

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Governance and Audit Committee
DATE:	27 September 2023
LOCATION:	Hybrid
TITLE:	Governance and Audit Committee self-assessment 2022-2023
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To consider the Governance and Audit Committee's ability to self-assess
For:	Recommendation
CABINET PORTFOLIO AND CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr. Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal & Governance and Public Protection

Background

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy's ('CIPFA') *Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police* (2018 Edition) sets out guidance on the function and operation of Audit committees.

In 2022 CIPFA produced the updated "Governance & Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police" Guidance which sets out the function and operation of Governance & Audit committees (GACs) self-assessment requirements including self-assessment.

The Guidance aims to:

- help GACs members understand the purpose of the committee, its core (and possible wider) functions, their responsibilities as members, independence and accountability, and effectiveness.
- areas where audit committees can exert influence, add value, and support overall governance within the authority.

Self-assessment

The 2022 Guidance includes guidance on developing effectiveness and recommends that the GAC considers an assessment of whether:

- it operates in line with practices recommended in the 2022 Guidance,
- whether it is compliant with any relevant legislation.

- to should reflect on how/whether it has fulfilled its terms of reference/core functions,
- consider how it operates (e.g., training, support and development of experience/knowledge),
- its effectiveness (impact on governance quality, internal control, risk management and satisfactory audit arrangements) and
- any feedback from those who interact with it,
- there is a need to review members knowledge and skills,
- evaluates its impact and identify areas for improvement.

In addition, the following should be considered:

- the GAC contribution and positive impact on the work of the authority
- GAC impact
- identify areas for improvement
- training
- GAC Chair facilitating general feedback to individual GAC members

The 2022 Guidance recommends that GACs report on their effectiveness in the Chair's annual report.

Governance and Audit Committee self-assessment 2022-2023

Following the circulation of a survey and workshop, on 10th March 2022 a draft Self-assessment and Evaluation of Effectiveness Review was considered by the Governance and Audit Committee ('the Committee'). It was agreed that the document would be reconsidered in order that a final review document could be presented at the next Committee meeting.

At the Committee's 7th June 2022 meeting, it was confirmed that the draft Self-assessment and Evaluation of Effectiveness Review had been added to the Forward Work Programme under September's 2022's scheduled meeting as it was hoped that a Workshop would be scheduled for the new Committee in advance of this meeting in order to reconsider the document and discuss the skills of the new Committee. It was agreed that a workshop be held prior to the September meeting in order to collate skills of Committee Members.

A workshop was held in November 2022.

A further workshop was held on 13/6/23 for the Committee to consider the draft Self-assessment and Evaluation of Effectiveness Review. The '*Self-assessment of good practice*' document, as completed is attached (at **Appendix 1-"Appendix E"**).

The Committee did not complete the CIPFA tool '*Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee*' tool ("Appendix F")

Current Position

The Committee now need to consider whether:

- the self-assessment exercise for 2022-23 is complete
- going forward it wishes to use CIPFA's '*Self-assessment of good practice*' and '*Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee*' tools, or use an alternative method of self-assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Governance and Audit Committee:

- 1) Notes the contents of the draft '*Self-assessment of good practice*' document (at **Appendix 1**);
- 2) Considers whether the self-assessment exercise for 2022-23 is complete; and
- 3) Considers whether the Committee it wishes to carry out a revised self-assessment procedure for the 2023-2024 self- assessment process.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Governance and Audit Committee is satisfied that effective assurance arrangements are in place to manage the authority's financial affairs, risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements.

Appendices: Appendix 1 – CIPFA's '*Self-assessment of good practice*' tool, as completed by the Governance and Audit Committee (Appendix E)

Head of Service: Elin Prysor-Corporate Lead Officer: Legal & Governance Services (& Monitoring Officer)

Reporting Officer: Hannah Rees, Governance Officer

Date: 6/9/23

Self-assessment of good practice

This appendix provides a high-level review that incorporates the key principles set out in CIPFA's Position Statement and this publication. Where an audit committee has a high degree of performance against the good practice principles, it is an indicator that the committee is soundly based and has in place a knowledgeable membership. These are the essential factors in developing an effective audit committee.

A regular self-assessment should be used to support the planning of the audit committee work programme and training plans. It will also inform the annual report.

Good practice questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*			Fully complies
	Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement	No further improvement
Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3	5

Audit committee purpose and governance

- 1 Does the authority have a dedicated audit committee that is not combined with other functions (eg standards, ethics, scrutiny)?
- 2 Does the audit committee report directly to the governing body (PCC and chief constable/full council/full fire authority, etc)?
- 3 Has the committee maintained its advisory role by not taking on any decision-making powers?
- 4 Do the terms of reference clearly set out the purpose of the committee in accordance with CIPFA's 2022 Position Statement?
- 5 Do all those charged with governance and in leadership roles have a good understanding of the role and purpose of the committee?
- 6 Does the audit committee escalate issues and concerns promptly to those in governance and leadership roles?
- 7 Does the governing body hold the audit committee to account for its performance at least annually?

* Where the committee does not fully comply with an element, three options are available to allow distinctions between aspects that require significant improvement and those only requiring minor changes.

Good practice questions	Does not comply					Partially complies and extent of improvement needed					Fully complies														
	Major improvement					Significant improvement					Moderate improvement					Minor improvement					No further improvement				
Weighting of answers	0					1					2					3					5				
8 Does the committee publish an annual report in accordance with the 2022 guidance, including:																									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022 																									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> results of the annual evaluation, development work undertaken and planned improvements 																									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how it has fulfilled its terms of reference and the key issues escalated in the year? 																									
Functions of the committee																									
9 Do the committee's terms of reference explicitly address all the core areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement as follows?																									
Governance arrangements																									
Risk management arrangements																									
Internal control arrangements, including:																									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> financial management value for money ethics and standards counter fraud and corruption 																									
Annual governance statement																									
Financial reporting																									
Assurance framework																									
Internal audit																									
External audit																									
10 Over the last year, has adequate consideration been given to all core areas?																									
11 Over the last year, has the committee only considered agenda items that align with its core functions or selected wider functions, as set out in the 2022 guidance?																									
12 Has the committee met privately with the external auditors and head of internal audit in the last year?																									

Good practice questions	Does not comply					Partially complies and extent of improvement needed					Fully complies														
	Major improvement					Significant improvement					Moderate improvement					Minor improvement					No further improvement				
Weighting of answers	0					1					2					3					5				

Membership and support

13 Has the committee been established in accordance with the 2022 guidance as follows?

- Separation from executive
- A size that is not unwieldy and avoids use of substitutes
- Inclusion of lay/co-opted independent members in accordance with legislation or CIPFA's recommendation

14 Have all committee members been appointed or selected to ensure a committee membership that is knowledgeable and skilled?

15 Has an evaluation of knowledge, skills and the training needs of the chair and committee members been carried out within the last two years?

16 Have regular training and support arrangements been put in place covering the areas set out in the 2022 guidance?

17 Across the committee membership, is there a satisfactory level of knowledge, as set out in the 2022 guidance?

18 Is adequate secretariat and administrative support provided to the committee?

19 Does the committee have good working relations with key people and organisations, including external audit, internal audit and the CFO?

Effectiveness of the committee

20 Has the committee obtained positive feedback on its performance from those interacting with the committee or relying on its work?

21 Are meetings well chaired, ensuring key agenda items are addressed with a focus on improvement?

22 Are meetings effective with a good level of discussion and engagement from all the members?

23 Has the committee maintained a non-political approach to discussions throughout?

Good practice questions	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed				Fully complies
	Does not comply	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement	No further improvement
Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3	5
24 Does the committee engage with a wide range of leaders and managers, including discussion of audit findings, risks and action plans with the responsible officers?					
25 Does the committee make recommendations for the improvement of governance, risk and control arrangements?					
26 Do audit committee recommendations have traction with those in leadership roles?					
27 Has the committee evaluated whether and how it is adding value to the organisation?					
28 Does the committee have an action plan to improve any areas of weakness?					
29 Has this assessment been undertaken collaboratively with the audit committee members?					
Subtotal score					
Total score					
Maximum possible score					200**

** 40 questions/sub-questions multiplied by five.