

Governance and Audit Committee

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Foreword by Councillor John Buckley, Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee

This report provides an overview of the Governance and Audit Committee's activity during the municipal year 2017/18.

I am pleased to report that the Committee continues to discharge its responsibilities to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the council's risk management framework and the associated control environment, and in providing robust scrutiny and challenge of the Authority's financial performance.

As outlined in the body of this report, the Committee has been actively engaged with both internal and external audit, and I would like to thank all the Members who served on the Committee during 2017/18. My thanks also go to the Council officers who have supported the work of the Committee and more specifically to me in my role as Chairman.

In looking forward to 2018/19 and beyond, and given the continued financial pressures facing the Council, the importance of an effective Governance and Audit Committee remains critical.

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council established a Governance and Audit Committee in March 2006. Whilst there is no statutory obligation to have an Audit Committee, they are widely recognised as a core component of effective governance. In recent years there has been a significant amount of regulation and guidance issues in governance arrangements for private and public sector bodies, the common feature of governance arrangements being the existence of an Audit Committee.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Council's Governance and Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent review of the authority's financial and non financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.
- 1.3 There are many benefits to be gained from an effective Audit Committee. In fulfilling its role the Committee will:
 - reduce the risks of illegal or improper acts;
 - reinforce the importance and independence of internal and external Audit;
 - increase confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial reporting.
- 1.4 Stricter internal control and the establishment of a Governance and Audit Committee can never eliminate the risks of serious fraud, misconduct or misrepresentation of the financial position. However, it will:
 - give additional assurance through a process of independent and objective review; and
 - raise awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations.

2.0 Membership

2.1 The Governance and Audit Committee comprised of 15 Members when it met on 28 June 2017 and 6 March 2018, and 14 Members when it met on 27 Sept 2017 and 6 December 2017. Committee agenda papers and minutes are available on the council's website (www.thanet.gov.uk).

	Members	28 Jun 2017	27 Sept 2017	06 Dec 2017	06 Mar 2018
C o m m i t t e e M e m b e r s	Cllr Buckley (Chairman)	✓	✓	✓	
	Cllr Braidwood	✓	A	A	
	Cllr Campbell (upto 7/9/17)	✓			
	Cllr Connor	✓	✓	A	
	Cllr Day	A	✓	✓	
	Cllr Dexter	✓	✓	Ab	
	Cllr Dixon	✓	✓	A	
	Cllr Edwards (upto 8/2/18)	Ab	Ab	✓	
	Cllr Evans (from 7/9/17)		✓	Ab	
	Cllr Game	✓	✓	A	
	Cllr I Gregory	✓	✓	A	
	Cllr Hayton (Vice Chairman)	✓	✓	Ab	
	Cllr Jaye-Jones (upto 13/7/17)	Ab			
	Cllr Larkins (upto 26/9/17, from 16/11/17)	✓	N/A	✓	
	Cllr L Piper	✓	✓	✓	
	Cllr Pugh (from 8/2/18)				
	Cllr Rusiecki (from 8/2/18)				
	Cllr Taylor-Smith (upto 7/12/17)	✓	✓	A	
Cllr Venables (from 7/9/17)		✓	✓		
R e s e r v e M e m b e r s	Cllr G Coleman-Cooke(R)				
	Cllr Dellar (R)				
	Cllr Dennis (R) (from 9/2/18)				
	Cllr Evans (R) (upto 7/9/17)				
	Cllr Fenner (R)				
	Cllr Grove (R)				
	Cllr Howes (R) (upto 15/8/17)				
	Cllr Jaye-Jones (R) (from 9/2/18)				
	Cllr Messenger (R)	S		S	
	Cllr Rev. S Piper (R) (from 9/2/18)				
	Cllr L Potts (R) (upto 8/2/18)				
	Cllr R Potts (R) (upto 8/2/18)				
	Cllr Savage (R)				
	Cllr Shonk (R) (from 9/2/18)				
Cllr Taylor (R) (upto 8/2/18)					
	Cllr Crow-Brown	IA	IA	IA	
	Cllr Campbell			IA	
	Cllr Rev. S Piper			IA	

Key

C	Chairman	VC	Vice Chairman	S	Present as Substitute
A	Apologies	IA	In Attendance	Ab	Absent

3.0 Programme of reports 2017/18

3.1 Detailed below is the programme of reports considered by Governance and Audit Committee during 2017/18, and how they relate to the Committees terms of reference.

Function/Issue	Responsible officer/body	28 Jun 2017	27 Sept 2017	06 Dec 2017	06 Mar 2018
Audit activity					
External Audit Annual Letter 2016/17	GT			✓	
External Audit Grant Certification Letter 2016/17	GT				✓
Internal Audit Annual Report	EKAP	✓			
External Audit Findings Year Ending March 2017	GT		✓		
External Audit Plan 2017/18	GT	✓			✓
Internal Audit 2018-19 Audit Plan	EKAP				✓
Internal Audit Quarterly Update Report	EKAP	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draft Audit Committee Assurance Statement	DCR	✓			
Regulatory framework					
Annual Governance Statement 2016/17	DCG		✓		
Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update	DCG	✓			
Annual Treasury Management Review 2016/17	DCR	✓			
Corporate Risk Register Annual Review	DCR	✓			
Corporate Risk Register Quarterly Update	DCR		✓	✓	✓
Draft Annual Governance Statement	DCG	✓			
Revised Code of Governance	DCG				✓
Revised Whistleblowing Code	DCG		✓		
Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy - Mid Year Review Report 2017-18	DCR			✓	
Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2018-19	DCR			✓	
Final Statement of Accounts	DCR		✓		
Audit of 2016-17 Final Accounts	DCR			✓	

Key

- DCG Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer
- DCR Director of Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer
- EKAP East Kent Audit Partnership
- GT Grant Thornton

4.0 Review of the Governance and Audit Committee's effectiveness

- 4.1 The Governance and Audit Committee should ensure it has effective communication with the authority, to include the Executive, the Head of Internal Audit, the External Auditor and other stakeholders. Consequently it is considered to be best practice for the Committee to be self aware and to submit an annual report to Council.
- 4.2 The annual report summarises the work of the Committee for the year and concludes that it has received clear, concise and relevant information, training events on topics specific

to the business of the Committee, and has done all that it can to meet the aims and objectives for the Committee in the best way that it can.

5.0 Annual Report

- 5.1 The Governance and Audit Committee is assured on the integrity and reliability of data held in the financial statement. It receives clear, concise reports and actions are dealt with in an appropriate timescale. The members of the Committee receive specific training in order to assist them with their role in receiving comprehensive assurance from the accounting officer.
- 5.2 The work of internal and external audit provides detailed assurance on the reliability and integrity of the information held in the financial statements as well as on the key control framework in operation across the council.
- 5.3 The assurances from the accounting officer, the work of internal and external audit together support the Committee in forming their opinion of the financial statements, enabling them to agree to sign them off in accordance with regulations.
- 5.4 The Committee reviews the Council's Governance Framework and Local Code of Corporate Governance.
- 5.5 The Committee reviews the Risk Management Strategy on a regular basis and considers the effectiveness of the risk management process both through the work of internal audit and through receiving quarterly risk management reports.
- 5.6 The Committee considers the effectiveness of the internal audit arrangements by reviewing the quality of reports, actions and follow-ups through the quarterly reports submitted during the year to the Committee.
- 5.7 The Committee is able to request service managers and, where necessary, the relevant portfolio holder to attend the Committee to give an update on progress against agreed actions to reduce risk and/or improve governance.
- 5.8 The Chairman and Officers have considered the effectiveness of the Committee. The self-assessment evidence demonstrating achievement of the Committee's terms of reference is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.9 The recommended actions are listed in Appendix 2 attached to this report. They will be incorporated into the council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2017/18.

6.0 Future Challenges

- 6.1 The Governance and Audit Committee will continue with its existing duties whilst continually striving to achieve best practice where this is feasible and affordable. In the forthcoming year, the Committee will need to:
 - address the implications of the Local Accountability and Audit Act 2014 and the appointment of new auditors
 - oversee corporate risk management within the context of change arising from the continued reduction in resources
 - maintain effective internal control in a period of government funding reductions and service change.

- Adopt the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 and a revised Code of Corporate Governance
- Reviewing the assurance process for the Annual Governance Statement and the reduced timeline available for production of the Annual Governance Statement

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 Governance and Audit Committee Annual Assessment for the period 2017/18

Appendix 2 Governance and Audit Committee Action Plan 2018/19

Governance and Audit Committee Self-assessment of good practice - Appendix 1

Good practice questions	Yes	Partly	No	Comments/Action
Audit Committee purposes and governance				
Does the council have a dedicated Audit Committee?	✓			
Does the Audit Committee report directly to full council?	✓			Annual Report of Governance and Audit Committee that goes to Annual Council
Do the terms of reference clearly set out the purpose of the committee in accordance with CIPFA's Position Statement?		✓		Action; Review the terms of reference against the CIPFA's Position Statement
Is the role and purpose of the audit committee understood and accepted across the authority?	✓			Set out in the constitution and understood by Members and officers
Does the audit committee provide support to the authority in meeting the requirements of good governance? Is an annual calendar of meetings/reports prepared to ensure all duties noted in the terms of reference are fulfilled?	✓			Meeting dates are arranged with deadline dates in mind to ensure they are met. Council protocol to issue agenda at least 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.
Are the arrangements to hold the committee to account for its performance operating satisfactorily?		✓		Action; Undertake a more detailed review of the committee's operation in the coming year
Functions of the committee				
Do the committee's terms of reference explicitly address all the core areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement?	✓			
• Good governance	✓			
• Assurance framework	✓			
• Internal audit	✓			
• External audit	✓			
• Financial reporting	✓			
• Risk management	✓			
• Value for money or best value		✓		Covered by work provided by internal and external audit
• Counter-fraud and corruption	✓			
Is an annual evaluation undertaken to assess whether the committee is fulfilling its terms of reference and that	✓			Annual report sets out the work undertaken in accordance with the committee terms of reference. This includes all core areas.

adequate consideration has been given to all core areas?							
Has the audit committee considered the wider areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement and whether it would be appropriate for the committee to undertake them?		✓		Action: To be undertaken as part of the terms of reference review			
Where coverage of core areas has been found to be limited, are plans in place to address this?			n/a	Core areas sufficiently covered			
Has the committee maintained its non-advisory role by not taking on any decision-making powers that are not in line with its core purpose?	✓						
Membership and support							
Has an effective audit committee structure and composition of the committee been selected? This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from the executive • An appropriate mix of knowledge and skills among the membership • A size of committee that is not unwieldy • Where independent members are used, that have been appointed using an appropriate process 	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	Members of the Committee are independent of the Executive.
Does the chair of the committee have appropriate knowledge and skills	✓				Chair has undertaken training		
Are arrangements in place to support the committee with briefings and training?	✓				Governance and Financial section within formal Induction Programme for Members following Elections. Training sessions provided throughout the year, especially for the Statement of Accounts. Members also request training when required.		
Has the membership of the committee been assessed against the core knowledge and skills framework and be found to be satisfactory?	✓						
Does the committee have good working relations with key people and organisations, including external audit, internal	✓						

audit and the chief finance officer?				
Is adequate secretariat and administrative support to the committee provided?	✓			
Effectiveness of the committee				
Has the committee obtained feedback on its performance from those interacting with the committee or relying on its work?	✓			The Charter and Strategy cover these areas. Also Customer Feedback which is detailed in the quarterly Internal Audit update reports and the Internal Audit Annual Report.
Has the committee evaluated whether and how it is adding value to the organisation?		✓		Partly through the Annual Report
Does the committee have an action plan to improve any areas of weakness?	✓			See actions recommended above.

Governance and Audit Committee Action Plan 2018/19 - Appendix 2

Following the completion of an annual assessment of the performance of the Governance and Audit Committee for the period May 2017 to April 2018, the issues below were identified and action will be undertaken during the period May 2018 to April 2019 to address these.

Ref	Good practice principle / description / issue identified	Proposed Action	Proposed completion date	Responsible officer / body
18-19/01	Do the terms of reference clearly set out the purpose of the committee in accordance with CIPFA's Position Statement?	Review the terms of reference against the CIPFA's Position Statement	June 2018	DCG
18-19/02	Has the audit committee considered the wider areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement and whether it would be appropriate for the committee to undertake them?	To be undertaken as part of the terms of reference review	June 2018	DCG
18-19/03	Are the arrangements to hold the committee to account for its performance operating satisfactorily?	Undertake a more detailed review of the committee's operation in the coming year via Member workshop.	June 2018	DCG and DCR

Key:

DCG Director of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer
DCR Director of Corporate Resources/S151 Officer
CE Chief Executive