

# Governance and Audit Committee

ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

## Foreword by Councillor Simon Day, Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee

This report provides an overview of the Governance and Audit Committee's activity during the municipal year 2018/19.

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 provides 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 2018/19. My thanks also go to the Council officers who have supported me in my role as Chairman, and in the work of the Committee.

In looking forward to 2019/20 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. Committee agenda papers and minutes are available on the Council's website ([www.thanet.gov.uk](http://www.thanet.gov.uk)).

	Members	25 Jul 2018	26 Sept 2018	05 Dec 2018	06 Mar 2019
C o m m i t t e e  M e m b e r s	Cllr Bambridge	A	✓	✓	A
	Cllr Buckley	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cllr Braidwood	✓	✓	Ab	✓
	Cllr Campbell	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cllr Connor	✓	✓	✓	A
	Cllr Day (C)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cllr Dennis	A	A	A	A
	Cllr Dexter	Ab	✓	Ab	✓
	Cllr Dixon	Ab	✓	Ab	✓
	Cllr Evans	✓	✓	Ab	A
	Cllr Larkins (VC)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cllr Messenger	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cllr R Potts	Ab	Ab	✓	Ab
	Cllr Pugh	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cllr Townend	✓	Ab	Ab	Ab
R e s e r v e s	Cllr G Coleman-Cooke(R)				
	Cllr Dellar (R)				
	Cllr Edwards (R)				
	Cllr L Fairbrass (R)				
	Cllr Fenner (R)				
	Cllr Grove (R)				
	Cllr Jaye-Jones (R)	IA			
	Cllr Savage (R)				
	Cllr Shonk (R)			IA	
Cllr Wells (R)					
	Cllr Gregory	IA	IA	IA	IA
	Cllr L Piper		IA	IA	
	Cllr Rev. S Piper		IA	IA	

### Key

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

### 3.0 Programme of reports 2018/19

3.1 Detailed below is the programme of reports considered by Governance and Audit Committee during 2018/19, and how they relate to the Committees terms of reference.

Function/Issue	Responsible officer/body	25 Jul 2018	26 Sept 2018	05 Dec 2018	06 Mar 2019
<b>Audit activity</b>					
External Audit Annual Letter 2017/18	GT		✓		
External Audit Grant Certification Letter 2017/18	GT				✓
Internal Audit Annual Report	EKAP	✓			
External Audit Findings Report	GT	✓			
External Audit Plan 2018/19	GT				✓
Internal Audit 2019-20 Audit Plan	EKAP				✓
Internal Audit Quarterly Update Report	EKAP	✓	✓	✓	✓
External Audit Update Report	GT			✓	
Audit Committee Assurance Statement	DCR	✓			
<b>Regulatory framework</b>					
Annual Governance Statement	DCG	✓			
Annual Treasury Management Review 2017/18	DCR	✓			
Annual Review of Corporate Risks Including Quarterly Update	DCR	✓			
Corporate Risk Register Quarterly Update	DCR		✓	✓	✓
Governance Framework and Local Code of Corporate Governance Update	DCG				✓
Risk Management Strategy	DCR				✓
Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy - Mid Year Review Report 2018-19	DCR			✓	
Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2019-20	DCR			✓	
Final Statement of Accounts 2017-18 and Management's Letter of Representation	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 as appropriate and Local Code of Corporate Governance annually.
- 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 Due to pressure on staff and resources recommended actions from last year have not been fully implemented. The work has therefore been rolled over into next year. The recommended actions are listed in Appendix 2 attached to this report. They will be incorporated into the council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

## 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:
- 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.
- make the Code more of a forward facing document by identifying and planning future changes in governance arrangements
- moving documents to the Council's website and provide links to those documents in reports

## **7.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1 Governance and Audit Committee Annual Assessment for the period 2018/19

Appendix 2 Governance and Audit Committee Action Plan 2019/20

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

Good practice questions	Yes	Partly	No	Comments/Action
<b>Audit Committee purposes and governance</b>				
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?		✓		<b>Action;</b> 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?		✓		<b>Action;</b> Undertake a more detailed review of the committee's operation in the coming year
<b>Functions of the committee</b>				
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?		✓		<b>Action:</b> 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?	✓						
<b>Membership and support</b>							
Has an effective audit committee structure and composition of the committee been selected? This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation from the executive</li> <li>• An appropriate mix of knowledge and skills among the membership</li> <li>• A size of committee that is not unwieldy</li> <li>• Where independent members are used, that have been appointed using an appropriate process</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	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?	✓			
<b>Effectiveness of the committee</b>				
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 2019/20 - Appendix 2

Following the completion of an annual assessment of the performance of the Governance and Audit Committee for the period May 2018 to April 2019, the issues below were identified and action will be undertaken during the period May 2019 to April 2020 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	September 2019	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	September 2019	DCG
18-19/03	Make the Code a more forward face document	Reviewing with Committee recommendations for future work	December 2019	DCG
18-19/04	Move to make the Code web rather than paper based	Create a dedicated web page on the internet site	July 2019	DCG

### Key:

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