

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

MEMBERSHIP: TEN COUNCILLORS

QUORUM: THREE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Statement of purpose

1. The Audit & Governance Committee is a key component of North West Leicestershire District Council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
2. The purpose of the Audit & Governance Committee is to provide independent assurance to those charged with governance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of North West Leicestershire District Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit arrangements, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance mechanisms are in place.

Governance, risk and control

3. To review the council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework and consider the local code of governance.
4. To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.
5. To consider the council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
6. To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.
7. To monitor and provide scrutiny over the effective development and operation of risk management in the council.
8. To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the committee such as the Corporate Risk Register.
9. To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
10. To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.
11. To monitor the Anti-Fraud and Corruption strategy, actions and resources.

Internal audit

12. To approve the internal audit charter.
13. To approve (but not direct) the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
14. To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.
15. To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the head of internal audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
16. To consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the head of internal audit. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
17. To consider progress reports from the head of internal audit on internal audit's performance during the year
18. To consider the head of internal audit's annual report, including the statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that supports the statement. Fundamental to the annual report is the opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion. These will assist the committee in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.
19. To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports in accordance with agreed protocols.
20. To receive reports outlining the action taken where the head of internal audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
21. To contribute to the QAIP and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.
22. To provide free and unfettered access to the audit committee chair for the head of internal audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

External audit

23. To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised.
24. To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the report to those charged with governance.
25. To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.
26. To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.

Financial reporting

27. To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.
28. To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.
29. To seek assurances that the Council has complied with the Treasury Management Strategy and Practices by demonstrating effective control of the associated risks and pursuing optimum performance consistent with those risks.

Accountability arrangements

30. To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions.
31. To report to full council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.
32. To publish an annual report on the work of the committee.

Functions	Matters reserved for a Decision
<p>The Council has determined under the powers conferred on it by Section 28(6) of the Localism Act 2011 to appoint an Audit and Governance Committee and it has the following roles and functions:</p>	<p>To determine any issues referred to the Committee (except for any matter reserved to the Council).</p>
<p>Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-optees.</p> <p>Assisting the councillors and co-optees to observe the Members' Code of Conduct</p> <p>Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct</p> <p>Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct</p> <p>Advising, training or arranging to train councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct</p> <p>Granting dispensations to councillors who require such dispensations for more than one meeting or on more than one occasion from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members Code of Conduct as appropriate</p> <p>Dealing with any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter concerning Governance.</p> <p>To establish Sub-Committees for the Assessment of Determination of matters concerning allegations of Members Conduct</p> <p>And in addition the Audit and Governance Committee also oversees the ethical framework of the Council including oversight of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Whistle Blowing Policy • complaints handling • Ombudsman investigations 	
<p>To exercise the above functions for the parish councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those parish councils.</p>	