

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Governance and Audit Committee

Annual Report 2024/25

Foreword - Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee

I am pleased to introduce the 2024/25 Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report, summarising the Committee's work during this period and the contribution it has made to the Council's governance, internal control, risk management and public financial management arrangements.

All Members of the Committee bring a balanced, independent and objective approach to the business of the Committee and I would like to place on record my thanks to them for the contributions they have made.

The Committee has provided robust challenge and meaningful review of the Council's arrangements, supported by a targeted work programme; in particular, the Committee has:

- Provided oversight to the Council's internal audit function, receiving the 2024/25 Head of Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion alongside regular updates on progress against the Internal Audit Plan and the implementation of recommendations reported;
- Considered the Council's draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts and engaged with the Council's external auditor, Audit Wales, as part of the audit process;
- Scrutinised and endorsed the Council's 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement and monitored the progress of improvement actions;
- Received regular updates and formal reports from Audit Wales, in line with the external auditor's work-plan, and Council progress updates on the same;
- Reviewed and approved the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Work Programme for 2024/25, received an in-year progress update and year-end report;
- Reviewed and approved the 2024/25 Whistle-blowing Annual Report;
- Received and reviewed updates on the key aspects of the Council's internal control arrangements, including risk management and contract procedure rules, providing robust challenge on the arrangements in place; and
- Scrutinised wider functions in respect of the Council's treasury management arrangements, complaints handling procedures and annual performance assessment.

The findings and outcomes from the delivery of the above programme of work provides assurance on the robustness of the Council's governance, internal control and risk managements arrangements during the year, and has been underpinned by Committee Members fully engaging in developing their skills and knowledge together with open and professional engagement with officers across the Council and Audit Wales.

The programme of work completed in 2024/25 positions the Committee well as we move into 2025/26 and I am confident the Governance and Audit Committee will continue to play a key role in reviewing, challenging and overseeing the governance arrangements in place across the Council in the year ahead.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 A key component of good governance for all organisations is to have in place a Governance and Audit Committee. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council complies with this requirement and the [Terms of Reference](#) for its Governance and Audit Committee, as included within the Council's Constitution, are set in line with the Local Government Measure 2011, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) publication 'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities & Police 2022 Edition' (from hereon the CIPFA guidance). The responsibilities of a Governance and Audit Committee, as required by the above legislation, is included at Appendix 1A.
- 1.2 In setting its workplan for 2024/25, the Governance and Audit Committee took into account risks as a result of different ways the Council provides services (including hybrid and digital working and utilisation of assets) and approved an internal audit plan that covered the Council's overall control environment, as far as practicable, to ensure there was robust and proportionate oversight of the Council's governance, internal control and risk management arrangements. This translated into the continuation of an approach where the Governance and Audit Committee focussed on its core responsibilities:
- Reviewing the draft Statements of Account;
 - Scrutinising and being satisfied with the Council's Annual Government Statement, to demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of objectives, and monitor management action in-year to further improve arrangements;
 - Monitoring the Council's internal audit function in terms of overseeing independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism, through the regular reporting of performance and the outcome of finalised audit assignments;
 - Considering the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements;
 - Considering reports and recommendations of external audit in respect of the Council (for the purposes of this Annual Report, External Audit is Audit Wales);
 - Supporting the ongoing development and effectiveness of the Committee; and
 - Ensuring compliance with legal requirements, namely the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, in respect of overseeing the Council's annual performance assessment and the arrangements for handling complaints.
- 1.3 Section 2 provides an Executive Summary of the Annual Report, Section 3 covers a brief overview of the CIPFA Guidance Position Statement, Section 4 summarises the work delivered by the Governance and Audit Committee during 2024/25 and the extent of its alignment with the principles set out within the CIPFA Guidance and Section 5 presents the outcome of the self-assessment against the CIPFA Guidance.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report has been prepared in line with the CIPFA Guidance (Section 3) and based on information reported to the Committee during 2024/25 alongside a 'self-assessment' process.
- 2.2 The CIPFA Guidance includes a Position Statement covering 5 areas: Purpose of the audit committee; Independent and effective model; Core functions; Audit Committee Membership; and Engagement and Outputs, with the expectation that all local government bodies make their best efforts to adopt the principles contained therein. Section 4 of the Annual Report considers the work of the Governance and Audit Committee during the year against the Position Statement, with the information and outcome of the Committee's work demonstrating compliance with the CIPFA Guidance.
- 2.3 Section 5 of the Annual Report sets out a self-assessment using the checklist included within the CIPFA Guidance, with the review process:
- Providing assurance that the targeted programme of work delivered by the Governance and Audit Committee during 2024/25 has enabled the Committee to deliver its Terms of Reference and ensure compliance with the CIPFA Guidance;
 - Demonstrating how the Committee's work has contributed to the robustness of the Council's governance, internal control and risk management arrangements; and
 - Identified a small number of recommendations that will further support the Committee in the effective discharge of its Terms of Reference, these being the requirement for:
 - On-going focussed on demonstrating the impact and influence of the Committee's work in supporting effective governance, internal control, risk management and strong public financial management arrangements; and
 - Focus to be afforded to specific strategic risks, as determined by the Committee, to further support its oversight of these areas and provide assurance on the effectiveness of the risk management arrangements in place.
- 2.4 Subject to a version of the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25 being agreed, the recommendations will form the basis of an action plan that will be led and managed by the Committee during 2025/26.

3. CIPFA'S POSITION STATEMENT: AUDIT COMMITTEES IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE 2022

- 3.1 The CIPFA position statement relates to all principal local authorities in the UK, corporate joint committees in Wales, the audit committees for Police and Crime Commissioner and chief constables in England and Wales and Fire and Rescue Authorities in England and Wales. It represents CIPFA's view on audit committee practice and principles that local government bodies in the UK should adopt and has been prepared in consultation with sector representatives.
- 3.2 More specifically it sets out the purpose, model, core functions and membership of the audit committee, noting that where specific legislation exists, for example, the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the position statement should supplement the requirements of the legislation.

- 3.3 CIPFA expects that all local government bodies should make their best efforts to adopt the principles, aiming for effective audit committee arrangements. This will enable those bodies to meet their statutory responsibilities for governance and internal control arrangements, financial management, financial reporting and internal audit.
- 3.4 The key areas within the Position Statement are as follows and are set out in more detail in Section 4 of the Annual Report.
- Purpose of the audit committee;
 - Independent and effective model;
 - Core functions: Maintenance of governance, risk and control arrangements; Financial and governance reporting; and establishing appropriate and effective arrangements for audit and assurance;
 - Audit Committee Membership; and
 - Engagement and Outputs.

4. THE WORK OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT

- 4.1 The CIPFA Position Statement sets out audit committee practice and principles alongside possible wider functions of an audit committee.
- 4.2 This section of the Annual Report covers each area of the Position Statement (capital and bold text headers) and a summary of the work undertaken by the Governance and Audit Committee during 2024/25, and demonstrating the extent of alignment with the Position Statement.

PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4.3 Governance and Audit Committees are a key component of an authority's governance framework and their purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements.

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 – PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Committee's role in ensuring that there is sufficient assurance over governance, risk and control gives greater confidence to all those charged with governance that those arrangements are effective.• In a local authority the full council is the body charged with governance. The audit committee may be delegated some governance responsibilities but will be accountable to full council.• The Committee has oversight of both internal and external audit together with the financial and governance reports, helping to ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place for both internal challenge and public accountability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Committee's Statement of Purpose and Terms of Reference (as set out within Part 3 (i) - Responsibility for Functions of the Council's Constitution) cover the Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks; financial reporting and annual governance processes; and monitoring and scrutinising the work of internal audit and external audit. The work programme for 2024/25 was set in line with the Terms of Reference and was reported to and agreed by the Committee on 25th June 2024.• The work presented to and reviewed by the Committee during the year (Appendix 1B) was in line with its work programme and provided conclusions / information on the adequacy of the arrangements in place. This position provides assurance to full Council (i.e. those charged with governance in Rhondda Cynon Taf) on the effectiveness of the governance, risk and control arrangements in place within the organisation.

INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE MODEL

4.4 The Governance and Audit Committee should be established so that it is independent of executive decision making and able to provide objective oversight. It is an advisory committee that has sufficient importance in the authority so that its recommendations and opinions carry weight and have influence with the leadership team and those charged with governance.

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 – INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE MODEL	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<p>The Governance and Audit Committee should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be directly accountable to the authority’s governing body.• Be independent of both the executive and the scrutiny functions.• Have rights of access to and constructive engagement with other committees/functions, for example scrutiny and service committees, corporate risk management boards and other strategic groups.• Have rights to request reports and seek assurances from relevant officers.• Be of an appropriate size to operate as a cadre of experienced, trained committee members. Large committees should be avoided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Committee is accountable to Full Council through the presentation of an Annual Report.• The Committee’s Statement of Purpose and Terms of Reference set out its independence in delivering its work and its rights of access to other committees, seeking assurance from relevant officers and requesting reports.• Committee membership is 9, comprising 6 elected Members and 3 lay members.

CORE FUNCTIONS

4.5 The core functions of the Governance and Audit Committee are to provide oversight of a range of core governance and accountability arrangements, responses to the recommendations of assurance providers and helping to ensure robust arrangements are maintained, these being: Maintenance of governance, risk and control arrangements; financial and governance setting; and establishing appropriate and effective arrangements for audit and assurance.

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 – CORE FUNCTIONS	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<p><u>Maintenance of governance, risk and control arrangements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a comprehensive understanding of governance across the organisation and among all those charged with governance, fulfilling the principles of good governance. Monitor the effectiveness of the system of internal control, including arrangements for financial management, ensuring value for money, supporting standards and ethics and managing the authority's exposure to the risks of fraud and corruption. 	<p><u>Governance and Control Arrangements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A learning and development plan is in place for the Governance and Audit Committee to support Members' understanding of the Council's governance arrangements (see section 4.6 for further information on learning and development activity delivered through to March 2025). The Committee reviewed and endorsed the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2023/24 that aligns to the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (CIPFA / Solace 2016) at its 25th June 2024 meeting. The Council also reviewed and updated its Local Code of Corporate Governance, this being reported to and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee on 17th December 2024. The Committee received in-year updates on: the conclusions of finalised internal audit assignments (providing opportunity for direct discussion with Internal Audit and, where required, the Committee has supported follow-up reviews to be undertaken in the small number of cases where limited assurance opinions were issued on the standard of internal control); internal audit performance; position statements on the implementation of internal audit recommendations reported; and reports from External Audit. The Committee also received a Head of Internal Audit Annual Report at year-end that summarised the position for the year and provided an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control. The Head of Internal Audit opinion being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Based on the planned and unplanned assurance and consultancy work undertaken by Internal Audit during 2024/25, in my view, the overall governance, risk management and control processes of the Council operated effectively during 2024/25 with some areas identified for improvement. There have been some instances whereby weaknesses in the governance, risk management or control processes have been identified but, in my opinion, these do not have a material impact on the overall level of assurance provided.</i>

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 – CORE FUNCTIONS	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<p><u>Maintenance of governance, risk and control arrangements (continued)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the effectiveness of the authority’s risk management arrangements. It should understand the risk profile of the organisation and seek assurances that active arrangements are in place on risk-related issues, for both the body and its collaborative arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee has received reports in respect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council’s core financial management arrangements - via internal audit’s review of core financial systems (as per the 2024/25 Internal Audit Annual Plan); Audit Wales examining whether the Council has put in place arrangements to secure value for money from the resources it uses; and Consideration of ethics and compliance with the Council’s laid procedures / polices and law, these being cross-cutting considerations tested by Internal Audit as part of undertaking individual audit assignments. The Committee maintained oversight of the Council’s Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy via agreeing a work programme at the start of the year (29th April 2024), monitoring the Counter Fraud work programme in-year (reported to the 17th December 2024 meeting) and received a year-end Annual Report (31st March 2025). The Committee reviewed and endorsed the position that the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy and on-going monitoring will ensure <i>‘the Council’s commitment and “zero tolerance” approach towards any fraudulent activity continues to be afforded a high priority and the delivery of the Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption work programme for 2025/26 will ensure the Council continues to operate within an effective anti-fraud culture across the organisation, with resilient preventive measures capable of identifying and addressing new threats’</i>. <p><u>Risk</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the year, the Committee’s work covered reviewing the Council’s 2024/25 Strategic Risk Register (4th November 2024) and further Strategic Risk Register updates reported to the Committee on 28th January 2025 and 29th April 2025 (with the 29th April 2025 update also providing an overview of the Council’s Risk Management Strategy and consideration of an on-line training resource that has been developed in respect of the Council’s risk management arrangements, this to be made available to officers across the Council). These updates enabled the Committee to maintain oversight of the Council’s risk management processes and the adequacy of the arrangements in place. The Internal Audit Annual Plan is underpinned by a risk-based approach in identifying audit assignment areas and the internal audit work subsequently undertaken, with the conclusions from each report being presented to the Committee during the year.

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 – CORE FUNCTIONS	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<p><u>Financial and governance reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be satisfied that the authority’s accountability statements, including the annual governance statement, properly reflect the risk environment, and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of the authority’s objectives. • Support the maintenance of effective arrangements for financial reporting and review the statutory statements of account and any reports that accompany them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee considered the Council’s draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement (along with the draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts for the Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund and Central South Consortium Joint Education Service, and the annual return for the Llwydcoed Crematorium Joint Committee). This update to the Governance and Audit Committee was accompanied by an overview of Accounting Policies and critical judgements applied in preparing the draft Statements of Account to support the Committee’s understanding and scrutiny of the area. • Other key governance documents (i.e. the Head of Internal Audit Annual, Annual Whistle-blowing Report and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Annual Report) provide assurance on the effectiveness of the internal control framework in place and contribute to ensuring the achievement of the Council’s objectives.
<p><u>Establishing appropriate and effective arrangements for audit and assurance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the arrangements in place to secure adequate assurance across the body’s full range of operations and collaborations with other entities. • In relation to the authority’s internal audit functions: oversee its independence, objectivity, performance and conformance to professional standards; support effective arrangements for internal audit; and promote the effective use of internal audit within the assurance framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As set out under Governance and Control Arrangements. • The Governance and Audit Committee reviewed the 2024/25 Internal Audit Charter (29th April 2024) that provided assurance around the independence of the internal audit service and set out the Service’s compliance with professional standards. • Internal Audit updates were a key component of the Governance and Audit Committee’s workplan to ensure this work is promoted, afforded a high priority and the Internal Audit Service held to account i.e. updates reported to the Committee in respect of the 2024/25 internal audit risk based plan (including resources); conclusions from audit assignments; internal audit performance; progress updates on implementation of recommendations; and the Head of Internal Audit Annual Report. The designated internal audit officer(s) also attended each Governance and Audit Committee meeting during the year. • More specifically, on progress updates on implementation of recommendations, a ‘Monitoring and Summary of Themes and Categories 2024/25’ was reported to the 28th January 2025 Governance and Audit Committee; further to the Committee considering the update the Committee agreed for 4 themes to be included within the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan: safeguarding, governance, purchase card compliance and private funds in schools.

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 – CORE FUNCTIONS	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<p><u>Establishing appropriate and effective arrangements for audit and assurance (continued)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the opinion, reports and recommendations of external audit and inspection agencies and their implications for governance, risk management or control, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit. • Contribute to the operation of efficient and effective external audit arrangements, supporting the independence of auditors and promoting audit quality. • Support effective relationships between all providers of assurance, audits and inspections, and the organisation, encouraging openness to challenge, review and accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Audit annual audit plans, in-year work programme updates (that included information on national reports published by Audit Wales) and finalised external audit reports relating to the Council were presented to the Governance and Audit Committee during the year. As part of these arrangements, Council progress updates on the implementation of recommendations reported by external audit were presented to the Committee to provide assurance on the arrangements and the steps Council services are taking to support on-going improvement. • Audit Wales updates and associated Council updates reported to the Governance and Audit Committee during the year were: 25th June 2024 – ‘Audit Wales - Detailed Audit Plan 2024’ and ‘Pension Fund Audit Plan 2024’; 19th September 2024 – ‘Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable (Quarterly Update 30th June 2024)’ and ‘Audit Wales Finalised Reports and Council Progress Update – Implementation of Recommendations within the Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary’; 4th November 2024 – ‘Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable (Quarterly update September 2024)’; 31st March 2025 – ‘Council position statement on the implementation of Audit Wales recommendations’; and 29th April 2025 – Audit Wales Programme and Timetable (Quarterly Update 31st March 2025). • External audit arrangements are part of the Committee’s Terms of Reference enabling the performance and work of Audit Wales to be monitored, scrutinised and held to account. Audit Wales officers attend Governance and Audit Committee meetings, providing direct access to elected Members and key areas of work were reported to the Committee during the year as detailed above. • The Committee’s Terms of Reference supports a framework that requires key parties to provide assurance to the Committee, Those Charged With Governance (i.e. full Council) and Management that the policies and procedures they have approved are being implemented in practice and operating as intended. During the year, this has been discharged via assurance received from internal and external audit, and alongside this, assurance from management on specific arrangements where required. • Designated officers from Internal Audit and External Audit attend Governance and Audit Committee meetings, and have provided independent updates to the Committee on plans and the results of their work, enabling direct discussion with Members. In parallel, internal audit, external audit and Management proactively engage as part of planning audit work, support the delivery of fieldwork and ensure agreed recommendations are implemented.

AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

4.6 To provide the level of expertise and understanding required of the Committee, and to have an appropriate level of influence within the Authority, the Members of the Committee will need to be of high calibre. When selecting elected representatives to be on the Committee or when co-opting independent members, aptitude should be considered alongside relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 - AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A membership that is trained to fulfil their role so that members are objective, have an inquiring and independent approach, and are knowledgeable. • A membership that promotes good governance principles, identifying ways that better governance arrangement can help achieve the organisation’s objectives. • A strong, independently minded chair, displaying a depth of knowledge, skills, and interest. • Willingness to operate in an apolitical manner. • Unbiased attitudes – treating auditors, the executive and management fairly. • The ability to challenge the executive and senior managers when required. • Knowledge, expertise and interest in the work of the committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During August 2024 members of the Governance and Audit Committee were requested to complete an on-line Training Needs Analysis questionnaire, in line with the CIPFA Publication. The feedback results from Committee Members was that, overall, a good or satisfactory knowledge was in place, with a small number of learning and development areas identified. These areas were subsequently used to inform the basis of a learning and development plan, this being agreed at the 19th September 2024, with delivery of the plan progressing during the year and will continue in 2025/26. • The Committee’s workplan has focussed on areas that promote good governance principles to contribute to the efficient and effective delivery of the Council’s priorities. This has covered: overseeing and scrutinising the work of internal audit and external audit; seeking assurance on the adequacy of governance, risk management and internal controls via the scrutiny of key governance documents; and engaging directly with internal and external auditors and senior Council officers as part of assurance arrangements. The minutes of Committee meetings demonstrate an objective and apolitical approach to lines of enquiry and questioning of officers and the assurances sought by Members. • The delivery of the Committee’s annual workplan has been supported via a focussed approach to the chairing of meetings and engagement of Committee Members to hold auditors and management to account.

ENGAGEMENT AND OUTPUTS

4.7 The Governance and Audit Committee should be established and supported to enable it to address the full range of responsibilities within its terms of reference and to generate planned outputs.

CIPFA POSITION STATEMENT 2022 - ENGAGEMENT AND OUTPUTS	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet regularly, at least four times a year, and have a clear policy on those items to be considered in private and those to be considered in public. • Be able to meet privately and separately with the external auditor and with the head of internal audit. • Include, as regular attendees, the chief finance officer(s), the chief executive, the head of internal audit and the appointed external auditor; other attendees may include the monitoring officer and the head of resources (where such a post exists). These officers should also be able to access the committee members, or the chair, as required. • Have the right to call on any other officers or agencies of the authority as required. • Support transparency, reporting regularly on its work to those charged with governance. • Report annually on how the committee has complied with the position statement, discharged its responsibilities, and include an assessment of its performance. The report should be available to the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governance and Audit Committee meets regularly, 7 times in the 2024/25 Municipal Year, with agendas and reports published. Should it be deemed required for a specific item of business to be considered privately (i.e. the press and public excluded), the reason for this is set out in the published agenda prior to the meeting, noting that this circumstance has been the exception rather than the rule. • Governance and Audit Committee Members have had direct access to external audit, internal audit and senior management of the Council, and vice versa, with opportunity for engagement also in place via regular attendance at Committee meetings i.e. with internal audit, external audit, external parties such as training with the Public Services Ombudsman Wales, the Council's Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Deputy Section 151 Officer and senior managers based on the nature of the agenda items at each committee meeting. • The Governance and Audit Committee considered and approved an Annual Report that is published and will be presented to full Council in the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

WIDER FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

4.8 In addition to the core functions of a Governance and Audit Committee as defined in the CIPFA Position Statement 2022, there are wider functions that are the responsibility of the Council's Governance and Audit Committee, this being in line with the CIPFA Position Statement and relevant legislation. The wider functions are set out below.

WIDER FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE	2024/25 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK
<p><u>Performance assessment arrangements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a duty on a principal council to keep its performance under review and to undertake a self-assessment of performance. The legislation requires the Governance and Audit Committee to review the self-assessment report and the Committee can make recommendations. The Council is not required to adopt the Committee's recommendations, but it should include an explanation of why it has not adopted the change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Governance and Audit Committee considered and endorsed the Council's draft self-assessment of performance on the 19th September 2024 (titled <i>Draft Annual Corporate Performance Report and Annual Self-Assessment 2024/24</i>). The self-assessment of performance was reported to and approved by full Council on 6th November 2024, concluding that it is an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council and its services and meets the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Part 6. A verbal update on the outcome of the 6th November 2024 full Council meeting was also provided to the Governance and Audit Committee.
<p><u>Treasury Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny of treasury management arrangements in line with the Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-sectoral Guidance Notes (CIPFA, 2021) that requires all local authorities to make arrangements for the scrutiny of treasury management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Governance and Audit Committee considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24 19th September 2024 with training arrangements provided to the Committee via the Council's approved treasury management advisors prior to the meeting; and The 2024/25 Mid Year Treasury Management Stewardship Report 17th December 2024.
<p><u>Arrangements for handling complaints</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review and assess the Council's ability to deal with complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the Council's ability to deal with complaints effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee considered Annual Reports on 4th November 2024 covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Services Representations, Compliments and Complaints Procedures Annual Report 2023/24; and Customer Feedback Annual Report (1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024) – based on the information presented, the Committee requested further updates to provide assurance that services are learning from the complaints received, with this update bring reported to the 31st March 2025 Governance and Audit committee meeting.

5. SELF-ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE CIPFA PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES & POLICE 2022 EDITION

- 5.1 The self-assessment checklist included within the CIPFA Guidance 2022 has been completed, based on the Governance and Audit Committee arrangements in place during 2024/25 and from a review of the information reported to the Committee over this period. The self-assessment is set out at **Appendix 1C** and for Members reference, the results of 2023/24 self-assessments is included at **Appendix 1D**.
- 5.2 The 2024/25 self-assessment and review process has demonstrated how the Committee has: delivered its Terms of Reference, as set out in Section 4; progressed / completed the recommendations reported as part of the 2023/24 self-assessment; and afforded on-going focus to evidencing the contribution / influence of the Committee's work, as a non-executive body, on the Council's governance, internal control and risk management arrangements. This position is summarised below along with proposed recommendations to support continuous improvement in the Committee's work during 2025/26.

Table 1 - Governance and Audit Committee – progress made in delivering 2023/24 recommendations, the contribution / influence of the Committee during 2024/25 and proposed recommendations to be implemented in 2025/26

Area	Progress made in delivering 2023/24 recommendations	Contribution / influence of the Governance and Audit Committee	Areas for Improvement / Recommendations To Be Implemented In 2025/26
<p>Promoting the principles of good governance and their application to decision making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council’s draft self-assessment 2022/23 was reported to the Committee on 19th December 2023 following year-end. The arrangements to compile the annual self-assessment, specifically its timeliness, require improvement to allow for scrutiny by the Committee earlier in the year and enable identified improvements to be incorporated into reporting arrangements. <p>Year-end Position Statement: Completed - the 2023/24 self-assessment was completed and approved more timely i.e. to the 19th September 2024 Governance and Audit Committee and to the 6th November 2024 full Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee’s skills and knowledge assessment should be refreshed to inform an updated learning and development programme. <p>Year-end Position Statement: Completed – the Committee’s skills and knowledge was refreshed, informed by a training needs analysis, and this informed an updated learning and development will implementation commencing in 2024/25 (and will be on-going during 2025/26).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feedback from full Council to be provided to the Governance and Audit Committee further to the Annual Report being presented. <p>Year-end Position Statement: Completed - the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report was presented to the 17th July 2024 full Council meeting and a verbal update on the feedback from the full Council meeting was provided to the 19th September 2024 Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed and approved an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance and endorsed the Annual Governance Statement (and the assurances underpinning it). <p>This work has ensured that local arrangements for governance are clearly set out in an up-to-date local code and enabled elected Members, the Senior Leadership Team and senior managers to understand the Council’s governance arrangements and their respective responsibilities.</p>	<p>On-going focussed on demonstrating the impact and influence of the Committee’s work in supporting effective governance, internal control, risk management and strong public financial management arrangements.</p> <p>(Self-Assessment Checklist (Appendix 1C) Number 27).</p>

Area	Progress made in delivering 2023/24 recommendations	Contribution / influence of the Governance and Audit Committee	Areas for Improvement / Recommendations To Be Implemented In 2025/26
Contributing to the development of an effective control environment	No recommendations reported.	<p>Encouraged ownership of internal control arrangements by managers through receiving reports on internal and external audit assignments, actively monitoring the implementation of recommendations from auditors and supported follow-up reviews in the small number internal audit assignments that received 'limited assurance' conclusions.</p> <p>This work has demonstrated a sound level of internal control across Council services and clear progress made by managers to implement agreed recommendations.</p>	No recommendations proposed.
Supporting arrangements for the governance of risk and for effective arrangements to manage risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alongside the on-going reporting of the Strategic Risk Register updates to the Committee and risk management being included within the Annual Internal Audit Plan, there is a requirement for updates to be reported focussing on specific risks, as determined by the Committee, to further support its oversight and provide assurance on the effectiveness of the arrangements in place. <p>Year-end Position Statement: Part-completed. The Governance and Audit Committee, as part of reviewing Strategic Risk Updates, have identified 3 strategic risk areas to review in more detail as part of its meeting on 28th January 2025 i.e. Regenerating our communities; Supporting our young people with additional learning needs; and A carbon neutral Council.</p>	<p>Reviewed the Council's Risk Management Strategy and received in-year Strategic Risk Register progress updates.</p> <p>This work as enabled the Committee to gain assurance around the effectiveness of the arrangements in place to manage strategic risks, that have contributed to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, as evidenced via quarterly Performance Reporting arrangements.</p>	Focus to be afforded to specific strategic risks, as determined by the Committee, to further support its oversight of these areas and provide assurance on the effectiveness of the risk management arrangements in place. (Self-Assessment Checklist (Appendix 1C) Number 9).

Area	Progress made in delivering 2023/24 recommendations	Contribution / influence of the Governance and Audit Committee	Areas for Improvement / Recommendations To Be Implemented In 2025/26
Supporting effective external audit	No recommendations reported.	<p>Audit Wales provided timely information to the Committee on its Audit Plan, in-year progress updates and final reports issued.</p> <p>The updates provided opportunity for the Committee to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage directly with the relevant Audit Wales officers where further clarity and explanations were required; and • Seek assurance from Council officers on the arrangements to monitor the implementation of recommendations reported by Audit Wales and the extent of progress made, with the position statements demonstrating appropriate action being taken by the Council to implement recommendations. 	No areas for improvement identified.
Supporting the quality of internal audit activity, in particular underpinning its organisational independence	No recommendations reported.	<p>The Committee reviewed and endorsed the Internal Audit Charter and received regular updates on the performance of the Internal Audit Service, enabling constructive challenge.</p> <p>This oversight supported full conformance with the PSIAS and annual opinion of the Head of Internal Audit.</p>	No areas for improvement identified.

Area	Progress made in delivering 2023/24 recommendations	Contribution / influence of the Governance and Audit Committee	Areas for Improvement / Recommendations To Be Implemented In 2025/26
Helping the authority to implement the values of good governance, including effective arrangements for countering fraud and corruption risks	No recommendations reported.	<p>The Committee endorsed an Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption work programme at the start of the year and scrutinised an in-year progress update and year-end annual report.</p> <p>This work enabled the Committee to review fraud risks and the effectiveness of the Council's strategy to address those risks, this being underpinned by assurance around a zero-tolerance culture and clear ethics in respect of counter fraud arrangements.</p>	No areas for improvement identified.
Supporting effective public reporting to the authority' stakeholders	No recommendations reported.	<p>The Committee considered the Council's draft Statement of Accounts, engaged with Audit Wales on the progress of the external audit of the Statement of Accounts and scrutinised and endorsed the Council's Annual Governance Statement.</p> <p>The outcome of the external audit of the Council's 2024/25 Statement of Accounts was an unqualified audit opinion; the Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report prepared were in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance; and the external audit was completed in line with the laid down timescale.</p>	No areas for improvement identified.

Overall Arrangements

- 5.4 The information set out above, when taken together:
- Provide assurance that the targeted programme of work delivered by the Governance and Audit Committee during 2024/25 has enabled the Committee to deliver its Terms of Reference and ensure compliance with the CIPFA Guidance (including alignment with the 5 Position Statement areas);
 - Demonstrates that the Committee's work has contributed to the robustness of the Council's governance, internal control and risk management arrangements; and
 - Identifies a small number of recommendations that will further support the Committee in the effective discharge of its Terms of Reference.
- 5.5 Subject to a version of the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25 being agreed, the recommendations (as per Table 1) will form the basis of an action plan that will be led and managed by the Governance and Audit Committee during 2025/26 and kept under on-going review.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 During 2024/25 the Council's Governance and Audit Committee has reviewed and challenged a targeted range of topic areas, including the work of Internal and External Audit and the Committee's responsibilities as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- 6.2 From a review of the coverage of Governance and Audit Committee's work (Section 4 / Appendix 1B) during the year, the Committee has delivered its Workplan and responsibilities in line with its Terms of Reference.
- 6.3 The Annual Report also sets out the results of the self-assessment undertaken against the checklist included within the CIPFA Guidance (Section 5 / Appendix C). The outcome of this process demonstrates the contribution and influence the Committee's work has had, the progress made to address recommendations included within the 2023/24 Annual Report and has also identified a small number of new recommendations to further reinforce the existing arrangements in place.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE IN LINE WITH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021

Chapter 2, section 81 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Local authorities to appoint audit committees

A local authority must appoint a committee (an “Audit Committee”) to—

- a) review and scrutinise the authority's financial affairs,*
- b) make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's financial affairs,*
- c) review and assess the risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements of the authority,*
- d) make reports and recommendations to the authority on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements,*
- e) oversee the authority's internal and external audit arrangements, and*
- f) review the financial statements prepared by the authority.*

A local authority may confer on its Audit Committee such other functions as the authority considers suitable to be exercised by such a committee.

It is for an Audit Committee to determine how to exercise its functions.

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Council Performance Arrangements

(i) To consider the Council's draft Annual Performance Self-Assessment report and if deemed necessary may make recommendations for changes to the Council.

(ii) To receive the Council's finalised Annual Self-Assessment report in respect of a financial year as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of that financial year.

(iii) At least once during the period between two consecutive ordinary elections of councillors to the Council, consider the independent Panel Performance Assessment report into which the Council is meeting its performance requirements.

(iv) To receive and review the Council's draft response to the report of the independent Panel Performance Assessment and if deemed necessary may make recommendations for changes to the statements made in the draft response to the Council.

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 2024/25 PROGRAMME OF WORK DELIVERED

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE		25/6/2024	19/9/2024	4/11/2024	17/12/2024	28/1/2025	31/3/2025	29/4/2025
A	At the first meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee following the Council's Annual General Meeting the Governance and Audit Committee shall appoint the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee (who must be a lay member) and appoint the Vice Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee.	✓						
B	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. 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement to be reported to the June 2024 Governance and Audit Committee meeting.	✓			✓ In-year progress update (including updated Local Code of Corporate Governance)			
C	Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on the appropriateness of the Authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements, and providing the opportunity for direct discussion with the auditor(s) on these.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D	To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud and corruption and to monitor the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.				✓ In-year progress update		✓ Year-end Annual Report	
E	To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.		✓ As part of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment					

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE		25/6/2024	19/9/2024	4/11/2024	17/12/2024	28/1/2025	31/3/2025	29/4/2025
F	To receive reports in relation to proposed changes to the Authority's Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules and where deemed appropriate, recommend their approval to Council.					✓ Overview of the Contract Procedure Rules		
G	To approve the Internal Audit Charter. Approved at the 29/4/2024 Governance and Audit Committee							
H	Review, approve and ensure the co-ordination of the risk based Annual Internal Audit Plan for the coming financial year. Approved at the 29/4/2024 Governance and Audit Committee							
I	To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the Head of Audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations and to consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the Head of Audit Service. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.	Assurance was set out as part of the Internal Audit Charter, with opportunity for direct discussion with Internal Audit designated officers at each Governance and Audit Committee meeting during the year.						
J	To receive reports on the performance of the Internal Audit Service throughout the year particularly in relation to matters of financial probity and corporate governance.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
K	To contribute to the Quality Assurance Improvement Programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of Internal Audit that takes place at least once every five years. Update included in the Internal Audit Charter 2024/25 that was approved at the 29/4/2024 Governance and Audit Committee							

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE		25/6/2024	19/9/2024	4/11/2024	17/12/2024	28/1/2025	31/3/2025	29/4/2025
L	To provide free and unfettered access to the Governance and Audit Committee Chair for the Head of Audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the Committee.	Available on an on-going basis during the year.						
M	To receive and consider the Head of Audit's Annual Report and opinion on the level of assurance it can give over the Authority's governance arrangements and associated internal control environment. To be considered at the June 2024 Governance and Audit Committee meeting.	✓ 2023/24 Head of Internal Audit Annual Report						✓ 2024/25 Head of Internal Audit Annual Report
N	Act as a point of arbitration, where senior officers of the Authority are unable to agree significant audit report recommendations.	As and when required.						
O	To receive and consider reports of the External Auditor in relation to matters of financial probity and corporate governance and providing the opportunity for direct discussion with the auditor(s) on these.	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
P	Consider national reports, for example, from the Wales Audit Office, of relevance to the work of the Authority.	As per O above and as part of quarterly Work Programme and Timetable updates.						
Q	Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's financial affairs, and providing the opportunity for direct discussion with the auditor(s) on these.	✓	✓		✓			✓
R	Review and comment on the Authority's certified draft financial statements before their approval by Council.		✓					
S	Oversee the Authority's audit arrangements (both internal and external).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
T	Promote and review any measures designed to raise the profile of probity within the Authority.	As and when required.						

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE		25/6/2024	19/9/2024	4/11/2024	17/12/2024	28/1/2025	31/3/2025	29/4/2025
U	Agree, where Committee Members deem it appropriate, that a matter arising from a written report to a Committee which requires further clarification may be either dealt with by a request for a written commentary from the appropriate designated officer, or by that designated officer or their senior representative, attending to answer questions in person on that specific matter. Alternatively, the Governance and Audit Committee can refer the matter to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.	As and when required.						
V	The committee may require members and officers of the Authority to attend before it to answer questions. Such members and officers have a duty to comply but are not obliged to answer any questions that may be refused in court proceedings in England and Wales. The Committee may invite other persons to attend the meeting.	As and when required.						
W (i)	To consider the Council's draft Annual Performance Self-Assessment report and if deemed necessary may make recommendations for changes to the Council.		✓					
W (ii)	To receive the Council's finalised Annual Self-Assessment report in respect of a financial year as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year.			✓				
W(iii)	At least once during the period between the two consecutive ordinary elections of councillors to the Council, consider the independent Panel Performance Assessment report into which the Council is meeting its performance requirements.	No independent Panel Performance Assessment scheduled in 2024/25.						
W (iv)	To receive and review the Council's draft response to the report of the independent Panel Performance Assessment and if deemed necessary may make recommendations for changes to the statements made in the draft response to the Council.	No independent Panel Performance Assessment scheduled in 2024/25.						
X (i)	To review and assess the Council's ability to deal with complaints effectively.			✓			✓	
X (ii)	To make reports and recommendations in relation to the Council's ability to deal with complaints effectively.			✓			✓	

2024/25 Self-assessment of good practice (based on the CIPFA Guidance 2022)

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
Audit committee purpose and governance						
1	Does the authority have a dedicated audit committee that is not combined with other functions (e.g. standards, ethics, scrutiny)?					✓
2	Does the audit committee report directly to the governing body i.e. Full Council?					✓
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?					✓
8	Does the committee publish an annual report in accordance with the 2022 guidance, including:					
	• compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022					✓

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
	<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:					
	• 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
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?					✓

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
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?					✓
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?					✓

2023/24 Self-assessment of good practice (based on the CIPFA Guidance 2022)

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
Audit committee purpose and governance						
1	Does the authority have a dedicated audit committee that is not combined with other functions (e.g. standards, ethics, scrutiny)?					✓
2	Does the audit committee report directly to the governing body i.e. Full Council?					✓
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?					✓
8	Does the committee publish an annual report in accordance with the 2022 guidance, including:					
	• compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022					✓

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
	<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:					
	• 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
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?					✓

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
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?					✓
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?					✓