

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE PANEL.

Minutes of a hybrid webcast meeting on 4 June 2025 at 10.00 a.m.

Present in
County Hall: Councillors Julie Dettbarn (Chair), Brian McGinley, Bob Pollock,
Cameron Ramsay and George Weir.

Present
Remotely: Councillor Mary Kilpatrick.

Apologies: Councillors Kenneth Bell and Alan Lamont.

Attending in
County Hall: T. Baulk, Chief Financial Officer; K. Anderson, Assistant Director –
Corporate Policy, Strategy and Performance; W. Carlaw, Service Lead -
Democratic Governance; C. McGhee, Chief Internal Auditor; D. Urquhart,
Senior Investigations Officer - Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud; J.
Chapman, Committee Services Officer; and E. Moore, Clerical Assistant.

Attending
Remotely: M. Newall, Chief Executive; C. Caves, Chief Governance Officer; L. Reid,
Assistant Director – Transformation, T Simpson, Service Lead – Corporate
Accounting.

Opening Remarks.

The Chair

- (1) welcomed everyone to the meeting;
- (2) outlined the procedures for conducting this meeting and advised that this meeting would be broadcast live; and
- (3) welcomed Councillor Pollock to his first meeting and thanked Councillor Cullen for his contribution to the Panel.

1. Sederunt and Declarations of Interest.

The Chair called the Sederunt for the meeting and having called the roll, confirmed that there were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. Call-ins from Cabinet.

The Panel noted that there were no call-ins from Cabinet of 28 May 2025.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting of 7 May 2025 ([issued](#)) were submitted and approved.

4. Action Log and Work Programme.

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme for this Panel ([issued](#)).

The Chief Financial Officer advised there were no actions outstanding.

The Panel

Decided: to note the current status of the Action Log and Work Programme.

5. Audit and Governance Panel – 2024/25 Annual Report

There was submitted a joint report ([issued](#)) of 27 May 2025 by the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Governance Officer providing the Panel with the Audit and Governance Panel annual report for 2024/25.

A Member of the Panel enquired if it would be possible to have a comparison with East and North Ayrshire Councils in respect of member attendance at Scrutiny Panels. The Service Lead - Democratic Governance advised that it could be difficult to obtain a direct comparison but would endeavour to obtain the information.

A Member of the Panel gave their views on Panel attendance and suggested that an approach be taken to speak to Members who may be encountering difficulties in attending. The Chief Financial Officer advised that Members' attendance was already monitored but he would have a discussion with the Chief Executive about how attendance monitoring could be examined further.

A Member of the Panel enquired as to what level was seen as critical in respect of Panel attendance. The Chief Financial Officer advised that there was a quorum in place in respect of Council Standing Orders. He thereafter gave his view that attendance at 75 per cent and above allowed for a good discussion to take place, and that the Panel was more than meeting this. He advised that he was happy to take this forward as part of the annual self-assessment discussion.

A Member of the Panel asked for further background information in respect of 25% of Panel Members disagreeing with quality of Panel reports. The Chief Financial Officer advised that he did not have that information available at this present time but confirmed the information was available.

A Member of the Panel made general comments about the nature of reports across the year and commended officers' attitude and progress towards these reports.

A Member of the Panel stated that it was not a criticism when they requested more information with regards to the 25% of Members disagreeing with the quality of reports and that they were simply surprised by the high figure and stated that they did not have a problem with quality of the reports. The Chief Financial Officer advised that it would be worth investigating with the particular members the issues they had with regards to the quality of the reports.

A Member of the Panel gave their views on the report and re-iterated the need to review Panel member attendance.

The Panel

Decided:

- (1) to consider the Audit and Governance Panel annual report for 2024/25 (attached as [Appendix 1](#)); and
- (2) to remit the report to Council on 26 June 2025 for consideration.

6. Best Value Action Plan – Progress Update

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 27 May 2025 by the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Education updating Members on the progress toward delivering the Council's Best Value Action Plan.

Having heard from a Panel Member and having heard the Assistant Director – Corporate Policy, Strategy and Performance, it was noted that the points raised would be reviewed for the next update.

Having heard from a Panel Member, the Assistant Director – Corporate Policy, Strategy and Performance and The Chief Executive it was confirmed that when improvements were ready to be delivered, they would be brought forward and implemented.

A Member of the Panel commented that it was encouraging to see everything progressing well and on track.

The Panel, having scrutinised the contents of the Best Value Action Plan update report;

Decided: to consider the progress through the narrative set out within Appendix 1.

7. Corporate Fraud – Activity Report and 2023/2024 National Fraud Initiative Update

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 27 May 2025 by the Chief Internal Auditor advising Members of the Corporate Fraud Team's (CFT) activity for the year to 31 March 2025 and providing an update on the 2024/25 National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise to date.

A Member of the Panel requested clarification on the criteria that was used to determine what complaints were passed onto other Council services. The Senior Investigations Officer - Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud advised that his team would only get involved if it was an issue that directly affected an investigation and that the appropriate service area had the ability to deal with complaints regarding their own service.

A Member of the Panel gave his views in respect of the National Fraud Initiative 2024/25 and wondered whether a more strategic look at the processing of applications could take place in order for potential fraud to be dealt with as part of the approval process. The Senior Investigations Officer - Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud detailed the reasoning behind the data matches and provided examples.

A Member of the Panel asked for clarification about what was meant by total financial outcomes. The Senior Investigations Officer - Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud gave his view on this and the Chief Internal Officer advised that the financial outcomes represent amounts that were identified that were due to be recovered by the Council and had been rebilled to Council residents, they did not necessarily represent the

amounts actually recovered at the date of the report but the amount due to be recovered.

Having heard from a Panel Member and having heard from The Senior Investigations Officer - Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud, it was established that the small business bonus scheme would not need to be re-applied for and would continue for those eligible accordingly.

The Panel

Decided:

- (1) to consider the CFT activity for the year to 31 March 2025; and
- (2) to note the update on the 2024/25 NFI exercise.

8. The Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) in the UK Public Sector

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 27 May 2025 by the Chief Internal Auditor advising of the requirements of the new Global Internal Audit Standard (GIAS), the Application Note: GIAS in the UK Public Sector and the CIPFA Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in Local Government.

A Member of the Panel asked if it would be beneficial to Members if a briefing was arranged to provide them with a better understanding of the new standards before the report to Panel in February 2026. The Chief Internal Auditor advised that she had been provided a checklist by the Institute of Internal Auditors which could be presented and explained to Members. The Chief Financial Officer added that the Panel would undertake a self-assessment process in September 2025, and these points could be addressed at that time.

A Member of the Panel enquired as to the reasoning for the new requirements. The Chief Internal Officer stated that it was part of a periodic update.

Having heard from a Member of the Panel and from the Chief Internal Auditor it was established that the target date for compliance was the start of the new financial year, April 2026.

The Panel

Decided: to note the new requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards, the Application Note; GIAS in the UK Public Sector and the CIPFA Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in Local Government and that the results of the self-assessment against conformance with the new standards would be reported to this Panel in February 2026.

The meeting ended at 11:01 a.m.