

Audit, Risk and Governance Committee
Meeting to be held on Monday, 29 January 2024

Electoral Division affected:
N/A;

Governance Risk and Resilience Framework Review
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Brief Summary

This report sets out the findings from the council's assessment of governance risks against the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's Governance Risk and Resilience Framework.

Recommendation

The Audit, Risk and Governance Committee is asked to:

- i) Provide feedback on the report;
- ii) Agree the actions set out at Appendix 'A'; and
- iii) Agree that the Governance Risk and Resilience Framework review exercise is conducted again in late 2025 or early 2026, following the next county council elections.

Detail

The council is conducting a broad governance review considering learning from various public interest reports which focus on failures in governance at other local authorities. This review includes the initial step of conducting a resilience exercise the outcome of which is the subject of this report. This exercise will in turn help inform the holistic review of the council's Constitution and its approach to shareholder governance of council companies, both of which are already in progress and form part of the broader governance review being led by the Monitoring Officer.

This initial exercise was performed using the risk and resilience framework developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), a social purpose consultancy that seeks to promote good governance, scrutiny and accountability in the public and private sector, including periodic review of governance practice. The



framework sets out seven characteristics to help understand and manage governance risk:

1. Ownership of governance and its associated systems;
2. Understanding the unique role that politics plays in governance in local government;
3. Future planning, and insight into what the future might hold for the area or for the council as an institution, and the approach to risk;
4. Mutual roles in support of robust and effective decision-making and oversight, including communication and accountability;
5. Internal candour and reflection; the need to face up to unpleasant realities and to listen to dissenting voices;
6. Integration into governance arrangements an understanding of partnership working and partnerships, and the local community and its needs; and
7. Scrutiny by councillors, and supervision and accountability overall.

Purpose

The aim of this work was to review how the council's governance works in practice, and to identify any potential risks and improvement actions. The findings will contribute to the current review of the Constitution, and the production of a robust Annual Governance Statement. Ensuring that we have a strong governance culture is a priority for all officers and members. This review was undertaken independently by the council's Internal Audit Service at the request of the council's Monitoring Officer to provide evidence of areas of governance strength and identify areas requiring continuous improvement.

Methodology

Views of selected members and senior managers were sought on the council's governance arrangements, using a questionnaire based on the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's framework checklist. Responses were followed up in meetings with members and directorate leadership teams. Respondents scored the council's governance arrangements against the seven characteristics and related behaviours and commented on good practice and areas for improvement.

Questionnaires were sent to 20 Executive Directors and Directors and 17 responses were received. Questionnaires were sent to 18 members and 10 responses were received.

This report focuses on areas where a need for improvement was identified. It should be borne in mind that the findings are based on the views and opinions of the responding officers and members and have not been subject to audit testing.



Summary

Overall, the responses from officers and members were positive with a significant majority either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the seven characteristics of good governance.

Where discussions and feedback from officers and members highlighted areas for continuous improvement these are highlighted in the Action Plan provided at Appendix 'A'.

The lowest scoring governance characteristic for officers (57%) and members (60%) was: internal candour and reflection; the need to face up to unpleasant realities and to listen to dissenting voices. This is therefore highlighted as an area for continuous improvement. This is also an important learning from other council's public interest reports. Further data on this issue will be collected as part of the staff survey.

Progressing the recommended actions within the timeframes presented will ensure good governance remains a priority across the Council. Repeating the CfGS Risk and Resilience review is recommended in the autumn of 2025 or spring of 2026, following the next elections as the exercise represents the opinions of respondents at a given point in time.

Appendices

Appendix	Title
Appendix 'A'	Action Plan

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

No significant risks have been identified.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A



