
GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE: 25 JANUARY 2022

**UPDATE ON THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNANCE
AND AUDIT COMMITTEE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

AGENDA ITEM: 10.2

REPORT OF THE AUDIT MANAGER

Reason for this Report

1. This report has been prepared in relation to the Governance and Audit Committee's responsibility to:
 - Work in synergy with the five Scrutiny Committees of the Council and liaise with other Council Committees as and when appropriate to avoid duplication in work programmes.
 - Raise the profile of probity generally within the Council and to report on matters of concern to the individual Cabinet Member, relevant Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or to Council as necessary and appropriate.
 - Review the Council's draft annual Self-Assessment Report in respect of the financial year 2021/22 and each financial year thereafter, and make any appropriate recommendations for changes.
 - Consider the Panel Performance Assessment Report when received, review the Council's draft response to the Panel Performance Assessment Report, and make any appropriate recommendations for changes
2. The report provides details of recent engagement between the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee and the Chairs of the Council's Scrutiny Committees, and a proposal for working together in partnership for which Committee approval is sought.

Background

3. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places performance responsibilities on the Governance and Audit Committee. The Committee is to review and make recommendations on the Annual Wellbeing report (the Council's statutory self-assessment report) each year and the Panel Performance Assessment Report to include the Council's draft response, required at least once during an electoral cycle. The focus of these reviews relates to high level issues around securing performance requirements using the governance

infrastructure of the Council, rather than on service area performance issues dealt with by Scrutiny Committees.

4. The Council's Scrutiny Committees are responsible for scrutinising specific performance issues within the remit of their terms of reference and executive decision making. The work of Scrutiny Committees as they relate to performance issues will feed into the Annual Wellbeing report, which then must be shared with the Governance and Audit Committee.
5. The above responsibilities and the interplay between Governance and Audit and Scrutiny Committees have been considered in Committee meetings, and via the All-Wales Governance and Audit Committee Chair's Network. The Chair's Network Meetings have been attended and contributed to by peers across Welsh Local Authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Audit Wales.
6. On 20 July 2021, in considering performance responsibilities, wider roles and the benefits of engaging as appropriate with Scrutiny Committees on relevant matters of business, the Governance and Audit Committee Chairperson advised Members of his intention to engage with the Chairs of the Council's five Scrutiny Committees in order to develop and maintain a partnership working arrangement.
7. The following paragraphs provide an outline of the intentions as agreed by all in attendance at a subsequent meeting held with the Chairs of Scrutiny Committees at the Scrutiny Chairs' Liaison Forum on 6 December 2021.

Issues

8. The Scrutiny Chairs' Liaison Forum meeting in December 2021 was attended by Committee Chairpersons, the Head of Democratic Services, Audit Manager, OM Performance and Policy and Principal Scrutiny Officers. The meeting was constructive, with a shared appetite communicated across Committees for working together in partnership.
9. A number of steps were agreed in the above meeting, centred on principles of sharing and informing the respective Committees of Committee work programmes, enquiries and outcomes.
10. The following process was agreed, which is intended to be substantially coordinated by the Audit Manager for the Governance and Audit Committee and the respective Principal Scrutiny Officer for each Scrutiny Committee. The Head of Democratic Services will oversee Scrutiny arrangements, and the OM Performance and Policy will provide support where appropriate.
 - A Liaison Plan will be developed for the current year and reviewed at the end of the reporting period
 - All Scrutiny Committee letters will be shared with the Audit Manager who will identify and discuss issues relevant to the Committees' role with the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee
 - The Audit Manager will share Governance and Audit Committee letters with relevant Principal Scrutiny Officers for Scrutiny Committee information
 - Committee Work Programmes and updates will be shared and considered by the Lead officer and respective Committee Chairperson for awareness and insight
 - The Chairs will hold a meeting twice a year (intended as July and December) – this will coincide with the timing of year-end and mid-year performance reports and reviews and would provide a forum for relevant discussions

- The Chairs may hold individual discussions and send relevant correspondence as and when required in respect of Committee business / enquiries

11. The Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee and Audit Manager will provide relevant updates to Committee on the working relationship between the Governance and Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committees as appropriate.

Legal Implications

12. There are no direct legal implications from this report.

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. That the Governance and Audit Committee considers and approves the process as set out in paragraph 10 above.

Chris Pyke
Audit Manager