

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Governance and Audit Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 16th April, 2026 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Andrew Blackmore, (Chair)
County Councillor Tony Easson, (Vice Chair)

Lay Members: Colin Prosser, Rhodri Guest,

County Councillors: Sara Burch, John Crook, David Jones,
Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy and Peter Strong

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Jan Furtek	Chief Internal Auditor
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer
Richard Jones	Performance and Data Insight Manager
Jonathan Davies	Head of Finance/Section 151
Colin Davies	Audit Wales Officer
Steve Wyndham	Audit Wales Officer
	Audit Wales Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor Ann Webb; Siwan Davies

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public Open Forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

3. To note the Action List from the previous meeting.

The Committee considered the action list.

- Commissioning Framework – One action remained open and was scheduled to return to the Committee on 4 June 2026.

The Performance & Data Insight Manager advised that work on the framework was ongoing, led by the Strategic Procurement Team in collaboration with Ardal. It was likely that the anticipated date would require adjustment, which would be reflected in the action plan and work programme outside the meeting.

4. Audit Wales - Monmouthshire County Council's Statutory Accounts: Delivery Plan and Next Steps

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Audit Wales presented a letter issued by the Auditor General to Welsh local government bodies concerning progress on statutory accounts.

The officer outlined the context, noting sector-wide delays since the pandemic, the earlier audit deadline (now end of September), and the need for continued collaboration. It was confirmed that the Council remained in a strong position, with timely and good-quality draft accounts.

Members queried the Council's capacity to meet shortened deadlines. The Head of Finance confirmed that draft accounts had consistently met deadlines, but acknowledged increased challenge in the audit completion phase, highlighting the importance of earlier engagement and corporate ownership of the process.

The Chief Officer for Resources emphasised the importance of coordinated planning, strong liaison with Audit Wales, and careful resource management, particularly over the summer period. He also drew attention to sector-wide challenges in specialist capacity and the potential role of technology and data analytics.

Members commended the Finance Team for the quality and timeliness of accounts.

RESOLVED:

That the report and discussion be noted.

5. Audit Wales Audit Plan 2026-27

Audit Wales presented the Annual Audit Plan. The officer outlined the scope of the financial audit, materiality levels (£3.9m overall; lower thresholds for senior officer remuneration and related party transactions), and key audit risks, including pensions, asset valuations, and the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

Concerns were raised regarding the increase in audit fees, and the Committee was advised that the fee reflected inflationary pressures, was an estimate based on expected work, and remained below the Welsh local authority average.

The Committee received detail of the performance audit elements, including:

- A cyber security review
- One service-based review
- One follow-up review of previous audit work

Council officers would be consulted on scope where appropriate, while Audit Wales retained discretion over final audit focus.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit Plan for 2026/27 be noted.

6. Implementing Audit Wales recommendations to improve the Council's digital approach

Audit Wales reported on follow-up work reviewing implementation of prior digital strategy recommendations and the Council's arrangements for tracking audit recommendations.

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It was confirmed that:

- The Council had approved its Digital and Data Strategy 2024–2027 on time.
- Robust monitoring and governance arrangements were in place.
- Member and senior officer oversight of audit recommendations was effective.

Members welcomed the positive findings.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7. Self-assessment of performance managements arrangements report

Officers presented the self-assessment of performance management arrangements.

Key points included:

- Clear alignment between wellbeing objectives and the performance management framework.
- Revised service business plan templates and associated training under development.
- Improved use of dashboards and performance data.
- Strengthened strategic risk management arrangements.
- External assurance from Estyn and the Panel Performance Assessment.

Members raised observations regarding the timeliness and consistency of service business plans. Officers acknowledged historic issues and outlined how new training systems would support improvement.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8. Code of Corporate Governance

The Chief Internal Auditor presented the updated Code of Corporate Governance.

It was explained that:

- The Code reflects CIPFA/SOLACE principles.
- Core governance principles remain unchanged.
- The update refreshes references, responsibilities and review mechanisms.
- The Code underpins the Annual Governance Statement and forms part of the Constitution.

Officers clarified relationships between the Code, governance framework and Constitution, and emphasised the need to increase accessibility and awareness among Members and staff.

RESOLVED:

That the updated Code of Corporate Governance be endorsed and recommended to Full Council for approval and adoption.

9. Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Plan

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

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10. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th February 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

11. Dates of Future Meetings:

The schedule of future meeting dates was noted.

Meeting ended at 15:15pm