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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Governance and Audit Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 28th November, 2024 at 2.00
pm

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

Lay Members: Colin Prosser, Martin Veale, Rhodri Guest,

County Councillors: Sara Burch, John Crook, David Jones,
Phil Murphy, Peter Strong and Ann Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Annette Evans	Customer Relations Manager
Peter Davies	Acting Chief Executive
Jan Furtek	Acting Chief Internal Auditor
Jane Rodgers	Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Richard Jones	Performance and Data Insight Manager
Jonathan Davies	Head of Finance
Rachel Freitag	Audit Wales Officer
Hannah Carter	Performance Analyst
Daniel Francis	Accountant
Matthew Gatehouse	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor Malcolm Lane

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

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

The Action List from the previous meeting was noted.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=mmyXnp7iDqPuFI7T&t=46>

1. Active Travel: Relevant scrutiny committee to review the success of Active Travel schemes/ the expectations and aspirations of local residents: CLOSED

4. 2024/25 Treasury Report

The Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer presented the 2024/25 Treasury Report. Members were invited to make comments and ask questions.

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The Governance & Audit committee reviewed the results of treasury management activities and the performance achieved in quarter 2 as part of their delegated responsibility to provide scrutiny of treasury policy, strategy and activity on behalf of Council.

ACTION: The Head of Finance was requested to circulate details of the 3 charters that organisations can voluntarily sign up for to ensure that all are meeting minimum level of Environmental, Social and Governance responsibility.

The report was noted.

5. 2023/24 MCC Statement of Accounts (Final)

Items 6 and 7 were considered together. The Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer presented the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts (Final). In doing so, the work of the Finance Team was recognised, also the co-operation between the Team and Audit Wales. Following presentation of the reports, Members were invited to ask questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=IZU4hW3lnQSk9bEF&t=878>

The report recommendations were agreed, as follows:

- 1.1. The committee noted that the accounts have been amended since the draft version was published to reflect the outcomes of the external audit process, as detailed within the Audit Wales ISA 260 Audit of Accounts Report.
- 1.2. The Governance and Audit committee approved the final audited Monmouthshire County Council Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.

6. Audit of Accounts report - Audit Wales

This item was considered at the same time as the previous item.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=IZU4hW3lnQSk9bEF&t=878>

7. Effectiveness of Strategic Risk Management Framework and summary of wider arrangements

The Performance and Data Insight Manager and Performance Analyst presented a report on the Effectiveness of the Strategic Risk management Framework and summary of wider arrangements. Following presentation of the report, Members were invited to ask questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=aiWkOW7dNZzFvRCm&t=1632>

As per the report recommendations, Members used the assessment to seek assurance about the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements.

8. Whole Authority Annual Complaints Report

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The Customer Relations Manager and Chief Officer, People, Performance and Partnerships presented the Whole Authority Annual Complaints Report. Following the report, Members were invited to comment and ask questions.

https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=7q41_FW4Svr622Ng&t=2639

As per the report recommendations, it was agreed that the committee used the report, which covers the 12 month period up to 31 March 2024, to seek assurance about the effectiveness of the authority's processes for dealing with complaints and compliments and makes recommendations where it identifies any shortcomings.

9. The Ombudsman's Annual Letter

The Customer Services Manager presented the Ombudsman's Annual Letter. Following presentation of the report, Committee Members were invited to ask questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=0-s2lxJqYbo498nf&t=3835>

As in the report recommendations the Governance & Audit Committee:

1. Noted the content of the Public Sector Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) annual letter (Appendix 1) and agreed to the PSOW of their considerations and any proposed actions. The PSOW is aware that due to the scheduling of meetings there would be a delay in responding to them.
2. Agreed that the authority continues to engage with the PSOW complaints standards work, access training for staff and provide the PSOW with complaints data. We have also fully implemented the PSOW's model complaints policy.

10. CPR Exemptions - 6 monthly update to 30th September 2024

The Acting Chief Internal Auditor presented the report on CPR Exemptions – 6 monthly update to 30th September 2024. Following presentation of the report, Members were invited to ask questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=IRtdl87ppg8FEEOV&t=4245/>

As contained in the report recommendations:

1. The Governance and Audit Committee accepted and acknowledged the justifications for the exemptions provided by operational officers.
2. If the justifications are not accepted, then consideration should be given to calling in the respective operational officer and their respective Head of Service to further account for the reasons why they could not comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules at the time of the procurement.
3. That the Governance and Audit Committee receive an updated report in 6 month's time.

11. Internal Audit Quarterly Progress Report (Q2)

The Acting Chief Internal Auditor presented the Internal Audit Quarterly Progress Report (Q2). The Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health also attended the meeting to provide

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an update on progress with the audit report for Mardy Park Resource Centre/Residential and Severn View. Following presentation of the report, Members were invited to ask questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=ol4Q54bp8GXARXp9&t=4926>

As in the report recommendations

1. The Committee considered and noted the audit opinions issued.
2. The Committee noted the progress made by the Section towards meeting the 2024/25 Operational Audit Plan and the Section's performance indicators at the 6 month stage of the financial year which are currently ahead of the profiled target.

12. Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Plan

The Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Plan was noted.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=PSLrd5TvSmHyOhap&t=6532>

13. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17th October 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Fh0p0Tql6a4?si=HO1A2FA0ixOCGdoR&t=6526>

14. Date of Next Meeting:

16th January 2025 at 2.00pm

Meeting ended at 3.50 pm