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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, 4th June, 2026 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillors: Sara Burch, John Crook, Tony Easson, David Jones, Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy, Peter Strong and Ann Webb

Lay Members: Andrew Blackmore (Chair), Colin Prosser, Rhodri Guest

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Jan Furtek	Chief Internal Auditor
Charlotte Owen	Audit Wales Officer
Richard Jones	Performance and Data Insight Manager
Jonathan Davies	Head of Finance/Section 151
Steve Wyndham	Audit Wales Officer
Daniel Francis	Finance Business Partner Corporate

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors

1. To elect a Chair for 2026/2027

Andrew Blackmore was elected as Chair for the year 2026/2027.

2. To appoint a Vice Chair for 2026/2027

County Councillor Tony Easson was appointed as Vice Chair for the year 2026/2027.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Public Open Forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

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

Noted.

6. Internal Audit Annual Report 2025/26

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The Chief Internal Auditor presented the report for consideration.

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- Overall opinion: reasonable assurance on internal controls.
- Majority of recommendations implemented or partially implemented (93%).
- Limited assurance in:
 - Employee expenses (repeat findings)
 - Travel and mileage
 - King Henry VII School (significant control weaknesses and projected deficit)
 - Additional controls and verification processes introduced for expenses.
- Follow-up audits planned within 6–12 months.
- King Henry VII School representatives to be invited to a future meeting.
- No immediate further call-in for expenses; progress will be monitored.

The Committee resolved to endorse the Annual Report.

7. Progress Report for Quarter 4 (2025/26) & Quarter 2 Rolling Plan (2026/27)

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The report was presented for the Committee to consider the adequacy of the internal control environment within the Council based on the outcomes of audit reviews and subsequent conclusions issued to the end of the 2025/26 financial year (31st March 2026). Also, to consider and approve the audit reviews to be undertaken during the second quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendations.

8. 2025/26 Treasury Outturn report

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The report was presented for the Committee to discharge its delegated role in scrutinising treasury management activity, including performance against the approved strategy and compliance with prudential limits and indicators.

- Activities complied with approved strategy and limits.
- Stable performance despite late-year geopolitical volatility.
- Investment performance remained positive with improving asset values.

The Committee noted and accepted the report.

9. Whistleblowing Annual Report

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The HR Manager presented the report to provide the Governance and Audit Committee with information in relation to whistleblowing practices and the number of whistleblowing cases in Monmouthshire County Council from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

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- Members raised concerns that while the policy is accessible, there is insufficient active promotion to ensure staff awareness.
- Officers confirmed that policies are available via the PageTiger platform and promoted when updated.
- It was agreed to review whether further targeted promotion of the whistleblowing policy is needed.
- Assurance was requested that awareness activity is proactive rather than relying on low case numbers as evidence of effectiveness.
- Officers noted that current case numbers are comparable with other local authorities.
- PageTiger enables wider access to policies, including for frontline staff without desk-based roles.
- Further promotion methods (e.g. QR codes, printed materials, supervisor distribution) will be explored.
- Members emphasised the importance of ensuring all staff, including those not based in central offices, receive key communications.
- It was suggested that updates to the whistleblowing policy, code of conduct, and governance communications could be combined into a coordinated communication exercise.

The Committee resolved to note the information and were assured of the effectiveness of Monmouthshire County Council's whistleblowing practices, and supports the review of the current Whistleblowing Policy and Employee Code of Conduct.

10. Effectiveness of Strategic Risk Management Framework

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The report was presented to provide the Committee with an assessment of the implementation of the council's strategic risk management framework which is an integral part of the authority's corporate governance arrangements. Members were provided with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.

- Continued strengthening of risk management arrangements noted.
- Improvements include:
 - Revised risk register structure
 - Risk appetite framework
 - Directorate-level risk registers
 - Risk radar for emerging risks
- Global supply chain disruption linked to geopolitical instability (including Iran conflict).
- Monitoring arrangements in place across finance, emergency planning and leadership structures.
- New performance and risk management training to be rolled out.

The Committee resolved that they were satisfied with effectiveness of risk management arrangements.

11. Panel Performance Assessment - To receive and review the authority's draft response to recommendations of the panel performance assessment report

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The Chief Officer for People, Performance and Partnerships presented the report to provide Governance and Audit Committee with the Panel Performance Assessment report and the authority's draft response to the recommendations in line with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The report sought to enable the committee to review the appropriateness of the draft and to make recommendations for changes to the response, where required.

- The council was assessed as a well-run organisation with strong potential.
- Three key recommendations:
 1. Prioritise major opportunities for better outcomes and efficiency.
 2. Strengthen community resilience and shared understanding.
 3. Improve workforce and succession planning.
- No recommendations were unexpected; they align with existing priorities.
- Members stressed the need to avoid complacency despite positive findings.
- Concerns were raised about ongoing frustrations from residents and councillors regarding communication and responsiveness.
- "Community resilience" includes building community capacity, networks, and reducing reliance on formal services.
- FPOP (For Purpose On Purpose) programme supports prioritisation and resource allocation across projects.
- The Committee requested visibility of progress, particularly via existing performance frameworks.

The Committee resolved to accept that the council's response to the Panel Performance Assessment's recommendations was appropriate.

12. Annual report of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Data Protection Act (DPA) Breaches, Data Subject Access Requests (DSARs)

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The Head of Info Technology and Security presented the report is to inform the Committee how the Council manages its legal responsibilities towards the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Data Protection Act (DPA). These responsibilities are met wholly by the actions of staff and the policies and procedures that are in place. The report also presented relevant performance statistics for the committee to evaluate.

- Strong performance in FOI handling was noted despite increasing volumes and complexity.
- Internal reviews have significantly increased and are resource intensive.
- Data breaches remain low relative to overall activity; most relate to email errors.
- Increased reporting reflects a positive culture of openness and early reporting.
- Subject Access Requests (SARs) have increased significantly, particularly from government agencies.
- AI use is contributing to increased complexity and volume of requests.
- Cyber security risks and preparedness were raised; officers confirmed robust arrangements are in place and a detailed report will follow in a closed session.
- Mandatory data protection training uptake is improving, supported by reminders and management oversight.
- AI is expected to increase resource pressures but may also improve efficiency.
- Members reviewed arrangements and were satisfied with their adequacy and effectiveness.

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- Committee requested early notification if resource pressures impact service quality.

The Committee resolved to accept the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements.

13. Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Plan

Noted.

14. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2026 were accepted as an accurate record.

15. Date of Next Meeting - 23rd July 2026

Noted.

Meeting ended at 16:00PM

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