

June 24th, 2024

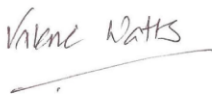
Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend a Meeting of the

Mid and East Antrim Audit & Scrutiny Committee

to be held on **Thursday, 27th June 2024 at 6:30 pm** in **Council Chamber,
The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena.**

Yours sincerely



Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Agenda

1 NOTICE OF MEETING

2 APOLOGIES

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

4 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION

4.1 Terms of Reference – circulated

[Terms of Reference A&S.pdf](#)

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4.2 Forward Plan for Audit & Scrutiny Committee - circulated

[Forward Plan.pdf](#)

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[Appendix 1 A&S Forward Plan.pdf](#)

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5 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

6 TABLED QUESTIONS

Closed Committee - In accordance with Council policy, representatives of the Press will not be in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION - CLOSED COMMITTEE

7.1 Procurement Update - circulated

[Procurement Update.pdf](#)

Not included

7.2 Policies - circulated

- Raising Concerns Policy

- Fraud Policy

- Fraud Response Plan

[New Policies.pdf](#)

Not included

📄 *Appendix 1 Raising Concerns Policy.pdf*

Not included

📄 *Appendix 2 Fraud Policy.pdf*

Not included

📄 *Appendix 3 Fraud Response Plan.pdf*

Not included

7.3 VAT Accounting Update - to follow

7.4 2023/2024 Financial Statements (Unaudited) - to follow

8 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL - CLOSED COMMITTEE

Open Committee

Council/Committee:	Audit and Scrutiny
Date:	27 June 2024
Report Title:	Terms of Reference for Audit and Scrutiny Committee
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Laureen Donnan, Interim Director of Corporate Services
Approver:	Valerie Watts, Interim Chief Executive

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report outlines the areas of business that fall within the remit of this Committee. The responsibilities of the Audit committee are well-defined, with clear delegations for the approval of the annual accounts. It is important to highlight however that Members have a clear responsibility to integrate strategy and service delivery within the scope of the Scrutiny Committee's remit. Additionally, Members contribute to achieving the priority outcomes set forth in the 2024 - 2028 Corporate Plan. It is therefore proposed that where scrutiny of performance and allocation of resources is required this will be reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2. This is in line with the decisions taken at Council on 13 May 2024 with regards to good governance changes and the Scheme of Delegation. The focus of this is to ensure that Council and Committees, through all Members, can drive the strategic direction, resource allocation against priorities and compliance where needed, but enabling officers to deliver services on a day-to-day basis in a streamlined and seamless way.
- 1.3. Whilst the distinct functions of Audit and Scrutiny sit within the remit of a single Committee, it is important to acknowledge however they are two committees with two distinct areas of responsibility. It is important to acknowledge when each Committee is in operation and define the role clearly.

2. Background

- 2.1. The committee's purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements.
- 2.2. The following are the service areas that fall within the remit of the Audit and Scrutiny committee:
 - 2.2.1. Key Functions (Audit)
 - Annual Governance Statement

- Annual sign off for accounts
- To consider the Report to those charged with governance
- Value for Money (VFM) approach
- Risk management and assurance, internal controls
- Fraud, Counter Fraud, Raising Concerns
- Oversight of the Internal Audit provision
- Review of the internal audit reviews and actions.

2.2.2. Key Service Areas (Audit)

- Internal Audit
- Compliance

2.2.3. Current delegated Powers (Audit)

- Writing off a loss of money (including bad debts) and loss of stores, obsolete equipment and materials in accordance with Financial Management Policy to the values determined by Council policy (any individual amount in excess of £3,000).
- Approving the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- Approving (but not directing) the internal audit strategy and annual plan and for receiving assurance over the effectiveness of systems, risk management and internal control.

2.2.4. Key Functions (Scrutiny)

- Deep dive scrutiny reviews into specific council services
- Scrutiny of identified service areas prior to decision making

2.2.5. Key Service Areas (Scrutiny)

- All services may fall within this remit.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The role of the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee combines two separate functions into one Committee, though the meeting takes effect in two distinct parts.
- 3.2. With regards to the Audit role which is set in legislation and has specific responsibilities which supports important governance assurance, the following is an outline of responsibilities:
 - Approve, review, and monitor the Internal Audit Strategy.
 - To approve the Internal Audit Charter
 - Consider specific Internal Audit reports.
 - Consider any recommendations from reports on investigation of fraud
 - Monitor the actions taken in response to Internal Audit recommendations.

- Receive the annual report from the Audit provider (internal) outlining Internal Audit activity during the year and an opinion on the level of assurance as to the Council's corporate governance, risk management and internal control arrangements.
- To consider any impairments to the independence or objectivity of internal audit and to approve any safeguards to limit such impairments.
- Consider specific reports from the external Auditor and other inspection/assurance agencies.
- Monitor the actions taken in response to recommendations of external bodies.
- Consider the external Auditor's Annual Letter, relevant reports and the 'Report to Those Charged with Governance.'
- Consider the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements, the control environment, and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements.
- Write off any debt in excess of £3,000 where it is recommended to do so
- Monitor the effective development and operation of risk management strategies and policies, reviewing the Corporate Risk Register and associated arrangements and action plans.
- Approve the Annual Accounts.
- To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control arrangements.

With regards to the scrutiny role, this is an important component of ensuring that Mid and East Antrim Council is making decisions that are open, transparent, and following the values and behaviours expected in local government decision making. It should be seen and operate as a critical friend to the decision making in the interests of improving services for our residents and communities. Based on both planned and responsive work the following role therefore follows:

- A programme of scrutiny reviews to consider service delivery against good practice and expected performance (2 or 3 per year), set out at the start of each municipal year.
- Responding to issues of challenge where formal or significant but informal – requiring relevant examination of issues and reporting with recommendations.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Committees of Council can carry out decision making on behalf of Council to ensure the business of Council is transacted in a timely and efficient manner.
- 4.2. This report is clarifying that this Committee has delegated authority to make and implement decisions on the following, after which the decisions are notified to Council:
 - Writing off any loss of money (including bad debts) and loss of stores and obsolete equipment and materials in accordance with Financial Management Policy up to the values determined by Council policy (any individual amount in excess of £3,000)
 - approving the Annual Statement of Accounts
 - approving (but not directing) the internal audit strategy and annual plan and for receiving assurance over the effectiveness of systems of governance, risk management and internal control.
- 4.3. Aside from the delegations listed in 4.2 above this Committee, will make recommendations to Council, which are then approved, adopted, and ratified by Council and become a decision of Council.
- 4.4. Additional powers can be delegated to this Committee to make decisions rather than recommendations only, but these must be proposed and agreed by Council.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Elected Members note the remit of the Committee and over the next 12 months, the Committee may seek additional delegations, subject to Council approval.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to approve the key functions and service areas the Committee will consider, and this will operate as the Terms of Reference for the Committee and a further report will be provided if further delegations are required.

7. Appendices/Links

N/A

Council/Committee:	Audit & Scrutiny
Date:	27 June 2024
Report Title:	Forward Plan
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Laureen Donnan, Interim Director Corporate Services
Approver:	Valerie Watts, Interim Clerk & Chief Executive

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is set out the forward planning process for Committees in order that work is planned, and Members can assure that the relevant reports are being scheduled at the appropriate time. Whilst this covering report has the forward plan for 27 June 2024 meeting attached as an appendix, in future, the appendix will be updated and considered as a final agenda item at each future meeting.

2. Background

- 2.1. Forward planning is a good governance tool that supports the work of Council. It enables Members to plan annually for the core business of Council and Committees and ensure that reports are appropriately provided and aligned with priority issues that can at times be seasonally specific.
- 2.2. There are also requirements for compliance through regular reporting to ensure oversight and governance of the performance and financial health of the Council, for which the Council is assessed by external auditors.
- 2.3. At present forward planning is limited. Agendas are largely developed on a meeting-by-meeting basis, through a meeting with the chair just prior to the agenda publication date and are usually determined by a range of officers, at times creating agendas with a plethora of reports as well as some which are significantly lighter. Forward planning supports the development of more balanced agendas across the municipal year.
- 2.4. The approach also supports better officer work planning and senior team oversight about the work plan for the year. A similar forward plan is being developed for SMT to drive and respond to agenda items, leading to a more balanced and planned approach.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The most effective approach to forward planning for Council and Committees is one that sets out the annual programme of meetings which is populated with the annual reports required in specific months, the quarterly reports required and thereafter spreading out the reports that would be expected on an annual cycle at some point through the year. Within each forward plan the next meeting would be set out to include the other reports that have been notified as necessary up to the preceding week of the committee meeting. The remainder of the plan at that stage would be the list of what is known for the remaining meetings for the year.
- 3.2. The forward plan should also indicate the purpose of each report and whether they are presented for decision or for information. As a final agenda item for the meeting Members will be asked to indicate if they are content with the next agenda as set out, including any further items identified at that meeting itself. This therefore becomes the agreed agenda, negating the need for a further agenda setting meeting with the chair, except where an item needs to be added at urgent notice. In this instance, officers will need to seek the agreement of the chair.

4. Proposed Way Forward.

- 4.1. Appendix 1 sets out the first forward plan for Audit & Scrutiny Committee in the municipal year 2024-25. It outlines the agenda for the next Committee meeting with the date as well the start of agendas for future meetings. It lists items that have not yet been programmed in and will be dependent on other factors such as officer capacity and the priorities of Members. As indicated above, each meeting the committee date and list of items will move up and become the next agenda, including items that have been added up to the preceding week.

5. General Considerations/Implications

- 5.1. Financial implications – there are limited financial considerations except for the inclusion of a further report being needed on the agenda.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members:
 - Consider and approve the proposed approach to forward planning
 - Agree the next agenda for the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 06 August (with any additional items being included following agreement with the Chair).



7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1: Audit & Scrutiny Committee – Forward Plan 2024-25

Forward plan – Audit and scrutiny

1. Planned Agenda Items Next meeting (06 August 2024)

Items	Purpose
Risk Management Framework and Strategy	Report for approval
Corporate Risk Register	Report for noting
Going Concern Statement	Report for noting
Annual Insurance Report	Report for noting
Scrutiny Review Report – Sickness Absence	Report for approval

2. Future Meetings

Meeting Date	Item	Purpose
26 Sept 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of accounts 2023-24 – sign off • RTTCWG • Internal Audit Progress Report • Internal audit – Labour Market Partnership Report • Audit Committee Self-Assessment 	Report for approval Report for noting Report for noting Report for noting Report for completion /approval
29 Oct 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTTCWG – management response • Corporate Risk Register • Scrutiny Review report – sickness absence 	Report for approval Report for noting Report for approval
10 Dec 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report • Internal Audit – Policing and Community Safety Report • Procurement – DAC Update 	Report for noting Report for noting Report for noting
21 Jan 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Audit letter • Corporate Risk Register 	Report for noting Report for noting
4 Mar 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report • Internal Audit – Recruitment & Selection Report • Internal Audit – Budgetary Control • Internal Audit – Follow Ups • MEA Internal Annual Plan for next FY • Internal Audit Charter 	Report for noting Report for noting Report for noting Report for noting Report for approval Report for approval
15 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIAO External Audit Strategy • Internal audit annual assurance report • Corporate Risk Register 	Report for noting Report for noting Report for noting
28 May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Governance Statement • Debt Write Off Report • Annual Chair of Audit and Scrutiny Committee Report 	Report for approval Report for noting Report for noting

3. Items to be programmed

Item	Purpose