

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber and Remote Locations on Thursday, 12 December, 2024 at 5:33 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

Alderman S P Porter (Chairperson)

Alderman O Gawith

Councillors D Bassett, N Eaton, A P Ewing, J Gallen, A Martin, M McKeever and R McLernon

PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Mr E Jardine (Independent Member and Vice-Chairperson)

Councillors S Burns, A Givan and S Lowry

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive
Director of Organisation Development and Innovation
Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Director of Regeneration and Growth
Acting Director of Environmental Services
Internal Audit Manager (remote)
Acting Environmental Health Manager
Performance Improvement Officer
IT Officer
Member Services Officers

Northern Ireland Audit Office

Mr R Ross (remote)

Ross Boyd Accountants

Mr B Stewart (remote)

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairperson, Alderman S P Porter, welcomed those present, in particular the external audit representatives – Mr R Ross and Mr B Stewart. He pointed out that, unless the item on the agenda was considered under confidential business, this meeting would be audio recorded. In accordance with the Protocol for Remote Meetings, the Chair asked those attending via zoom to ensure that the meeting could not be seen or heard by any other person at their remote location when confidential business was being considered.

The Chair, Alderman S P Porter, asked that mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting. The Director of Organisation Development and Innovation outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, together with Councillors D Lynch and P Kennedy.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Report from the Performance Improvement Officer

3.1 Compliments and Complaints Report – Quarter 2 2024/25

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of a comparative report taken from the Council's Customer Care System detailing the number of comments, complaints, and compliments in Quarter 2 of 2024/25.

In response to a query raised by Councillor M McKeever, the Performance Improvement Officer agreed to circulate a breakdown to Members, in respect of Quarter 2 Complaints upheld by department.

3.2 Performance Improvement Objectives, Case Studies & Associated KPIs – 2nd Quarter Review (2024/25)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of:

- (a) a quarterly monitoring document (covering July – September 2024) on all projects that demonstrated improvement against the 2024/25 Performance Improvement Objectives, including the relevant Performance Improvement KPIs. An additional section was included detailing some case studies and customer feedback that had demonstrated improvement during Quarter 2; and
- (b) a report from the 'Performance Management System' detailing the Performance Improvement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the period July – September 2024.

Members noted an error at 1.4 of the report should have stated 'Quarter 2' not 'Quarter 4'. Councillor N Eaton put on record her appreciation to officers for the positive outcomes within the report, particularly in respect of the community development toolkit, as positive feedback had been received on how valuable the toolkit had been for community groups.

3.3 Corporate Plan KPIs – Quarter 2 2024/25 All Directorates

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of reports detailing the Quarter 2 2024/25 KPIs for each directorate. During discussion Officers responded to a number of questions from Members in relation to the new financial software system and the draft fleet strategy.

3.4 NI Audit Office – Audit and Assessment Report 2024/25

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of:

- (a) a copy of the NI Audit Office Audit and Assessment Report 2024/25; and
- (b) Certificate of Compliance issued by NIAO.

4. Report by Acting Environmental Health Manager

4.1 Corporate Risk Register

The Acting Environmental Health Manager set out in her report, an update in respect of the quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register. Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, copies of the Corporate Risk Dashboard and Directorate Risk Registers. Members' queries were addressed by Officers, in respect of contractors declaring tax and fleet management.

Prior to considering the confidential business on the agenda, the Chairperson, Alderman S P Porter asked Members if they had any items of any other business. No Members had any matters to raise.

The Acting Director of Environmental Services left the meeting at 6pm, as did the Acting Environmental Health Manager and the Performance Improvement Officer.

5. Confidential Business

The matters contained in the confidential report would be dealt with "In Committee" due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

"In Committee"

It was proposed by Councillor A P Ewing, seconded by Councillor J Gallen and agreed that the following matters be considered "in committee," in the absence of members of the press and public being present. The member of the press seated in the public gallery left the Council Chamber (6.02 pm).

5.1 Report by Head of Finance

5.1.1 2023-2024 Final Report To Those Charged With Governance
(Report will never be available – final certified accounts will be published)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy the 2023-2024 Final Report To Those Charged With Governance, presented by Mr B Stewart (Ross Boyd Accountants).

5.1.1 2023-2024 Final Report To Those Charged With Governance
Cont'd

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services clarified the Council position in relation to the non-acceptance of a recommendation to review the chart of accounts, as the recommendation related to the old finance system which was no longer in operation. The Committee noted that the finance team considered the Chart of Accounts in advance of the new system being implemented and were satisfied that the Chart of Accounts reflected the needs of the Council.

5.1.2 Annual Audit Letter 2023-2024: Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
(Report will be made available following Council ratification)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy the 2023-2024 Annual Audit Letter, presented by Mr B Stewart (Ross Boyd Accountants).

5.2 Report by Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

5.2.1 Dundonald International Ice Bowl – Risk Register
(Report will never be made available)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the Risk Register update for the redevelopment of Dundonald International Ice Bowl. Officers responded to a number of questions from Members arising from the report.

During discussion, Councillor S Lowry put on record her appreciation to Officers for swiftly addressing safety concerns she raised in relation to the project, which provided reassurance on how well the project was being managed.

The Director of Regeneration and Growth left the meeting (6.18 pm).

5.3 Report by Internal Audit Manager

5.3.1 Internal Audit – Progress Report
(Redacted report will be made available on 30 December, 2024)

Members were provided with a copy of an Internal Audit Progress Report summarising internal audit work and progress against the Operational Plan since the last meeting of the Committee on 12 September, 2024. Copies of any internal audit reports referred to in the progress report, alongside the Terms of Reference for the external review of LCCC Internal Audit Service were also provided in full on Decision Time for Members' information.

It was proposed by Councillor A P Ewing, seconded by Councillor R McLernon, and agreed to recommend that:

- (a) the Internal Audit Progress Report be noted; and
- (b) the Terms of Reference for the PEER Review of LCCC Internal Audit Service by Derry and Strabane District Council be approved.

6. Closed Session

In line with good practice and the Governance and Audit Committee Terms of Reference, Members met with representatives from External Audit and Internal Audit in a closed session, the purpose of which was to afford Members the opportunity to ask questions that may not specifically be addressed as part of an audit.

The following Officers left the Meeting prior to the closed session taking place (6.22 pm): Chief Executive, Director of Organisation Development and Innovation, Director Finance and Corporate Services, Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing and Member Services Officers.

The Director of Organisation Development and Innovation and Member Services Officers returned to the meeting at 6.43 pm.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A P Ewing, seconded by Councillor D Bassett, and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed.

The Chairperson, Alderman S P Porter, wished those present a Happy Christmas and New Year.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.44 pm.

Mayor/Chairperson