

**LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Remote Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on Thursday, 10 March, 2022 at 6:00 pm**

**PRESENT IN CHAMBER:**

Councillor John Palmer (Chairman)

Alderman J Baird (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor J Lavery BEM

**PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:**

The Right Worshipful the Mayor  
Alderman S Martin

Aldermen O Gawith, S P Porter and J Tinsley

Councillors S Eastwood, J Gallen, S Lowry, G McCleave and R McLernon

**INDEPENDENT MEMBER:**

Mr E Jardine (present remotely)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

In Chamber:

Chief Executive  
Director of Finance and Corporate Services  
IT Officer  
Technician  
Member Services Officers

In Remote Location:

Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development  
Internal Audit Manager  
Performance Improvement Officer  
Risk Officer  
Internal Auditor

Northern Ireland Audit Office

Mr P O'Sullivan (present remotely)

**Commencement of the Meeting**

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman, Councillor John Palmer welcomed those present to the remote meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee, which was being live streamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings.

At this point, the Member Services Officer read out the names of the Elected Members and Officers in attendance at the meeting.

The Chairman, Councillor John Palmer, stated that, whilst the meeting was being live streamed, unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per the Council's Standing Orders. He asked that mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting. The Chief Executive outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

The Chairman, Councillor John Palmer, welcomed to the meeting Mr Peter O'Sullivan, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and the recently appointed Internal Audit Manager, Ms Maureen Leonard.

1. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of the Deputy Mayor, Councillor T Mitchell, Councillors S Lee, C McCready and A Swan and Mrs C Kane, NIAO.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Report from Chief Executive

3.1 Party Group Leaders Forum (This item was subject to a Call-In. These Minutes were ratified by Council on 22 March, with the exception of this item.)

Members were provided with a report setting out a number of options in respect of membership of the Party Group Leaders Forum.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird and seconded by Councillor J Lavery that (a) option 1 be agreed, ie that the status quo would remain with parties of 3 or more Elected Members being represented, with single or dual Member parties having access to anything discussed at the meeting; and (b) membership of the Forum be reviewed every 4 years following the Local Government elections to ensure the Forum reflected the wishes of the new Council.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor J Gallen and seconded by Councillor G McCleave that, in order to increase inclusivity and transparency (a) option 5 be agreed, ie that all parties would be represented (currently DUP, UUP, APNI, SF, SDLP, Green and 1 Independent); and (b) membership of the Forum be reviewed every 4 years following the Local Government elections to ensure the Forum reflected the wishes of the new Council.

Alderman O Gawith stated that the Alliance Party would be in favour of option 5, with the condition that anyone who had left a party to which they had been elected in order to become an Independent Member during the Council term would not be included in the Forum. Councillor J Gallen agreed to amend his proposal to reflect this.

3.1 Party Group Leaders Forum (Contd)

The amendment in the name of Councillor J Gallen, as further amended by Alderman O Gawith, was put to the meeting and, on a vote being taken, was declared “lost”, the voting being 6 in favour and 7 against (the Chairman having used his casting vote).

The proposal in the name of Alderman J Baird was put to the meeting and, on a vote being taken was declared “carried”, the voting being 7 in favour (the Chairman having used his casting vote) and 6 against.

4. Report from the Performance Improvement Officer

4.1 Complaints Report – Quarter 3

Members having been provided with a copy of a comparative report taken from the Council’s Customer Care System detailing the number of comments, complaints and compliments in Quarter 3 of 2021/22, it was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Councillor J Laverty and agreed to recommend that this report be approved.

4.2 Performance Improvement Objectives, Case Studies & Associated KPIs – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman S Martin, left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.26 pm).

Members were provided with a copy of:

- (a) a quarterly monitoring document (covering October – December 2021) on all projects that demonstrated improvement against the 2021/22 Performance Improvement Objectives, including the relevant Performance Improvement KPI. An additional section was included detailing some case studies and customer feedback that had demonstrated improvement during quarter 3; and
- (b) a report from the ‘Performance Manager’ System (Dashboard) detailing the Performance Improvement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the organisation for the period October – December 2021.

Members noted from the report of the Performance Improvement Officer, information in relation to KPI Reference 151, KPI Reference 152 and KPI Reference 176.

It was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Councillor J Laverty and agreed to recommend that the reports at (a) and (b) above be approved.

Councillor J Gallen, as well as the Chairman, Councillor John Palmer, commended Officers involved in this area of work.

4.3 Draft Performance Improvement Objectives and Projects 2022/23

Councillor J Lavery left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.28 pm).

Members having been provided with a copy of the Draft Performance Improvement Objectives and Projects for 2022/23, it was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed to recommend that these be approved.

4.4 Northern Ireland Audit Office – Audit and Assessment Report 2021/22

Councillor S Lowry left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.32 pm).

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the final report and certificate of compliance recently issued by the NIAO.

In response to a query by Alderman J Baird in relation to accessibility of the Summary Performance Improvement Plan, the Performance Improvement Officer advised that there had been quite a few hits on the performance page on the website and agreed to endeavour to determine how many people had read the document.

Alderman S P Porter and Alderman O Gawith put on record their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of Officers involved in having achieved this positive Audit and Assessment Report.

5. Report from the Risk Officer

5.1 Corporate Risk Register

The Risk Officer 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, a copy of the Corporate Risk Dashboard. Members having been asked to identify the next two corporate risks to undergo deep dive in the new financial year it was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Alderman J Baird and agreed to recommend that these would be Risk CRR4 'Capital Programme' and Risk CRR7 'Financial Sustainability'.

In response to comments by Alderman S P Porter regarding discussion that had taken place the previous night at the Corporate Services Committee meeting in respect of the Council's telephone service, the Chief Executive advised that this was an operational issue. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services and Director of Service Transformation had discussed this earlier and this matter would be addressed during the course of the coming year.

6. 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 Alderman O Gawith, seconded by Alderman J Baird and agreed that the following matters be considered “in committee”, in the absence of members of the press and public being present. The live-stream was paused at this stage (6.45 pm).

6.1 Report by Director of Finance and Corporate Services

6.1.1 NIAO 2021/22 Audit Strategy

Alderman S P Porter left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.46 pm).

Members were provided with a copy of the NIAO Strategy for 2021/22. Mr P O’Sullivan, NIAO, made a verbal presentation to the Committee in respect of the Strategy and answered queries raised. Further to comments by Alderman J Baird, Mr O’Sullivan agreed that consideration would be given to providing the estimated audit fee at an earlier stage in future years in order that this could be taken account of during the estimates process.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor J Gallen and agreed that that 2021/22 Audit Strategy be noted.

6.2 Report by Internal Auditor

The Internal Audit extended a welcome to the newly appointed Internal Audit Manager, Ms M Leonard.

6.2.1 Internal Audit Progress Report – March 2022  
(Item 6.2.2 on agenda)

Alderman S P Porter re-joined the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.57 pm).

Members were provided with a copy of an Internal Audit Progress Report – March 2022. This report summarised internal audit work and progress against the Operational Plan since the last meeting of the Committee on 9 December, 2021. A copy of any internal audit reports referred to in the progress report were also provided in full on SharePoint for Members’ information.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor J Gallen and agreed that the Internal Audit Progress Report be noted.

6.2.2 Draft Internal Audit Operational Plan 2022/23  
(Item 6.2.3 on agenda)

Members having been provided with a copy of the draft Internal Audit Operational Plan 2022/23, it was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed to recommend that it be approved.

6.2.3 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Annual Audit Letter 2020/21  
(Item 6.2.1 on agenda)

Members having been provided with a copy of the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Annual Audit Letter for 2020/21, it was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed that it be noted.

6.2.4 Internal Audit Charter – March 2022

Members were provided with a copy of the Internal Audit Charter – March, 2022. This Charter defined the purpose, authority, responsibility and scope of activity of the Council's Internal Audit Unit. It reflected good practice and was compliant with CIPFA and Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed to recommend that the Internal Audit Charter – March 2022 be approved.

6.2.5 Terms of Reference for Governance and Audit Committee

Members were advised that, in line with good practice, the Terms of Reference for the Governance and Audit Committee should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remained effective, reflected best practice and aligned with CIPFA guidance. Members having been provided with a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Committee, as well as the Indicative Work Programme for Committee meetings during 2022/23, it was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Alderman J Baird and agreed to recommend that the Terms of Reference for the Governance and Audit Committee be approved.

6.2.6 Governance and Audit Committee Self-Evaluation Outcome Report

Members were provided with a copy of an Outcome Report in respect of a Governance and Audit Committee Self-Evaluation exercise that had been undertaken in February 2022. It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Alderman J Baird and agreed to recommend that this report be approved.

The Chairman, Councillor John Palmer, commented on the importance of the self-evaluation exercise and thanked those Members who had returned questionnaires.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Alderman S P Porter, and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed. The live-stream was resumed at 7.09 pm.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Special Meetings of the Committee

The Chairman, Councillor John Palmer, advised of forthcoming special meetings of the Committee as follows:

- (a) 23 June, 2022 – for presentation of draft accounts; and
- (b) 22 September, 2022 – for presentation of final accounts.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 7.09 pm.

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Mayor/Chairman