

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Audit and Corporate Governance Committee
<b>Date:</b>	30 June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Audit and Corporate Governance Committee - Annual Report
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Will Tuckley, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Sarah Wilson, Assistant Director Legal and Governance
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	NO
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix A – Draft Annual Report of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out:

- A draft annual report for the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee for the committee to consider and approve.
- The report will be presented to Full Council and follows a self-assessment by the committee.

#### Recommendation:

1.2 The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee is recommended to:

- Consider and approve the draft report for submission to Full Council for noting.

#### Reasons

1.3 The committee's function is critical to the Council, helping it to achieve its objectives by evaluating the effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal control arrangements and promoting good corporate governance. Reviewing what has gone well and what areas there are for focus in the new municipal year are an important part of the committee's role.

1.4 To inform this annual report, committee members were invited to a self-assessment workshop on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025, utilising CIPFA evaluation toolkit. This assessment has been used to inform the training and work programme for this municipal year.

#### Commissioner Review

This report is outside the scope for pre-publication commissioner review; please check the [Commissioners' instruction 5 to CLT to sign off papers](#) for further details.

## Background

- 1.1 On an annual basis, the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee should report on their activities during the municipal year including consideration of the areas that they will focus on in the next year too. The Committee's Terms of Reference state that to ensure accountability the Committee should publish an annual report on its work.
- 1.2 CIPFA has produced guidance and an evaluation framework to assess the impact and effectiveness of an audit committee. This guidance states that the effectiveness should be judged by the contribution it makes to and the beneficial impact it has on the Council's business. Since the Committee is primarily an advisory body, it can be more difficult to identify how it has made a difference. Evidence of effectiveness will usually be characterised as "influence", "persuasion" or "support". Committee members were also asked to complete individual self-assessments.
- 1.3 The framework includes ten key principles to inform the evaluation and suggests questions in relation to how proactive the Committee is in seeking assurance and responding to aspects of governance, risk, control and audit that need change or improvement.
- 1.4 The report contains details of attendance of committee members at formal meetings and training events. Where committee members have attended less than 50% of meetings, the Chair has raised the issue with the relevant Group Leader. Group leaders were reminded of the knowledge and skills required of committee members for this committee and to consider whether political proportionality rules were restricting the pool of members. Nominations for the committee, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, were agreed at Full Council in May. The chairing arrangements are to remain the same, which provides helpful continuity and there is a balance between existing members remaining on the committee and new members bringing a fresh perspective.
- 1.5 Some of the issues and next steps for this year's work programme include:
  - Focus on company governance assurance reporting
  - Focus on assurance for statutory and other formal partnerships
  - Focus on collaboration with overview and scrutiny, including option of one joint meeting in improvement and recovery plans
  - Assurance report on finance improvement plan
  - Assurance reporting on procurement activity, including use of waivers
  - Report on new risk management framework
  - Focus on assurance of arrangements for managing external service delivery, including understanding contract management arrangements
  - Report on internal assurance systems mapped against LGA Improvement and Assurance framework
  - External review of internal audit

- Consider reporting mechanism for member oversight of capital programme, use of grant funding and s.106 funds
- Consider assurance reporting on value for money
- Counter fraud policies and strategies to be subject to review and report to committee on outcome
- Reporting on assurance on information governance, including adherence to transparency and FOI compliance

1.6 Committee members now have the opportunity to review the draft annual report, which includes a draft work programme and training schedule and recommend it to Full Council for noting. It is accepted that the work programme and training plan are draft plans and are likely to evolve and adapt over the year.

### **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

#### **3.1 Financial implications**

3.1.1 There are no direct financial implications to this draft annual report

#### **3.2 Legal implications**

3.2.1 The work and effectiveness of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee is critical to the Council's improvement journey and to it meeting its best value duty. As stated in its Terms of Reference, the Committee is a key component of the Council's corporate governance. It should provide an independent and high-level focus on the audit assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

#### **3.3 Risk management implications**

3.3.1 Having in place an annual review process of the work of the committee ensures there is an opportunity to consider any improvement and learning opportunities for the future. This guards against the potential failure to operate an inadequate governance and control framework.

#### **3.4 Environmental implications**

3.4.1 There are no direct environmental implications in this report.

#### **3.5 Equality implications**

3.5.1 *Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:*

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.