

# Audit and Governance Committee



Date of meeting:	29 November 2021
Title of Report:	<b>Audit and Governance Terms of Reference Review Working Group Update.</b>
Lead Member:	Councillor John Riley (Cabinet Member for Governance, HR, IT and Community Safety)
Lead Strategic Director	Brendan Arnold (Service Director for Finance)
Author:	Andrew Loton, Head of Governance Performance and Risk
Contact Email:	Andrew.loton@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	AGWG AL21
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

The Audit Committee was reviewed in 2018 and led to the establishment of the Audit and Governance Committee which combined the audit and finance elements of the then Audit Committee with the member development, governance and constitutional elements of the Constitutional Review Group that existed up until May 2018.

During the last six months the Audit and Governance Committee has recognised that, after a period of two years, it would be appropriate to once again revisit the Terms of Reference for the committee to identify improvements that can be made to the way the committee functions at present.

This report identifies the scope and approach for a working group to consider how improvements could be made to the functioning of the committee to support the panel in having a greater focus and impact on the Council.

## Scope of Review

The working group met for an initial discussion on the review of the Audit and Governance Terms of Reference (appendix A) and identified the following themes that will be considered:

- Performance of the Audit and Governance Committee since its last review in 2018.
- Committee positioning within the committee structure of Plymouth City Council.
- Remit and influence of the chair.
- Frequency of meetings.
- Agenda size.
- Panel make up and skills.
- Recruitment and retention of independent members.

## Approach

The proposed approach is for a review of the Audit and Governance Committee to be conducted over the next two months to be reported back at an additional Audit and Governance Committee meeting to be set up in January for the purpose of receiving and discussion of recommendations from the working group on their findings. The findings will seek to clarify what is working well, what challenges

are currently faced by the committee in its work and provide recommendations for improvements to the way the committee is delivered. This will include a detailed look at agendas and past meetings, a benchmarking exercise with other Councils to examine different approaches, interviews with past and present members of the committee.

## **Recommendations and Reasons**

Recommendations:

The Committee recommends that:

- **The working group be authorised to proceed with a review of the Terms of Reference and identify ways to optimise the impact of the Audit and Governance Committee.**
- **A meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee be convened in January to review the findings from the working group and to consider the recommendations put forward by the working group.**

**Reasons:** To enable a working group to continue to consider how improvements could be made to the functioning of the committee to support the panel in having a greater focus and impact on the Council.

## **Alternative options considered and rejected**

The option not to review the Terms of Reference and wider working of the committee has been considered however this would not address certain issues widely accepted with the committee. It would also not allow the necessary exploration of the model to allow changes to be made in the next municipal year.

## **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan**

Effective framing and execution of the committees work programme is vital to the delivery of the Plymouth and Corporate Plan by enabling the Council to exercise the scrutiny and challenge of it's governance, finance, risk and audit processes.

## **Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**

None arising specifically from this report.

## **Financial risks:**

No implications identified.

## **Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

None arising specifically from this report

## **Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:**

*\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

## **Appendices**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Audit and Governance Terms of Reference Review working group update.							

### Background papers:

\*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Sign off:

Fin	ba.21. 22.18 8	Leg	LS/37 717/A C/26/ 11/21	Mon Off		HR		Assets		Strat Proc	
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 24/11/21											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor John Riley (Cabinet Member for Governance, HR, IT and Community Safety)											
Date approved: 26/11/21											