

TITLE OF REPORT: Training Programme

REPORT OF: Mike Barker – Strategic Director Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of the report

1. This report sets out the proposed training programme for members of the Audit and Standards Committee for the municipal year 2024-2025.

Background

2. Members of the Audit and Standards Committee have an important role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and in considering the effectiveness of the Council's audit functions, risk management and internal control functions. Members of the Committee also review and consider financial statements, external auditor's opinions and treasury management performance.
3. This is a wide ranging and critical role. To ensure this function is undertaken effectively, members of the Committee should be appropriately trained. CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) guidance on the role of audit committees recommends training is undertaken help members to understand the key agenda items, and to keep them informed of new developments.
4. It is acknowledged that the training programme has been delayed and this is to be rectified with a programme of regular and wide-ranging sessions which will be open to all members of the Audit and Standards Committee, with some sessions being opened up to the wider membership of the Council.
5. The following topic areas will be covered:

Knowledge Area	Detail of Core Knowledge Required
Organisational Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An overview of the authority's governance structures and decision-making processes.• Knowledge of the organisational objectives and major functions of the authority
Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An understanding of the audit committee's role and place within the governance structures.

Role and Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with the committee's terms of reference and accountability arrangements. • Knowledge of the purpose and role of the audit committee.
Governance / Values of good governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the seven principles as outlined in Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (CIPFA/Solace, 2016). • How the principles of governance are implemented locally as set out in the local code of governance. • Knowledge of the authority's key arrangements to uphold ethical standards for both members and staff (eg code of conduct). • Knowledge of the whistleblowing arrangements in the authority.
Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An awareness of the key principles of the PSIAS and the LGAN. • Knowledge of the arrangements for delivery of the internal audit service in the authority and the charter. • How the role of the head of internal audit is fulfilled. • Details of the most recent external assessment and level of conformance with the standards. • Internal audit's strategy, plan and most recent annual opinion.
Financial management and financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the financial statements that a local authority must produce and the principles it must follow to produce them. • An understanding of good financial management practice as set out in the CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code) and the level of compliance with it. • Knowledge of how the organisation meets the requirements of the role of the CFO as required by The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, 2016) • An overview of the principal financial risks the authority faces.
External audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the role and functions of the external auditor and who currently undertakes this role. • Knowledge of the key reports and assurances that external audit will provide. • Familiarity with the auditor's most recent plan and the opinion reports. • Knowledge about arrangements for the appointment of auditors and quality management undertaken.
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the principles of risk management, including how it supports good governance and decision making.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the risk management policy and strategy of the organisation. • Understanding of risk governance arrangements, including the role of members and of the audit committee. • Knowledge of the current risk maturity of the organisation and any key areas of improvement
Counter Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the main areas of fraud and corruption risk that the organisation is exposed to. • Knowledge of the principles of good fraud risk management practice in accordance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014). • Knowledge of the organisation's arrangements for tackling fraud.
Treasury Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Scrutiny of Treasury Management is an assessment tool for reviewing the arrangements for undertaking scrutiny of treasury management. The key knowledge areas identified are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – regulatory requirements – treasury risks – the organisation's treasury management strategy – the organisation's policies and procedures in relation to treasury management.

Proposals

6. Following agreement at the Audit and Standards Committee on 18 June 2024, training sessions will be held on the same date as the committee meetings are scheduled, taking place immediately after the meeting has concluded. Each session will be approximately 1 hour in duration. The topic to be covered in the training session will reflect agenda items at the following meeting to ensure learning is relevant to the business of the committee.
7. There are two sessions which will fall outside of these proposals:
 - a. Financial Reporting and Reviewing Financial Statements – this session will take place immediately before the committee meeting on 26 September 2024. The statements are on the agenda for that meeting and it will be useful to have the learning fresh in members' minds going into the meeting (rather than take place prior to the summer recess).
 - b. Treasury Management – this session will be undertaken by an external organisation. It will be held on a date separate to a scheduled committee meeting, but prior to the March meeting when Treasury Management will be considered. The meeting

will be held on Teams and will be open to all Councillors to attend. The session is likely to last for 60 – 90 minutes.

8. The following timetable is proposed:

Topic	Knowledge Area	Proposed Delivery Date
Basic Introduction to the Role and Remit of the Committee and Corporate Governance Structures	Organisational Knowledge. Audit Committee Roles and Functions. Governance. Values of Good Governance.	16.7.24
Ethics and Probity	Standards	16.7.24
Financial Reporting and Reviewing Financial Statements	Financial Reporting	26.9.24 – immediately before the A&S meeting
Corporate Risk Management / Business Continuity Planning	Risk Management	5.11.24
Treasury Management	Treasury Management	Separate session – prior to March A&S meeting
Understanding Internal / External Audit	Internal Audit External Audit	4.3.25
Counter Fraud & Corruption	Counter Fraud	29.4.25

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that the Committee note the report and agree the proposed training programme timetable.