

AUDIT COMMITTEE - Table of Outstanding Issues (January 2025) - GENERAL

Governance Principle and Issue	Recommendation / Issue	Lead / Service	Progress / Comments	Status – Target Date
<p>Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it.</p>	<p>Following the consideration of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy last year, it was resolved that:</p> <p>The Head of Democratic Services & Elections be requested to consider including training for Members on anti-fraud and corruption measures as part of the Councillor Development Scheme.</p>	<p>Director - Governance</p>	<p>The development of a Formal Training Programme remains ongoing which will include as necessary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joint general training with other Essex Authorities. 2. Statement of Accounts training 3. The role of Internal Audit Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy 4. Corporate Governance and Assurance in a Local Authority setting 5. Role and appointment of External Audit 6. Risk Management <p>The above are subject to external training providers’ availability and associated procurement processes.</p>	<p>Training sessions delivered to date: ‘Your Role on The Audit Committee’ – June 2023 and Fraud training in June 2024.</p> <p>Further modules will be delivered on 22 Jan 2025 with an external specialist trainer, and will include other Members e.g. Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>In light of the above, further ‘modules’ will be considered later in the year.</p>

<p>Determining the Interventions Necessary to Optimise the Achievement of the Intended Outcomes – Office for Local Government (OFLOG)</p>	<p>On the 05 Oct 23, the Audit Committee received an update on changes to upcoming regulatory requirements and establishment of OFLOG. The Committee requested additional information on this future regulatory reform.</p>	<p>Director - Governance</p>	<p>Future opportunities to provide additional information to Members will be explored e.g. an All Member Briefing.</p>	<p>Superseded – the new Government are no longer pursuing OFLOG arrangements.</p> <p>However, key elements would still remain relevant as part of the Council’s wider best value responsibilities which will be addressed and reflected via the Council’s Annual Governance Statement.</p>
<p>Defining Outcomes in Terms of Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits – Climate Change</p>	<p>At its meeting on the 05 Oct 23, the Committee resolved that:</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for the Environment be requested to oversee the development of a Climate Action Plan from 2024, with its ambitions and actions set in the context of current national policy.</p>	<p>Corporate Director - Place and Economy</p>	<p>The Council has contracted with APSE Energy to review our carbon emissions for 2022/23 as a baseline for the Action Plan 2024-27. Officers have completed a first draft of the action plan, which is currently being refined to be sent to APSE Energy for comment in Feb 24. The Consultants will review the carbon impact of the proposed actions and advise a trajectory for the Council to become net zero. The Council will need to review the cost</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The report of the Environment Portfolio Holder setting out the Council’s Climate Action Plan was considered by Cabinet on 15 Nov 24 for adoption via a separate Executive Decision following Full</p>

			implications of the off-setting required to reach net zero and the costs of investments to reduce our underlying carbon emissions.	Council's agreement to align the target for achieving net zero carbon emissions to the UK Government's objectives to achieve net zero, i.e. by 2050 at their meeting on 26 November 2024.
Determining the Interventions Necessary to Optimise the Achievement of the Intended Outcomes – Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy	At its meeting on 25 January 2024 the Committee requested that an annual review of the effectiveness of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy is undertaken with the outcome to be reported back as part of the usual annual review process.	Director - Finance & IT	The first review will be undertaken in early 2025 for reporting to the Committee in March 2025.	March 2025
Determining the Interventions Necessary to Optimise the Achievement of the Intended Outcomes – Housing Review	At its meeting in April 2024, the Audit Committee considered the outcome of a recent external review of the Council's Housing function. Following discussion, Officers were requested to consider appropriate processes to provide timely updates to Members on the associated action plan.	Corporate Director – Operations and Delivery	Work remains ongoing with the aim of ensuring that timely and appropriate updates are presented to Members during the year.	An update was provided to the September 2024 Audit Committee meeting. As resolved by the Committee at its September 24 meeting, this item will now form part of the Committee's

				annual work programme which will be presented in March 25.
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management – Spendells Project	<p>At its meeting in July 2024, the Audit Committee resolved;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That in respect of the Spendells House issue, the Committee looks forward to reviewing the outcome of the work undertaken by the Chief Executive 2. Notes and endorses the proposed joint working with the Resources and Overview Scrutiny Committee, and will seek to identify the associated opportunities for a combined exercise with that Committee going forward. 	Chief Executive	<p>In respect of 1. This forms part of the AGS action plan set out in Appendix B with an update to be provided to the Committee as soon as practicable, once the work referred to has been completed.</p> <p>In respect of 2. This remains under consideration subject to the outcome above.</p>	Subject to the progress of the review, it is currently planned to update the Committee at its March 25 meeting.
Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability	<p>At its meeting in September 2024, the Audit Committee expressed its desire to have a standing item on the agenda for each of its formal meetings in relation to complaints and that the designated Member with responsibility for housing complaints and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance be required to attend as appropriate.</p>	Director - Governance	<p>This will be reflected in the Committee's upcoming work programme for 2025/26 that is planned to be presented to its March 2025 meeting.</p>	March 2025

AUDIT COMMITTEE - Table of Outstanding Issues (September 2024) – ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTIONS 2023/24
On-going / outstanding items at the end of 2023/24 carried forward into 2024/25

Governance Principle & Issue	Required Action(s)	Update / Additional Comments
<p>Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.</p> <p>Ensuring compliance of the Council's governance arrangements through project board reviews.</p> <p>Utilising the Council's systems to implement best practice for drafting, reporting and decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of project outcome being undertaken by the Project Board to support future decision making and delivery. • Continuation of the roll out of the functionality of Modern.Gov over a phased approach in 2022/23 – completed areas – training record for Councillors, TDC representatives on outside bodies, E petitions function, automated e mails, submission of final reports for Planning Committee, Cabinet, Council, Committee and Management Team dates published, Environmental Health licensing decisions published, report writing functionality. <p><u>ADDITIONAL FOCUS FOR 2024/25</u></p> <p>Performance monitoring within services and decision implementation and project management.</p>	<p>The outcome from key projects will be reported to Members following completion of the associated project. Upcoming reports will include Jaywick Flexible Workspaces, Starlings and the Office Transformation Project. In respect of the Jaywick Flexible Workspaces project, the report is planned to be presented to Cabinet in February 25.</p> <p>Modern.Gov – the supplier completed the required server upgrade in November 2024. To progress this action requires that the use of (*.bat) file types by the Modern.Gov software and the identification of these file types as a security risk in the Council's IT network be overcome.</p> <p>A potential solution has been identified and will be further considered over the remainder of the year.</p> <p>In terms of the additional focus this remains ongoing and will likely continue into 2025/26 which will be considered as part of the next review of the AGS as necessary.</p>

<p>Developing the Council’s entity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it.</p> <p>Effectively manage the transition to a new Administration following the local elections in May 2023.</p> <p>REVISED FOCUS FOR 2024/25:</p> <p>Capacity to deliver the Council’s Corporate Plan and its Priorities, together with new emerging initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of the delivery of the Member Development Programme • Cabinet focus on new Corporate Plan, project prioritisation, financial sustainability and robust decision-making. <p><u>REVISED FOCUS FOR 2024/25:</u> Work is now underway to develop a number of milestones against the highlight priorities as part of delivering against the Corporate Plan themes.</p> <p>Departmental Plans within services will continue to be reviewed against the themes and highlight priorities during the year, with particular focus on governance issues, such as monitoring and implementing decisions, managing risks and budgets.</p> <p>Capacity requirements to be reviewed in light of the new range of competing capital project timescales, resources for projects and existing service provision.</p>	<p>WORK COMPLETED: An extensive Development Programme was implemented as part of the Induction arrangements for the newly elected/returning Councillors.</p> <p>This made use of written material, in-person and online events and the opportunity to interact directly with officers from a wide range of services across the Council.</p> <p>The Development Programme has continued and has included arrangements with mock hearings and similar, delivered in-house for both Planning and Licensing Committee Members and hearings based training for Members of the Standards Committee delivered by specialist external trainers. Use has been made of LGA in-person and online training and events to further enhance the development offer and this has included specific training for several Cabinet Members through a residential course provided by the LGA.</p> <p>A refresh of the skills of audit undertaken at the start of the Municipal year in 2023 is now planned to inform Member Development for the coming year and beyond.</p> <p>The Project Delivery Unit highlighted in September 24 has now been established with work remaining in progress to secure the necessary skills and capacity to support the Council in terms of delivery of a number of schemes and projects.</p> <p>A revised Corporate Plan and Vision was approved by Full Council at its meeting on 28</p>
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<p>Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.</p> <p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing Risk Management / Business Continuity arrangements. • Conduct and audit review in relation to the effectiveness of the Council’s response to COVID-19, including a review of the lessons learnt from the Council’s response and longer-term consequences. • Review of the effectiveness of the Audit Committee. • Develop and implement a Corporate Policy and Strategy ‘register’ to ensure that these are reviewed and updated in a timely manner and to support decision making. 	<p>Due to a number of competing priorities it is unlikely to be able to undertake this review in 2024/25 as originally planned. It is still recognised as an important governance issue and will continue to be prioritised going forward which will likely involve its inclusion in the next review of the AGS.</p> <p>This continues to form part of the ongoing work of Internal Audit, which will also reflect any learning points that may emerge from the national public inquiry currently underway.</p> <p>It is planned to undertake a review in consultation with the Audit Committee and other key partners as soon as possible. Although this is later than originally planned this remains a key activity along with developing an associated action plan as necessary.</p>

		<p>The development of the register has commenced and is held on the Council's website as part of its commitment to transparency. It will be added to as strategies and policies are adopted and reviewed. Services have also been requested to reference the relevant strategy or policy within reports supporting decision making and has been evident in recent reports to Cabinet.</p> <p>Corporate Policy and Strategy Register progress to link in with Review of Local Code of Corporate Governance.</p>
<p>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.</p> <p>Maintaining an up to date Local Code of Corporate Governance along with key policies and procedures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the Local Code of Corporate Governance and key policies and procedure. 	<p>The commitment remains in place to undertake this review and will be considered as part of the wider governance statement activities that will be reported to the Audit Committee later in the year.</p>
<p>Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.</p> <p>Delegated decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness and further strengthening of good decision making incorporating the Council's policies and framework. 	<p>Work remains in progress to increase the understanding of key principles including consultation, business planning, budget, procurement and legal, with individual and bespoke guidance being provided, where requested, by the Monitoring Officer through report development. Concept papers and PIDs are encouraged to be completed comprehensively to ensure successful delivery within the governance framework.</p> <p>It is planned to undertake/continue a number of activities to increase the understanding of key</p>

principles including consultation, business planning, budget, procurement and legal requirements, this will be delivered through the Senior Management Forum. It is worth highlighting that a presentation on the impacts of the Procurement Act 2023 was presented to the Senior Management Forum on 15 January 25.

Focus will be on embedding robust project management within the culture of the organisation, to provide oversight on financial and non-financial issues especially in key areas such as – Levelling Up Fund / Regeneration Project, waste contract renewal, new major contractual requirements and housing review recommendations.

In respect of external funding guidance highlighted in the September 24 report, Cabinet agreed a high level framework at its 20 September 24 meeting. Cabinet also requested that an external funding policy be developed for approval by the Leader of the Council in his capacity as the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to compliment the high level framework mentioned above and that it be presented to a future meeting of the Audit Committee for their support and assurance on the governance processes. The policy remains under development and will be reported to a future meeting of the Audit Committee.

<p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.</p> <p>In terms of business continuity this is especially important given the current global/economic climate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental Plans to be subject to review to reflect any updated Council objectives and priorities including the associated management of risk. • Develop the financial planning process with the aim of strengthening the Council’s long term financial sustainability. <p><u>ADDITIONAL FOCUS FOR 2024/25</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To implement/embed the necessary processes to support the identification of the required level of savings set out in the long term forecast. 	<p>As highlighted above, reviews of the Departmental Plans will be concluded alongside the Corporate Plan and highlight priorities during the remainder of the year (this will include alignment with any new/revised risk management approach and peer reviews as relevant).</p> <p>Review to incorporate resources/capacity to deliver priorities, projects and service provision.</p> <p>The revised financial forecast was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 December 24 which was subsequently reviewed by the Resources and Overview Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 25. Work remains ongoing to present the final budget proposals to Full Council in February 25. It is also worth highlighting that this key issue forms part of Cabinet’s key priorities for 2025/26 as agreed at its December 24 meeting which references both the General Fund and HRA.</p> <p>The dedicated/regular Officer Management Team meetings will remain ongoing with a focus on financial and non-financial issues along with performance and delivery.</p>
<p>Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.</p> <p>Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation/reporting updates against the Climate Change Action Plan for approval by both the Cabinet and Council to form part of the Council’s Policy Framework. 	<p>In terms of the adoption of the updated Climate Change Action Plan, please see comments within Appendix A. In terms of reporting against the plan this is a key item within Cabinet’s Highlight Priorities for 2026/26.</p>

<p>To set out the Council's vision following the Council's Climate Emergency declaration of the Council's activities being 'carbon neutral' by 2030.</p>		
<p>New Items for 2024/25</p>		
<p>Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p> <p>Approach to Community Engagement, consultation and participation to be reviewed following adoption of the Corporate Plan and Communications Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers be requested to review the Council's Community Engagement Strategy and its operation, taking into account the feedback received through the Corporate Plan consultation with the public, partners and businesses, with a view to the outcomes being presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet. • Review Article 10 of the Council's Constitution which sets out how the Council will promote Community Consultation and Participation through a range of opportunities. 	<p>Officers have been requested to review the various forums set out in Article 10 within their areas and responses will be collated to produce a revised version for approval.</p> <p>Article 10 updates have been received from relevant service areas and are currently being collated.</p>
<p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.</p> <p>In response to the Section 5 of Local Government & Social Housing Act 1989 report from the Council's Monitoring Officer on Spendells House</p>	<p>The Chief Executive:</p> <p>a) Has instructed that a formal review be undertaken to provide further clarity on how the issue arose and developed (including the governance arrangements associated with issuing verbal orders), which in turn can inform any further actions along with</p>	<p>In respect of Item a) – this remains ongoing and further updates will be provided to the Committee later in the year.</p> <p>In respect of Item b) – the directive referred to has been issued and will form part of collective meetings with senior officers over the course of the year.</p>

	<p>informing decision making and project delivery in the future;</p> <p>b) has issued a directive to all Senior Managers relating to financial and budget management, which explains the consequences and expectations of them in their roles and will be supported by further collective meetings with Senior Officers over the coming weeks/months and:</p> <p>c) has commenced arrangements for the implementation of a Senior Officer Project 'Board' that in turn will report directly to the Council's Senior Management Team on a regular basis.</p> <p>Statutory Officers to re-deliver governance awareness at the upcoming Senior Managers' Forum, where attendance is mandatory.</p>	<p>In respect of Item c) – arrangements remain ongoing and a further update will be provided to the Committee later in the year.</p> <p>In respect of the re-delivery of governance awareness, this was covered at a recent Senior Management Forum event.</p>
<p>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.</p> <p><i>(Although this action is expected to cut across all seven of the key governance principles (A to G) set out above)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review OFLOG requirements and revised Best Value Guidance, CIPFA Codes/guidance to identify areas of weakness and improvement and develop an action plan (including learning from external reviews, inspections and self-assessments). 	<p>As highlighted in Appendix A, the new Government are no longer pursuing the establishing of OFLOG. However, key issues will continue to form part of the Council's wider Best Value responsibilities.</p> <p>Revised Best Value Statutory Guidance is specifically being referred to by the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, highlighting the relevant Best Value Themes, as detailed in the</p>

		<p>Guidance and the relevant indicators to the subject matter of the reports.</p> <p>Further opportunities to address Best Value responsibilities will be considered during the year, which will include a self-assessment style approach and associated action plan as necessary.</p>
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