



Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 8 September 2020
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive,
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS),

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
<i>After Committee Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>After Council Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Some time in the future</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit & Risk Panel at its September 2020 meeting and present minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the key issues arising at the meeting, note the Annual Governance Statement at Appendix 2 and approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 8 September 2020 at Appendix 1.

3.0	Main report
	<p data-bbox="272 309 427 342">Key Issues</p> <p data-bbox="272 412 549 445"><u>Audit and Risk Panel</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 510 1331 645">3.1 This was the first virtual meeting of the Audit & Risk Panel, which was held to consider important year-end reports that had previously been circulated to Panel members in August for comment. Minutes of the meeting are at Appendix 1.</p> <p data-bbox="272 712 1034 745"><u>Annual Governance Statement and other year-end reports</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 813 1374 898">3.2 The Council has a statutory responsibility to annually prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) as part of the Financial Report.</p> <p data-bbox="165 965 1374 1301">3.3 The AGS is prepared on the basis of many different processes and sources of assurance, all of which were considered by the Panel at their meeting, including the Head of Audit Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) annual assurance statement (including completion of the annual audit plan for 2019/20), annual assurance statements completed by senior managers, annual review and update of the code of governance, corporate risk management report, annual update on fraud and whistleblowing and various other reports.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1368 1430 1906">3.4 The Panel reviewed and agreed the draft Annual Governance Statement for the year 2019/20, including the five significant governance issues being disclosed and the actions to address them. These issues relate to the Council’s financial position, digital security, organisational recovery, city and community recovery and the relationship between elected members and officers. The AGS, provided at Appendix 2 for information, forms part of the unaudited statement of accounts which have been certified by the Chief Financial Officer and is subject to review by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) as part of their annual audit. The AGS is to be formally signed by the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources when the accounts are being finalised in December 2020.</p>

Internal Audit and Corporate Risk Management

3.5 The Panel considered the **indicative audit plan for 2020/21** which had been reviewed and updated to take account of the impact of Covid19 and associated assurance needs and noted the need for AGRS to be responsive to the assurance needs of the Council during 2020/21. The Panel agreed that they were content that the revised plan provided them, and therefore Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, with the necessary assurances over the council's risk, control and governance arrangements.

3.6 **The Panel noted the position on delivery of the audit plan for 2019/20** and how Covid19 had impacted on delivery of this plan, with some work being paused and replaced with other higher priority work, including, ensuring that there were proper processes in place to control changes to our financial governance arrangements in the changed working environment and providing advice on various risk and control matters.

3.7 The Panel considered the **Covid-19 risk analysis** and how the corporate risks had been impacted by Covid19, in particular the significant impact on the risk regarding the Councils financial position. The Panel agreed three new corporate risks regarding; planning for potential future lockdowns; organisational recovery and; city and community recovery, and agreed for AGRS to work with officers to support them in assessing both the existing corporate risks and the three new corporate risks and developing appropriate mitigation plans. The Panel also agreed for management to **review and update business continuity plans, to reflect learning to date, by end of October 2020.**

Corporate Health and Safety, Absence Management and Performance Improvement

3.8 The Panel received year-end reports on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement. The Panel welcomed these updates and in particular the work that is ongoing to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are in place and support provided to staff in the context of Covid19. The Panel **approved the year end Corporate Performance Assessment 2019-20 and noted the changed arrangements for meeting our performance improvement duty during 2020-21** due to Covid-19, as advised by the Department for Communities.

<p>3.9</p> <p>3.10</p> <p>3.11</p>	<p><u>National Fraud Initiative</u></p> <p>The Panel noted the report from the NIAO on the most recent National Fraud Initiative Exercise (NFI). The Panel received a high level update from the Head of AGRS on the specific data matches for the Council and the investigatory work undertaken and noted that no issues of fraud had been identified. The Panel noted that the exercise had identified two duplicate payments and that monies had been recouped and corrective measures put in place to prevent recurrence. The Panel also noted that there were some issues with locating staff declarations of interest forms and that AGRS were liaising with departments and Legal and Civic Services to ensure these are resolved.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None known at this time.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 8 September 2020</p> <p>Appendix 2– Draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20</p>