

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE - 18TH OCTOBER, 2023

REPORT OF:

PRESENT: J. ABSALOM (CHAIR)

Councillors S. Behr (Vice-Chair)
D. Bevan
K. Chaplin
W. Hodgins
C. Smith

WITH: Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officer Resources
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Service Manager for Development and Commissioning
Service Manager – Registration, Elections & Corporate Complaints
Service Manager – Performance & Democratic
Senior Business Partner – Capital and Corporate Accounting
Data Protection & Governance Officer

**AND: Representing Audit Wales
Mr. Mike Jones**

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillor Joanna Wilkins, Mr. Martin Veale, Chief Officer Commercial and Customer, Audit and Risk Manager, Professional Lead – Internal Audit and Deborah Woods – Audit Wales.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interests or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>AGENDA ITEM ORDER</u></p> <p>It was agreed that the following items would be considered at this juncture in the meeting:</p> <p>Item No. 8 – Statement of Accounts 2021/2022 Item No. 7 – The Annual Letter of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales 2022/2023</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the reports of the Chief Officer Resources and Auditor General for Wales.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that on consideration of the report together with the External Auditor’s report that the Statement of Accounts be approved under the delegated authority of the Council.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>THE ANNUAL LETTER OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES 2022/2023</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that assurance had been provided that the</p>	

	<p>process for the monitoring of complaints was robust and the performance information provided reflected these practices.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The decisions of the Governance & Audit Committee held on 20th September, 2023 were submitted.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting held on 20th September, 2023 was submitted.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the proposed Forward Work Programme 2023/2024.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Forward Work Programme be accepted.</p>	
No. 10	<p><u>AUDIT WALES: DIRECT PAYMENTS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE</u></p> <p>The report of the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Committee was assured that the</p>	

	<p>Council's Management Response identified in Appendix 2 would appropriately respond to the Audit Wales recommendations.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT COUNCIL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Interim Chief Executive.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Committee was assured that the Council's Self-Assessment 2022/2023 was an accurate account of the effectiveness of performance management arrangements of the Council.</p>	
<p>No. 12</p>	<p><u>PUBLIC INTEREST REPORT - ASSURANCE REVIEW FINDINGS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic, Governance & Performance.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the findings of the Assurance Review be noted and the recommendations outlined below be agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Link Officer be identified within the Council to establish regular liaison meetings with Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria by the end of March 2024. • A Member Briefing be organised on the operations and services provided by the Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria by the end March of 2024. • All relevant strategic documents, annual business plan and accounts for Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria be included in the Forward Work Programme for the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for 2024-25, and Council where relevant, at least twice a year. • The Terms of Reference be developed into a 'governance toolkit' for use by officers across the Council for providing assurance against existing companies and in the event of 	

the establishment of any new ones by the end of March 2024.

No. 13 **INFORMATION GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT**

The report of the Data Protection and Governance Officer was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 endorsed, namely that the information in the report be accepted which gave an assurance that appropriate oversight and monitoring was taking place and any shortfalls had appropriate controls in place to make the necessary improvements.