

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

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

**SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE - 17TH JANUARY, 2024**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

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PRESENT: J. ABSALOM (CHAIR)

Councillors S. Behr (Vice-Chair)  
C. Smith  
J. Wilkins

M. Veale  
C. Hucker

WITH: Interim Chief Executive  
Chief Officer Resources  
Chief Officer Commercial & Customer  
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships  
Audit & Risk Manager  
Professional Lead – Internal Audit  
Service Manager - Customer Experience and Transformation  
Data Protection & Governance Officer  
Corporate Communications - Marketing & Customer  
Access Manager

AND: **Audit Wales Representatives**  
Mike Jones  
Deborah Woods

ALSO: **SRS Representatives**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Deputy Chief Operating Officer

**DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

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ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
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<p><b>No. 1</b></p>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES &amp; WELCOME</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Bevan, W. Hodgins and K. Chaplin.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Cheryl Hucker, Lay Member to her first meeting of the Governance &amp; Audit Committee.</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and dispensations reported.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>GOVERNANCE &amp; AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The decisions of the Governance &amp; Audit Committee held on 1st December, 2023 were submitted.</p> <p>It was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET</u></b></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting held on 1st December, 2023 was submitted, whereupon;-</p> <p><b><u>Item 9 – Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Manager 2022/2023</u></b></p> <p>A Member requested an update in relation to the ongoing investigations. The Audit &amp; Risk Manager responded that she would seek clarification from the Legal Section regarding constraints and report back appropriately to the Committee in due course.</p> <p>It was unanimously</p>	

	RESOLVED that the Action sheet be noted.	
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer.</p> <p>It was proposed that the Statement of Accounts 2022/23, Audit of Financial Statements and the Final Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 be presented to a future meeting of the Committee (March if possible) and the items for February's Committee be reviewed.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for the Governance and Audit Committee be accepted.</p>	
<b>No. 7</b>	<p><b><u>AUDIT WALES – BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2022</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance &amp; Partnerships.</p> <p>It was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Annual Audit Summary published in November 2023 be noted.</p>	
<b>No. 8</b>	<p><b><u>AUDIT WALES: CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES – COMMENTARY ON THEIR PROGRESS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Executive.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the content of the Audit Wales Report, 'Corporate Joint Committees – commentary on their progress' be noted and the Governance &amp; Audit Committee receive any future reports from Audit Wales on the progress of the CJs.</p>	

<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>The Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships reported a typing error on page 81 and confirmed this would be corrected and responded to points raised by Members for clarification and amendment in the final Governance Statement.</p> <p>It was unanimously;</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the Committee considered and challenged the content, and deemed it to be consistent with their knowledge and understanding of the wider issues affecting the Council, subject to the proposed amendments.</p>	
<p><b>No. 10</b></p>	<p><b><u>EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Audit and Risk Manager.</p> <p>It was unanimously;</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Governance &amp; Audit Committee considered the action plan developed in response to the findings from the EQA, attached at Appendix A &amp; B, and noted the progress made.</p>	
<p><b>No. 11</b></p>	<p><b><u>SRS IT AUDIT PLAN</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>It was unanimously;</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Shared Resource Service Summary of Audit Activity 23/24 provided by Torfaen CBC, containing the SRS IT plan and progress made against it (Appendix A) be noted.</p>	