



Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of Meeting of 2 December 2025
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Corporate Services
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"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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/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 December 2025 meeting and present the minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee notes the key issues arising at the meeting and approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 2 December 2025 at appendix A.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u>
3.1	The Statement of Accounts are a fundamental part of the councils overall corporate governance framework and provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.
3.2	The Panel received an update on the audit of the accounts for the year-end 31 March 2025 by Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) which remains ongoing with one priority one issue highlighted so far relating to bank reconciliation. The NIAO have requested that a new significant governance issue is added to the Annual Governance Statement and the Audit and Risk Panel have agreed the wording of this issue.
3.3	The Panel were updated on several measures that Finance have implemented to prevent reoccurrence of the bank reconciliation issue, including the establishment of a process for escalation of unallocated income queries to departments. The delay in completing the audit has meant that the accounts have not been published on the council's website by the legislative deadline of 30th September.
3.4	When the audit is complete the revised set of financial statements, including the updated Annual Governance Statement and Report to Those Charged with Governance (which outlines the system / control issues arising from the NIAO audit) will be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources committee for approval and sign off.
	<u>Key reports</u>
3.5	The Panel noted the progress being made against the annual audit plan , with the following three assignments finalised in the period September - November 2025; Agency; Performance Management and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund. The Panel also received a management update report on Asset Management.
3.6	The Panel considered the corporate risk dashboard which provided an analysis and update on the progress being made to manage the 23 risks that are considered to present the greatest threat to the delivery corporate priorities and / or compliance with key statutory requirements. The Panel noted the quarterly assurances provided by directors regarding

	the arrangements in place for the management of risk (including formal departmental risk management arrangements) and the implementation of agreed audit actions.
3.7	Regarding business continuity management , the Panel agreed for the critical services; to complete their annual exercise, review and update of their BCM plans.
3.8	The Panel received an update on the National Fraud Initiative , which is nearing completion.
3.9	The Panel noted the quarter 2 reports on corporate health and safety and absence management and received the mid-year an update on the performance Improvement plan which is report is available to members on request.
3.10	The Panel agreed the initial assessment of how the Panel complies with the NIAO 'Effective Audit & Risk Assurance Committees – A Good Practice Guide' and the recommendations to further improve the effectiveness of the Panel, which mainly relate to the development of a training programme and update of the Panels terms of reference. The Panel also agreed their 2026 programme of business .
3.11	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.12	None known at this time.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix A - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 2 December 2025