



Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 10 September 2019
Date:	20 September 2019
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan; Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
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 2019 meeting and present minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.
2.0	Recommendations
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 10 September 2019 at Appendix 1.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Key Issues <u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u>
3.1.1	The Panel considered the Statement of Accounts of the Council for the year-end 31 March 2019. These accounts are a fundamental part of the Council's overall corporate

	governance framework and provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the Council's finances and its financial position.
3.1.2	The NIAO Director informed the Panel that their audit of the accounts is almost complete and on the basis of the work completed to date, the Local Government Auditor (LGA) will report on the 2018-19 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion .
3.1.3	The Panel considered the draft Report to those Charged with Governance for 2018/19 , which outlines the system / control issues arising from the NIAO audit. The draft report contained 5 recommendations for management action, none of which are priority one (i.e. significant or material in nature) , the recommendations relate to infrastructure assets, valuation of the Gasworks Site, zero net book value of vehicles still in use, retention of documentation re Giant's Park and break even position of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Management will bring an update to the next meeting of the Panel on their response to these issues.
3.1.4	In addition, the Panel also considered the Local Government Auditor's Report (2019) summarising the results of audit work undertaken in the year to 31 March 2018 in councils across Northern Ireland. The report included general observations / recommendations in a number of areas including, value for money in the use of agency workers, reserves policy, Audit & Risk Panel training, conflict of interest training for Members, conduct of a NI-wide study on Planning, performance improvement, plans to undertake a cost benefit analysis of local government reform, absenteeism, principles for asset management and monitoring of city deals. The Panel received assurances that the recommendations contained in the report had been communicated and were being taken forward by the relevant officers. <u>Audit and Risk Panel</u>
3.1.5	Members of the Panel play a pivotal role in assisting the Council in continually improving the governance arrangements of the Council. To support members in fulfilling this role, and in line with best practice, the Audit & Risk Panel agreed to hold a half day training session on the morning of Monday 21st October 2019 . It is important that Panel members attend this session.
3.1.6	In line with recommended practice the work of the Audit & Risk Panel has been supported by the attendance and input of an external member, Sharon Hetherington. Sharon is a source of expertise on audit and finance related matters, augmenting the skills /

	<p>experience provided by Members. The Panel agreed to extend the contract with the external member for an additional two years, in line with the relevant legal agreement.</p> <p><u>Key reports</u></p>
3.1.7	<p>The Panel noted the progress being made against the annual audit plan, with 12 audits finalised in the period April – August 2019 and agreed to replace the planned audit of waste management with the audit of waste collection.</p>
3.1.8	<p>The Panel considered the 20 corporate risks that are considered by management to present the greatest threat to the delivery of our corporate plan and / or compliance with key statutory requirements. The Panel received assurance that AGRS are currently working with each Risk Owner to support them in assessing each risk and developing the necessary mitigation actions. Progress in developing and implementing these corporate risk mitigation plans will be reported to CMT, the Assurance Board and the Audit & Risk Panel.</p>
3.1.9	<p>The Panel received the annual report and policy update in respect of Fraud and Whistleblowing along with a high level update on the number of cases in which the policies have been applied during the 18/19 year. The Panel approved the updated Council policies for fraud and whistleblowing, reflecting recent changes.</p>
3.1.10	<p>The Panel also received quarter 1 reports on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager highlighted to the Panel that corporately the Council was not meeting its target of implementing 80% of agreed health and safety and actions and fire safety actions, which had implementation rates of 29% and 67% respectively.</p>
	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.2	<p>None</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.3	<p>None known at this time.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 10 September 2019</p>