



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting of Audit and Risk Panel</b>
<b>Date:</b>	19th March 2021
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Deputy CX and Director of Finance & Resources
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Claire O'Prey, Head of AGRS

#### Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

☐

After Council Decision

☐

Sometime in the future

☐

Never

☐

#### Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
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 and Risk Panel at its meeting on 9th March and present the minutes of that meeting for approval.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the key issues arising at the meeting, approve the updated Risk Strategy and approve the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 9th March, at Appendix 1.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b>Issues and Actions Arising from the Audit and Risk Panel on 9 March 2021</b>
3.1	The minutes of the meeting are attached at Appendix 1, with key matters summarised below. <b>External Audit 2019/20</b>

3.2	<p>The financial statements are a fundamental part of the councils overall corporate governance framework and provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the councils finances and its financial position. The NIAO have concluded their audit of these financial statements and the Panel received the final Annual Audit Letter and Report to those Charged with Governance from the NIAO providing an <b>unqualified opinion</b> on the financial accounts for the year-end 2020.</p>
	<p><b>Internal Audit / Implementation of Audit Recommendations</b></p>
3.3	<p>The Panel received an update on the progress being made to deliver the revised internal audit plan for 2020/21, including summaries of recently completed audits of Pitches, Performance Management, Accounts Payable, Cash-flow Forecasting and the temporary expenditure controls over Agency and Vacancy Control.</p>
3.4	<p>In order to feed into the year-end assurance processes and to ensure that the council is maintaining a robust system of internal control, the Panel agreed for a <b>recommendations monitor exercise to be undertaken during April / May</b>, with AGRS working closely with management on these updates, for reporting to the June meetings of the Panel.</p>
3.5	<p>The Panel agreed the <b>internal audit plan for 2021/22</b> which is designed to assist the Council in meeting relevant statutory obligations in relation to internal control, risk management and good governance.</p>
	<p><b>Risk Management / Business Continuity Management (BCM)</b></p>
3.6	<p>For QE December 2020, the Panel reviewed the <b>Corporate Risk Dashboard</b> and the progress being made to manage the 25 corporate risks, with some queries being raised as to the reason for delays in implementing mitigating actions within the agreed timeframe. The Panel was informed that the risk rating had increased for the corporate risk on Health &amp; Safety and decreased for the corporate risks on Financial Position and City Risks / Resilience. The Panel agreed for the current risk on Brexit to be refocused on the risk associated with managing the Brexit Implementation Programme for the Belfast Port. The Panel will receive quarterly updates on the progress being made to manage the corporate risks.</p>
3.7	<p>The Panel <b>agreed the updated Risk Strategy, including the updated Risk Appetite Statement</b> (Appendix 2).</p>

3.8	<p>The <b>Panel also agreed to waive the need for critical services to undertake an annual test of the BCM plans</b> (as required by the BCM Policy) during 2021/22.</p> <p><b>Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment 2021</b></p>
3.9	<p>The Panel noted the work that had been undertaken to update the <b>Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment</b> in the context of the changed internal environment where the application of normal internal controls may be disrupted due to remote working / reassignment of staff / processes moving online and the changed external environment in terms of the increased risk of cyber-attack and potentially increased motive for fraud. The Panel also noted that while AGRS will continue to support management in reviewing the level of fraud risks associated with their key activities and ensuring that appropriate mitigations are put in place, that it is management <b>responsibility to ensure that there are robust systems of internal control in place to help manage the risk of fraud.</b></p> <p><u>Corporate Health and Safety, Absence Management and Performance Improvement</u></p>
3.10	<p>The Panel received reports / updates for quarter ending December 2020 on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement. <b>The Panel welcomed these updates including the significant decrease in sickness absence at the end of quarter three which is 7.58 days compared to 9.83 days for the same period last year.</b> The Head of Human Resources indicated that a year-end analysis would be undertaken examining the impact of Covid-19 and working from home on absence management. The Panel noted that the NIAO audit and assessment of the councils improvement activity is underway and due to be completed by the end of March 2021 and received an update on the work that the Performance Improvement Working Group was doing to discuss and agree performance improvement requirements for 2021/22. The Panel noted the continued critical role of the Corporate Health and Safety Unit in supporting the council in complying with evolving government guidance on Covid-19 matters and in ensuring the health and safety of our workers and others and that this has impacted on routine health and safety activity including inspections and training.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p>
3.11	<p>None</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></b></p>
3.12	<p>None</p>

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 – Minutes of Meeting of 9th March Appendix 2 – Updated Risk Strategy