

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th December 2023
Subject: Chairs report for Audit & Scrutiny Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Darryl Sankey	

The Audit & Scrutiny Committee met on the 26th September 2023 with the updates set out below:

Mr Willis explained that the Draft Accounts of 21/22 were completed and published some time ago. However, the audit of those draft accounts are currently taking place. The timetable for the Auditor's Opinion was September. This will now be delayed, as agreed with the External Auditors. It is unknown when the 22/23 Accounts will be audited. Focus is on achieving the previous year's audit. This is due to Nationwide issues with external auditors.

A report gave an update on the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the period April to July 2023. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy was agreed at Council in March and places financial risk as its primary consideration. The Council uses large banks with reputation in the industry, government agencies or counterparties advised by our treasury advisers.

A report recommended to Council that an Independent Person (IP) is appointed to the Council's Audit & Scrutiny Committee (for audit business), in line with best practice. This was agreed by the committee.

A report and recommendations of the Formal Complaints and Performance Indicators Working Group were considered by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee and were agreed.

The Committee considered and agreed the 2023/24 Scrutiny work programme with any additions agreed by the committee at the meeting.

The Audit & Scrutiny Committee met on the 14th November 2023 with the updates set out below:

The committee noted the progress made against the 2023/24 internal audit plan and the findings from the audit completed since the last Committee meeting. The Committee approved an escalation process for the non-completion of audit recommendations where the escalation process was to require the responsible officers for recommendations that have surpassed two implementation dates (the 233 original and one revised date) to attend the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to

provide an update on progress and an explanation for not implementing the recommendation by the agreed dates.

A report introduced the Draft Audit Results Reports for the 2021-22 Accounts prepared by the Council's external auditors EY. The annual audit expressed an opinion on the Council's financial statements and addressed current statutory and regulatory requirements. The Draft Audit Result Report contained the external auditor's findings related to the areas of audit emphasis, their views on the Council's accounting policies and judgements and their finding on material internal controls.

A report set out the findings of the Council's treasury management advisors, Link, in respect of a review of the Treasury Management Strategy. The Council has, over recent years, embarked upon an ambitious capital investment programme that has necessitated significant treasury management activity, including sizeable borrowing. A report was commissioned from the local government experts in this field (Link) to report back on this activity – both in terms of the Council's performance and its current compliance with best practice. Members welcomed this report, in particular its transparency, clarity and usefulness and would like to see this level of transparency reflected in all future reports. Members also requested that debt management was added to the risk register. Officers confirmed debt management would be included in the next Strategic Risk Register before Members.

The Committee was updated on the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the period April to October 2023. In line with the scrutiny of the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance in 2023/24 in compliance with CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code 2021 Edition) and generally accepted good practice.

An update was provided on the Insurance & Risk Management Strategy and the status of the Councils 2023/24 Strategic Risk Register.

A report provided a summary and detail of the current financial contributions the Council has secured through section 106 agreements from new developments for affordable housing and public open space works. In addition, the report set out the proposed future plans for s106 Agreement processes and procedures. Mr Summers gave assurance that no monies had been lost through S106 to the Council and this information would be included in future reports. Mr Summers also advised that more detailed information would be available following the review of all S106 processes and procedures taking place as part of the Planning Improvement Plan.