

Contact Officer: Nicola Sylvester

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Friday 1st August 2025

Present: Councillor John Taylor (Chair)
Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Caroline Holt
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Councillor Kath Pinnock
Councillor Angela Sewell

Co-optees Nicholas Booth

In attendance: Samantha Lawton, Service Director, Legal, Governance and Commissioning
Shauna Coyle, Head of People Service
Michelle Moss, HR Manager
Sean Westerby, Corporate Safety and Resilience Manager
Nick Howe, Policy & Partnerships Manager
Amy Oakes, Learning & Organisation Development Partner
Greg Charnley, Grant Thornton
Aanchal Singla, Grant Thornton
Bill Armer (Ex-Officio)

Apologies: Councillor Imran Safdar
Andrew North (Co-Optee)

18 Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Andy North (Co-optee) and Cllr Nosheen Dad (Ex-Officio).

19 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2025 be approved as a correct record.

20 Declaration of Interests

No intertest were declared.

21 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

22 Deputations/Petitions

No Deputation or Petitions were received.

23 Public Question Time

No questions were asked.

24 Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Annual Report

The Committee received the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Annual Report which provided an overview of the Corporate Emergency Planning team's responsibilities in relation to incident response, training and exercises, hazard reporting, support for schools, particularly signing off high-risk educational off-site visits, compliance with statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and core competencies relating to Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response under the Health and Social Care Act (2014).

Sean Westerby, Corporate Strategy and Resilience Manager emphasised the importance of multi-agency cooperation, for example the West Yorkshire Resilience Forum and the use of Resilience Direct for secure information sharing. The report also detailed the Council's priorities over the next 12 months in relation to emergency preparedness, resilience and response.

During discussion, the Committee questioned the Council's IT recovery plan, the approval of high-risk off-site educational visits and the channels of communication for sharing information. The Committee was informed that a disaster recovery plan was in place that outlined the necessary response from IT, as well as other teams within the Council. It was noted that all staff were qualified and competent to undertake the role in approving high risk educational visits and provided advice through the Evolve platform. It was also noted that systems were in place to ensure communication with communities in both emergency and non-emergency situations and work was being carried out at a local level to identify the needs of the community.

RESOLVED- That the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Annual Report be noted.

25 Mandatory Training Review

The Committee received the Mandatory Training Review report which provided an update on the revised approach to compliance training for Kirklees Council Staff.

Shauna Coyle, Head of People Service and Michelle Moss, HR Manager, Workforce Strategy advised the Committee that the shift from 'Mandatory' training to 'Compliance' training was a requirement of the whole workforce and not job specific. Recording and reporting of training was completed on the Council's learning management system which held e-learning for current compliance training. The Committee noted that many frontline services did not complete the e-learning, instead used toolbox talks and other mechanisms. The Committee was advised that moving forward investment had been made into the learning management system to centrally record compliance training that had been completed offline and/or recorded in other systems, which was at testing stage. Once testing was completed, Homes and Neighbourhoods and Highways would pilot services before wider roll out.

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The Committee acknowledged the improvement plans to centralise training data to improve reporting but raised concern over the low compliance rates and the lack of consequence to ensure completion. The Committee highlighted the need for clearer processes to ensure compliance and asked officers to return to a future meeting with improved statistics and assurance measures.

The Committee queried the training provided for volunteers supporting Council delivery and welcomed further information in relation to the processes for this.

RESOLVED - That the Mandatory Training Review including the updated approach and actions in progress to implement changes in relation to compliance training be noted.

26 Community Governance Review Report

The Committee received the Community Governance Review Report that had been agreed by Council to undertake a Community Governance Review and delegate to agree Terms of Reference and oversee delivery to this Committee.

Nick Howe, Policy and Partnership Manager, Policy, Partnership and Corporate Planning advised the Committee that the Community Governance Review was due to commence on the 1st of October 2025. Following agreement, Officers would commence drafting the Terms of Reference for this Committee to approve at its meeting on the 26th of September 2025. The purpose of the review was to enable upper-tier councils to review and make changes to governance arrangements for parish council within its area, to ensure they continued to reflect the identity and interests of local communities and were as effective and convenient as possible.

During discussion, the Committee queried the growing interest in creating new town and parish councils and highlighted the importance of clear scoping. The Committee were reassured that information would be captured through the first stage of consultation, draft guidance would be developed in line with the government guidance and work would be undertaken within Wards to understand the views of residents.

RESOLVED -

- 1) That the arrangements for producing the Terms of Reference for the Community Review be agreed,
- 2) That Corporate Governance and Audit Committee oversee the delivery of the Community Governance Review.

27 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report

The Committee received the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Annual report which set out a summary of the work the Committee had undertaken during 2024/25.

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor John Taylor confirmed that the report highlighted the Committees work in promoting transparency and accountability in governance, provided assurance that the Committee complied with CIPFA's

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Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police, and encouraged the wider engagement of membership in the committee.

RESOLVED - That the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report be noted and referred to Council.

28 External Audit Verbal Progress Update

Greg Charnley, Grant Thornton External Auditors provided a verbal update to the Committee on the Value for Money work that has been undertaken, and the Financial Statement. Mr Charnley advised that the Audit was progressing well, and that there had been good engagement with Council Officers with no concerns to report to date. The Value for Money findings were expected to be presented to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee in November 2025, subject to no major issues. A detailed progress report on the Financial Statement would be shared at this Committee meeting in September 2025. The Final Audit findings were to be completed by January 2026, ahead of the statutory sign off date 27th February 2025.

During discussion, the Committee queried the level of resource required to complete the Audit and were advised that Kirklees fell within the highest risk scoring bracket and was significantly resourced in terms of staffing and time, but had always met statutory deadlines.

RESOLVED - That the External Audit progress update be noted.

29 Agenda Plan

The Committee received the Agenda Plan for 2025/26, the Chair of the Committee, Councillor John Taylor, advised that the meeting scheduled for March 2026 had been brought forward to the 20th February 2026. This would allow for any constitutional changes to be submitted for approval at Council in March 2026.

RESOLVED - That the updated Agenda Plan be noted.