

Contact Officer: Nicola Sylvester

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Friday 28th November 2025

Present: Councillor John Taylor (Chair)
Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Caroline Holt
Councillor Harry McCarthy
Councillor Kath Pinnock
Councillor Angela Sewell
Councillor Nosheen Dad (ex-Officio)
Councillor Graham Turner (ex-Officio)

Co-optees Nicholas Booth
Andrew North

In attendance: Chris Read, Corporate Customer Standards Officer
Ruth Calladine, Head of Procurement and Commissioning Support
Samantha Lawton, Service Director Legal and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)
Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resource
James Anderson, Head of Accountancy
Rachel Firth, Finance Manager
Alice Carruthers, Senior Risk Officer
Martin Dearnley, Head of Risk
Gareth Mills, Grant Thornton
Gregg Charnley, Grant Thornton

Apologies: Councillor Bill Armer (ex-Officio)

46 Membership of the Committee
Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Bill Armer (Ex Oficio).

47 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

48 Declaration of Interests
No interests were declared.

49 Admission of the Public

It was noted that Agenda item 13 would be considered in private session.

50 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

51 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

52 Corporate Customer Standards Annual Report 2024/25

The Committee received the Annual Report on Corporate Customer Standards 2024/25.

The report highlighted that complaint handling performance had remained broadly consistent with the previous year and provided a detailed breakdown of the overall number of complaints received, which included Ombudsman complaints. Appendix 1 of the report highlighted the comparisons across Yorkshire and Humber which showed Kirklees in the upper half of Councils in terms of performance, and appendix 2 provided a detailed summary of Ombudsman cases that were upheld. There had been no formal reports issues against the Council in 2024/25. The report also highlighted the increase in housing complaints which had risen from 190 to 250 and that Whistleblowing cases had returned to pre-covid levels. Information was provided in relation to Third Stage Complaints, in total 901 cases passed through the Corporate Customers Standards section in 2024/25 which was very similar to previous years. The report set out the number of complaints by service area and internal investigations had identified elevated numbers in waste collection and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, as well as a small increase in highways and planning.

The report also included details of the Councils approach to adopting the Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code which required the Council to transition to a two-stage complaints process in April 2026.

During discussion, regarding broader performance, the committee was advised that the Ombudsman Code included Key Performance Indicators that would be reported on annually and would provide more detailed comparisons between services and other Councils. The Council also produced a quarterly performance report which was submitted to Cabinet. The Committee queried the increase in Housing complaints (8 to 49) and were assured that work had been undertaken within the service to improve processes.

In response to queries regarding the two-stage complaint process, the implementation across services and the importance of having a consistent approach across the organisation, the Committee was advised that a new complaints system would be introduced to collate the number of complaints received for each service.

RESOLVED-

- 1) That the Corporate Customer Standards Annual Report 2024/25 be noted.
- 2) That the Whistleblowing outcomes as in Appendix 4 of the report be noted.

- 3) That the proposed implementation of the Local Government Ombudsman Complaints Code by Kirklees as in Appendix 3 of the report be noted.

53 Contract Management Arrangements Update

The Committee received the Contact Management Arrangements Update Report which provided an update on the work undertaken in relation to the recommendation in the External Auditors' Annual Report 2023/24.

The report detailed the Councils response to the recommendation which had seen the establishment of a Contract Management Transformation Project in April 2025. The initiative focused on laying strong foundations and embedding core principles to better support colleagues involved in Contract management activities. A detailed action plan had been developed and a stakeholder team established to ensure the delivery of key milestones and outcomes at pace. The work had been divided into four workstreams, Learning Resource, Contract Management Framework, Governance Framework and Data Management. In relation to the Contract Management Framework, the Committee was informed that a tiering process to assess and categorise contracts (bronze, silver, gold) based on risk had been introduced. A suite of tools which included guidance documents and various training options had been developed to support contract managers and a specific role had been created to manage the contracts register.

During discussion, the Committee noted the framework but queried the timescale for roll out and the application to existing contracts. The Committee was informed that guidance was readily available and that the application to existing contracts was a long-term goal. The Committee suggested mapping gold and silver tier contracts to risk registers to ensure the right level of categorisation.

RESOLVED – That the Contact Management Arrangements Update be noted.

54 Half Yearly Monitoring report on Treasury Management activities 2025/26

The Committee received the mid-year Treasury Management Report for 2025/26 which provided assurance that the Council's treasury management function was being managed prudently and pro-actively and that the Council had complied with its treasury management prudential indicators. The report highlighted that External investment, including the £10 million Local Authority Property Fund (LAPF), averaged £98.9 million during the period at an average rate of 4.21%. Investments ranged from a peak of £139.2 million in July 2025 to a low of £58 million in April 2025 and the majority of funds were placed in instant access accounts. The report also highlighted that the Council's external borrowing stood at £789.9 million which reflected new loans and scheduled repayments.

The Committee noted that the Treasury Management budget for 2025/26 was £36.1 million with a forecast underspend of £1.8 million. This reflected higher levels of investment balances and borrowing at rates below budget assumptions. It was also noted that all treasury management activities undertaken during the period complied fully with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and Council's approved Treasury Management strategy.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee - 28 November 2025

During discussion, the Committee queried the information presented in table one of the report in relation to forecast and estimated, and actual borrowing figures, both internal and external. The Committee was informed that estimates were part of the Capital Finance Requirement and historically had found that the outturn against Capital expenditure / Capital Plan was lower than estimated. The committee acknowledged that investment decisions were balanced on risk and reward and prioritised liquidity.

RESOLVED - That the Half Yearly Monitoring report on Treasury Management activities 2025/16 be noted.

55 External Audit Update Report

Gareth Mills and Greg Charnley, Grant Thornton External Auditors provided an update on the 2024/25 external audit and advised the Committee that the accounts audit was nearing completion, with only minor points outstanding. The ISA260 report and Value for Money (VFM) report were expected to be presented at the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting in January 2026. A draft VFM had been issued in preparation for finalisation, with some ongoing issues highlighted.

The Committee noted that Kirklees remained outside the national backlog and was on track for a full audit opinion and that future statutory deadlines would move forward significantly, which would require earlier completion in subsequent years.

RESOLVED- That the External Audit Update report be noted.

56 Risk Management Update report

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the Council's delivery of its risk management strategy and areas of focus for the next year.

The report highlighted that continual development and promotion of risk management was integral to strong performance, financial sustainability, ongoing compliance and the delivery of planned outcome for the Council. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) were responsible for risk management, supported by the Risk Management Framework which provided a structure and process to identify, assess, monitor and report on risks. Service Risk Registers continued to form the basis of the risk management process and the standard service risk register template had been adopted by most services, with full adoption expected at the end of Quarter 4 2025/26. This would provide consistency and direct comparisons between risks on different risk registers. The report included a heat map which provided details of the change in distribution of corporate risks. The Corporate Risk Register formed part of the quarterly performance and risk report to ELT, as well as the Executive Board, Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on a quarterly basis. In addition, from Quarter 1, 2025/26, risk metrics had been included as part of the quality Check and Challenge process.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee - 28 November 2025

The report also highlighted the ongoing work with regards to the provision of a Risk Appetite Statement for Kirklees, which would be used as a strategic tool to help the organisation determine how much risk it was willing to take. A draft copy could be found at Appendix 2 of the report.

During discussion, the Committee highlighted the larger complex projects and the lack of independent programme assurance. The committee noted the continued work to embed risk management across governance frameworks, enhanced training, and regional collaboration.

RESOLVED - That the Risk Management Update report be noted.

57 Risk Assurance on selected services

The Committee received a report which provided assurance on the effective and operationalisation of risk management processes throughout the Council.

Two case studies were shared with the Committee in relation to Highways Service Risk Management and Corporate Risk CAS01 Community tension, resilience and wellbeing, as part of a request from the Committee to understand how the Risk Management Policy was operationalised at both a Service and Corporate level. The report highlighted that the Risk Management Framework was designed to ensure risks were identified, monitored and managed at a Service level, and, where required, there was clear escalation routes. The report provided detailed information in relation to Service Risk Registers and the Corporate Risk Register, which both followed the same quarterly review process.

The Committee welcomed the approach as a way of providing deeper assurance and suggested extending similar reviews to long-standing risks with limited movement. The Committee also highlighted the importance of managers undertaking self-assessments of control, effectiveness and design as a way of consistency.

RESOLVED - That the Risk Assurance on Selected Services report be noted.

58 Internal Audit Quarterly Report 2 2025/26 - July 2025 to September 2025

The Committee received a report which set out the Internal Audit activity during Quarter 2, 2025/26. Appendix 1 of the report provided an update on all recommendations from 2024/25 and 2025/26 that were due to be implemented by 30th September 2025 but had not yet been fully carried out. Of the outstanding recommendations, two fundamental recommendations had not been fully completed, two major recommendations had not been implemented and eighteen had seen partial implementation. This was an improved position from Quarter 1. The report also highlighted the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act investigations, of which there had been none for this period.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee - 28 November 2025

During discussion, the Committee sought confirmation that recommendations prior to 2024/25 had been fully implemented and agreed that a retrospective review should be undertaken and added to the report as required.

RESOLVED – That the Internal Audit Quarterly Report 2025/26 – July 2025 to September 2025 be noted.

59 Agenda Plan 2025/26

RESOLVED- That the Agenda Plan 2025/26 be noted.

60 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED - That acting under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as specifically stated in the undermentioned minute.

61 Internal Audit Quarterly Report 2 2025/26 - July 2025 - September 2025

RESOLVED- That the Committee noted the exempt information, which was an appendix to Agenda item 13.