

Audit and Accounts Committee Draft Training Plan

To: Audit and Accounts Committee

Meeting Date: 30 May 2024

From: Executive Director for Finance and Resources

Electoral division(s): All

Outcome: The Committee is asked to consider an updated proposed training programme to support members awareness and understanding in carrying out their functions on this Committee.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- i. Note the report;
- ii. Consider both the format and content of the draft training plan attached at Appendix 1, noting any changes in that or timings.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) issued an updated position statement on local authority, and police, audit committees in 2023. Included in those suggestions, which took account of other reviews such as the Redmond Review, was advice that while expertise in the areas within the remit of the committee is very helpful, the attitude of committee members and willingness to have appropriate training are of equal importance. None of the national bodies have set a prescribed standard of training with suggestions ranging from specific training to encouraging committee members to participate in networks and forums established for the purpose of sharing good practice.
- 1.2 In response to this the Audit and Accounts Committee approved its annual training plan in May 2023 to look at providing a strong framework that covers the areas covered by the Committee as well as emerging changes. This report assesses the application of that, lessons learnt and suggestions for the coming years plan.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 During the last 12 months training has been provided as planned on Risk Management, Treasury Management and Accounts. This was a mixture as planned of on-line and in person, as well as using both officers as well as external advisors, such as the Treasury Management training. Feedback captured informally after the sessions was positive and will continue to be sought and learning from.
- 2.2 Training planned on financial sustainability did not take place due to the reporting to the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee but it is suggested this is rolled forward to the 2024/25 training plan. E-learning planned on changes relating the audit landscape, code and regulation has been deferred due to delays in changes planned by audit governing bodies. Likewise the planned training on the skills framework has been deferred to the next 12 months for the same reasons. As such progress has been slower than anticipated on e-learning provision and work on this is to be prioritised in the coming months. It is proposed a lot of this will initially be video presentation on subject matters, although alternative arrangements such as self-directed learning will be examined.
- 2.3 Looking forward progress and emerging expectations are expected around best value and governance. As such it is suggested that these areas will be built into the future programme. It is also noted that a joint session with Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on Cyber Planning is planned for July 2024.
- 2.4 As such an update proposed training plan for 2024-2026 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 It is suggested this programme could inform the future Annual Report presented to Full Council by the Chair of the Audit and Accounts Committee to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Committee.

3. Significant implications

3.1 Finance implications

None identified.

3.2 Legal implications

None identified.

3.3 Risk implications

None identified.

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

None identified

4. Source documents

4.1 Previous committee report - [Audit and Accounts Committee paper 26 May 2023](#)

Proposed Audit & Accounts Committee DRAFT / POTENTIAL Training Programme 2024-2026

Face to face training:
2024/25
Financial Sustainability: This will focus on how the Council assesses factors that affect its long-term financial viability, including commitments, budget monitoring and management of reserves.
Internal Audit: A focus on the role of IA, qualitative factors and measures, resourcing, risk based approach including three lines of defence, as well as good reporting and follow up.
Business Continuity: This will focus on what is Business Continuity, when does it apply, how it is managed and what an Audit Committee should look at in assessing the effectiveness of an organisations response to incidents.
Constitution: This training will coincide with the planned update of the Authority's Constitution as part of its Annual Governance Statement work. As such it will look at what is a constitution, what does it cover and how is it applied.
Fraud and Money Laundering: A guide to legislative requirements to safeguard public funds. How we plan and undertake checks within our controls to mitigate these risks.
Best Value and Governance: What is the national guidance framework and how do we assess and monitor that, such as the Annual Governance Statement.
2025/26
Induction & Role of an Audit Committee: Basic introduction to the purpose of an Audit Committee, the Terms of Reference, Frequency and agenda of meetings, where to find further information and introduction to key officers and partners.
Accounts (1): Basic introduction to the format and content of the Council's Statement of Accounts.
Accounts (2): More in depth analysis of the content of the Council's Statement of Accounts, including Property, Plant and Equipment Valuations, Capital reporting and pension fund.
Treasury Management: This will inform members of the Councils Treasury Strategy, the reasoning behind risk, as well as how and where the Council invests / borrows its money. The cashflow forecasting employed and the accounting for treasury management.

Potential E-Learning modules

2024/25

Audit Landscape: Changes taking place around how external and internal audit are set out, delivered and governed are expected, including Codes of Practice.

Role of the Statutory Officers: who are statutory officers, what are they responsible for, where is their role defined and what does that mean for the way we work.

Partnership Governance: How do we work with our partners; what difference factors do we need to consider in making decisions across partnerships.

Ombudsman: Which Ombudsman bodies cover local government, how do they operate and how do we respond.

Transparency & openness: why is this such an important principle of the public sector and what does it mean? How do we interpret and ensure we are in line with standards? Where do the 'grey lines' lie?

Skills Frameworks: This programme will focus on the core competencies of audit and finance, including risk based audit, estimation and forecasting.

2025/26

External & Internal Audit: Who are they, what are their powers, what areas do they look at, how are they different. Introduction to our auditors as well as plans of work and ways of reporting to Committee.

Risk Management: What is it, how do we do this and what is the role of councillors and this Committee in risk management.

Financial reporting: How the Council sets, monitors and reports its finances.

Internal Audit: A focus on the role of IA, qualitative factors and measures, resourcing, risk based approach including three lines of defence, as well as good reporting and follow up.