

Audit Committee 2022-23

Chairman's Report

At the start of the new civic year the membership of the Audit Committee was bolstered from seven to nine members, with councillors Nikki Woollatt and Ray Stanley being welcomed as new members. The increase in the committee's size is a recognition of the important role the committee plays in the governance of the Council.

At each of our bimonthly meetings we receive reports from both internal auditor, Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) and external auditor Grant Thornton. We also receive regular performance and risk reports. Devon Audit Partnership, audit the many services and functions across the Council and provide us with their reports and opinion on risks and the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls and update us on progress made by services in addressing recommendations made by internal audit. At our January meeting we were also presented with their Counter Fraud Resilience and Assessment Report.

The Audit Committee approved the updated 'Data Quality Policy' at our November meeting and updated Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Strategy' at our January meeting. We also recommend approval of a new Procurement Strategy. At our November meeting we considered the business plan being presented by 3 Rivers Development and provided Cabinet with our opinion and recommended that the business plan not be supported in the form presented, due to the level of risk to the Council.

Grant Thornton have been our external auditor for many years, they are however appointed on our behalf through the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) scheme, of which we opt to be part and following the most recent tendering exercise Bishop Fleming are to be our new external auditors commencing with the 2023/24 year. Grant Thornton will still audit the 2022/23 accounts and therefore provide their reports and opinions to the Audit Committee in respect of that audit, but the Committee will also start to hear from Bishop Fleming over the course of the next year. Our thanks to Grant Thornton for all the work they have done for Mid Devon and the support and advice they have provided to the committee over many years.

As the Committee chairman I have attended meetings Devon Audit Partnership Committee, on which each member authority is represented and also South West Councils Chairs of Audit Forum. This included attending a very useful Chair of Audit and Governance workshop at Taunton Racecourse in June. It is always good to meet members from other authorities hear about the work they undertake and issues they experience.

My thanks my Vice Chairman Cllr Andy Wyer for his support, and all the other members of the Audit Committee for their commitment and work. Thanks to officers of the Council for all they do, Andrew Jarrett, Deputy CEO & S151 officer, Paul Deal, Corporate Manager for Finance and his team who put together the Council's accounts, Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste and Paul Middlemass from Devon Audit Partnership. A special thank you to Sarah Lees our Member Services Officer who ensures the efficient working of our committee.

Cllr Neal Davey

Chairman of the Audit Committee