

Report of the Chairman of the Audit Committee for 2023 / 2024

The Audit Committee helps the authority to fulfil its responsibilities for accountability to the local community and meet the expectations of partners, regulators, and other stakeholders. As the primary point of contact for the authority's auditors, it provides a forum to review audit conclusions and recommendations.

During bi-monthly meetings it is the duty of the committee to consider reports from both internal and external auditors on a wide range of subjects related to the financial resilience and operations of the council with specific consideration of Governance and Risk Management.

Following local council elections in May 2023 a change of governing party resulted in multiple changes to the membership of the committee.

At an early stage the committee considered the first external audit report on the 3Rivers Project, a subject considered by the previous committee who had considered and advised against the risk of the proposed business plan. The first report received by this committee had found that whilst there were significant losses incurred by the council, the owners of the project, governance was acceptable and there was no evidence of fraud.

During the course of the year Grant Thornton, our external auditors appointed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Scheme, have stood down and the role taken over by the officers of Bishop Fleming.

On behalf of the committee and Council I would like to express our thanks to Grant Thornton for their advice and guidance. I look forward to an equally productive relationship with staff of Bishop Fleming.

I would like to thank the committee for their diligence in representing the Council, stakeholders and other organisations with whom we connect. I would like to express my special thanks to the committee Vice Chair, Councillor Lloyd Wright, for assuming the chair whilst I was incapacitated due to minor eye surgery and covid.

In conclusion, on behalf of the committee, I thank the officers of the council who through often difficult pressing meetings demanding their tolerance they have given controlled consideration of difficult questions concerning complicated historical matters. Some of these have been due to enforced delays in completion and have resulted in the external auditors not being able to complete their submissions. This will be a matter that will in the near future allow the committee to complete this year's considerations.

Cllr Lance Kennedy
Chairman of the Audit Committee