

**AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
WEDNESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2025**

Table of Recommendations

No	Item	Summary of key Recommendations	Estimated Timescale for completion
1.	Apologies	Alderman Callan, McAuley, Councillor Callaghan	-
2.	Declarations of Interest	None	-
3.	Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held Wednesday 17 September 2025	Confirmed as a correct record	-
4.	Northern Ireland Audit Office Reports		
4.1	S95 Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment	Information	-
4.2	Major IT Projects in NI	Information	-
4.3	Waste Crime in NI	Information	-
5.	Internal Audit Charter	To recommend that Council approve the Internal Audit Charter for 2025-26 as attached in Annex 1, previously circulated	
6.	Direct Award Contracts	Noted	
7.	Complaints Reports		
7.1	April 2024 – March 2025	To recommend that Council notes the	

No	Item	Summary of key Recommendations	Estimated Timescale for completion
		<i>progress on Complaints Handling and approves the Report attached in Appendix 1 - Annual Complaints Handling Data 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025, previously circulated</i>	
7.2	Six Monthly Report – 01 April 2025 – 30 September 2025	<i>To recommend that Council notes the progress on Complaints Handling and approves the Report attached Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, previously circulated on Best Practice for Annual Complaints Handling Data 1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025, and 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025</i>	
8.	Correspondence		
8.1	NIAO Change of Director – CCGBC	Information	
	In Committee (Items 10-16) inclusive)		
10.	Internal Audit (McHughLindsay) Reports		
10.1	Insurance	Information	-
10.2	Museums	Information	-
10.2	Invoicing and Debtors	Information	-
10.4	Town Halls and Civic Buildings	Information	-
10.5	Code of Governance	Information	-

No	Item	Summary of key Recommendations	Estimated Timescale for completion
11.	Revised Code of Governance Implementing Internal Audit Recommendations	To recommend that Council approve the updated Code of Governance and the associated Code of Governance Schedule	December 2025
12.	Prior Year Recommendations	Note	-
13.	Absenteeism Report (Quarter 2 – 2025-26)	Note	-
14.	Corporate Risk Matrix and Register	To recommend that Council notes and approves the changes to the Corporate Risk Register	-
15.	Procurement for Specialist ICT Audit	To recommend that Council approve the appointment of the external consultant to undertake a specialist ICT internal audit.	-
16.	Raising Concerns	None	
17.	Any Other Relevant Business (notified in accordance with Standing order 12 (o))	None	

No	Item	<i>Summary of key Recommendations</i>	<i>Estimated Timescale for completion</i>
18.	Date of Next Meeting – Thursday 18 March 2026	<i>Thursday 18 March 2026</i>	-

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF
THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE ON
WEDNESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 7.05 PM**

- In the Chair:** Councillor Mairs (Vice-Chair)
- Members Present:** Alderman Hunter (R), Coyle (C), Stewart (C)
Councillors N Archibald (R), Chivers (R), Huggins (C),
McGurk (R), Storey (C), Wisener (C)
- Substitutions:** Alderman Coyle substituted for Councillor Schenning
- Officers Present:** M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services (C)
A Ruddy, Audit, Risk & Governance Manager (C)
A Hamilton, Democratic & Central Services Manager (R)
I Owens, Committee & Member Services Officer (C)
- In Attendance:** P O'Sullivan, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit
Office (R)
C McHugh, Partner, McHughLindsay (R)
L Mitchell, Independent Member (C)
- C Ballentine, ICT Officer (C)
L Boyd, ICT Officer (C)
A Lennox, ICT Officer (R)
- Press 1 (R)
- Key:** (R) = Remotely in attendance

The Director of Corporate Services undertook a roll call. During the roll call it was determined there was an issue with sound for those in attendance in the Chamber only. The Chair advised that a recess would be taken until the matter was rectified. The meeting resumed at 7.25 pm.

The Chair advised Audit Committee of its obligations and protocol whilst the meeting was being audio recorded.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Alderman Callan & J McAuley, Councillor Callaghan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Elected Members.

3. MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2025

Copy, previously circulated.

AGREED - That the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held Wednesday 17 September 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. NORTHERN IRELAND AUDIT OFFICE REPORTS

Reports, previously circulated, were presented by the NIAO Auditor.

4.1 S95 Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment

The NIAO Audit Manager stated that the outcome was an unqualified opinion and demonstrated compliance with Local Government Act 2024 for the period 2025/26. There are no statutory recommendations for improvement and staff involved are thanked for their input.

At the request of the Independent Member the NIAO Audit Manager confirmed that the results were favorable and comparable to other Councils and confirmed that Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council consistently performs well.

4.2 Major IT Projects in NI

The NIAO Audit Manager said that the reports previously circulated were for information.

Committee NOTED the report.

4.3 Waste Crime in NI

The NIAO Audit Manager said that the reports previously circulated were for information.

Committee NOTED the report.

5. INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Audit Risk and Governance Manager.

Purpose of Report

To seek Audit Committees approval for the revised Internal Audit Charter in line with Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS).

Background

The purpose of the internal audit function is to strengthen Council's ability to create, protect, and sustain value by providing the Audit Committee and management with independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight and foresight.

The Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) dictate that an internal audit charter must formally define the internal audit function's purpose, authority and responsibility within the Council. The standards dictate that the chief audit executive (Audit Risk and Governance Manager) must periodically review the Internal Audit Charter and present it to senior management and the board (Audit Committee) for approval.

The Internal Audit Charter is attached (Annex 1, previously circulated) for Members consideration. The Internal Audit Charter establishes the position of internal audit activity within each Council along with reporting lines. It is a formal document that defines the purpose, authority and responsibility of internal audit activities.

One of the key roles which demonstrate the Audit Committee's oversight is the approval of the Internal Audit Charter. The Causeway Coast and Glens Charter has been reviewed for 2025-26 to ensure it reflects the requirements of the new Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS).

The Global Internal Audit Standards came into effect in the public sector in the UK from 1st April 2025; they replaced the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Global Internal Audit Standards will be complemented by CIPFA's Application Note and Code on the Governance of Internal Audit.

The Chief Audit executive is responsible for reviewing the Internal Audit Charter and presenting it to Audit Committee annually for review and approval in line with the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS). Final approval for the Internal Audit Charter resides with the board, in the case of Causeway, Coast and Glens Borough Council the Audit Committee.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Audit Committee approve the Internal Audit Charter for 2025-26 as attached in Annex 1, previously circulated to this report, previously circulated.

The Audit Risk and Governance Manager advised that auditing standards changed to ensure compliance with global standards and outlined responsibilities for internal auditor, audit committee and management which underpinned the work of the Internal Audit Section.

At the request of the Independent Member the Audit Risk and Governance Manager confirmed that she was the Chief Audit Executive referred to within the Internal Audit Charter.

Proposed by Councillor Storey
Seconded by Councillor Wisener and

AGREED – to recommend that Council approve the Internal Audit Charter for 2025-26 as attached in Annex 1, previously circulated.

6. DIRECT AWARDS CONTRACTS

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Background

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council approved an updated Procurement Policy in June 2025.

Detail

The revised policy had addressed the commencement of the Procurement Act which came into force in February 2025. The new policy still has inclusion of guidance around single tender actions or Direct Award Contracts (DAC) and sets out a procedure to follow in such circumstances.

DAC Process

In all cases where council staff are considering the use of the award of a contract without competition, they must seek guidance from the procurement officer before proceeding as such an approach will be easily challenged in the courts unless rigorously supported by appropriate documentation and completed in accordance with the legislative requirements.

Authorisation required

When a member of council staff has spoken with the procurement officer - and discussed all the alternative options available - and wishes to proceed with the award of a contract without competition the staff member should seek approval of their approach from the Senior Management Team before seeking Council approval to award.

A detailed report should be completed by the member of staff requesting the contract award explaining their rationale and the consideration given to all alternative options in conjunction with discussions between the staff member and the procurement officer. The template provided in Appendix B – Direct Award Contract Form, previously circulated, should be fully completed by the member of staff requesting the contract award.

Once completed, this document will require authorisation from the Senior Management Team before proceeding to the relevant committee for consideration. Upon agreement from the Council the staff member should contract the procurement officer to assist with the contract award to the chosen supplier.

DAC Approvals

The purpose of this short report is to inform members of those DAC's which have been approved since the drafting of the June 2025 report to this committee and these are listed below, it should be noted that two of these required Council approval at the point of award which was granted, there have been six DAC's awarded since the last Audit Committee in September

At the request of the Independent Member the Director of Corporate Services provided clarification on an unsuccessful tender referred to within the reporting.

Committee NOTED the report.

7. COMPLAINTS REPORTS

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

The Director of Corporate Services said that this report commenced quarterly reporting in accordance with best practice for NIPSO in tandem with the other 10 Northern Ireland Councils.

7.1 April 2024 – March 2025

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Complaints Handling Data for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council from 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 (Appendix 1), previously circulated.

Background

The information contained in the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)'s MCHP Parts 1-3 was adopted in full by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in October 2023 to ensure it meets NIPSO's MCHP test of compliance.

Council has a process for the internal reporting of complaints information, including analysis of complaints trends. Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of areas where services need to improve. The Council's definition of a complaint is "An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Council."

Stage 1: Frontline Response provides the opportunity to resolve or respond to complaints quickly and effectively. The procedure is:

Inform corporate support for logging purposes and identify service manager/officer to deal with Stage 1 response. Aim to resolve within 5 working days (or 10 if extension is appropriate). Corporate Support will acknowledge within 48 hours from next working day.

Stage 2: Investigation is appropriate where the customer is dissatisfied with the frontline response. It will require a more in-depth and detailed investigation to establish the relevant facts given the complexity or serious nature of the issue.

Proposals

Stage 1: Frontline

The following is the Complaints Data for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Number of Stage I complaints received and closed out – 45 received and closed within the 2024/2025 financial year.

Number of Stage I complaints rectified within target time (5 days) – 33 of these met the deadline of 5 working days or less to rectify.

Stage 2: Investigation

The following is the Complaints Data for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Number of Stage II complaints received and closed out - 49 received and closed within the 2024/2025 financial year.

Number of Stage II complaints rectified within target time (20 days) - 35 of these met the deadline of 20 working days or less to rectify.

Outcomes

Complaint Outcomes

Complaints received for the period 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 were investigated in line with statutory guidelines and closed based on the following outcomes:

Complaint Outcomes	
Resolved	13.83%
Upheld	3.19%
Partially Upheld	20.21%
Not Upheld	62.77%

Complaints By Directorate

Directorate	
Chief Executive	0%
Corporate Services	34.04%
Environmental Services	30.85%
Leisure and Development	35.11%
Finance	0%

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Audit Committee notes the progress on Complaints Handling and approves the Report attached in Appendix 1 - Annual Complaints Handling Data 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025, previously circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Huggins
Seconded by Alderman Stewart and

AGREED – To recommend that Council notes the progress on Complaints Handling and approves the Report attached in Appendix 1 - Annual Complaints Handling Data 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025, previously circulated

7.2 Six Monthly Report – 01 April 2025 – 30 September 2025

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the Six-Monthly Complaints Handling Report for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council from 1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025 and 1st July 2025 – 30th September (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), previously circulated.

Background

The information contained in the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)'s MCHP Parts 1-3 was adopted in full by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in October 2023 to ensure it meets NIPSO's MCHP test of compliance.

Council has a process for the internal reporting of complaints information, including analysis of complaints trends. Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of areas where services need to improve.

The Council's definition of a complaint is "An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Council."

Stage 1: Frontline Response provides the opportunity to resolve or respond to complaints quickly and effectively. The procedure is:

Inform corporate support for logging purposes and identify service manager/officer to deal with Stage 1 response. Aim to resolve within 5 working days (or 10 if extension is appropriate). Corporate Support will acknowledge within 48 hours from next working day.

Stage 2: Investigation is appropriate where the customer is dissatisfied with the frontline response. It will require a more in-depth and detailed investigation to establish the relevant facts given the complexity or serious nature of the issue.

Proposals

Stage 1: Frontline

The following is the Complaints Data for the period 1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025 for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Number of Stage I complaints closed out – 14 opened and 14 closed within the period 1st April 2025 to 30th June 2025.

Number of Stage I complaints rectified within target time (5 days) – 5 of these met the deadline of 5 working days or less to rectify.

The following is the Complaints Data for the period 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025 for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

- Number of Stage I complaints received in the financial quarter: 6
- Number of Stage I complaints closed in the financial quarter – 7 closed in the financial quarter 1 July 2025 to 30 September 2025
- Number of Stage I complaints rectified within target time (5 days) – 3 of these met the deadline of 5 working days or less to rectify.

Stage 2: Investigation

The following is the Complaints Data for the period 1st April 2025 to 30th June 2025, for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Number of Stage II complaints received in the financial quarter - 3 received within the financial quarter 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025

Number of Stage II complaints escalated from Stage I in the financial quarter - 3 escalated from Stage I within the financial quarter 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025.

6 complaints in total at Stage II in this quarter

Number of Stage II complaints closed out - 3 closed in the period 1st April 2025 to 30th June 2025.

Number of Stage II complaints rectified within target time (20 days) - 1 of these met the deadline of 20 working days or less to rectify.

The following is the Complaints Data for the period 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025, for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Number of Stage II complaints received in the financial quarter - 13 received within the financial quarter 1 July 2025 to 30 September 2025

Number of Stage II complaints closed in the financial quarter 12 closed within the financial quarter 1 July 2025 to 30 September 2025

Number of Stage II complaints escalated from Stage I in the financial quarter – 4 escalated from Stage I within the financial quarter 1 July 2025 to 30 September 2025

Number of Stage II complaints rectified within target time (20 days) - 5 of these met the deadline of 20 working days or less to rectify.

Outcomes

Complaint Outcomes

Complaints in these two quarters' (1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025, and 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025) were investigated in line with statutory guidelines and closed based on the following outcomes:

Complaint Outcomes	Apr - June 2025	July- Sept 2025
Resolved	1	0
Upheld	1	4
Partially Upheld	6	6
Not Upheld	9	9

Complaints By Directorate

Directorate)	Apr- June 2025	July- Sept 2025
Chief Executive	0	0
Corporate Services	3	5
Environmental Services	5	10
Leisure and Development	9	4
Finance	0	0

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Audit Committee notes the progress on Complaints Handling and approves the Report attached Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, previously circulated, on Best Practice for Annual Complaints Handling Data 1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025, and 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025.

Proposed by Councillor Huggins
Seconded by Alderman Stewart and

AGREED – To recommend that Council notes the progress on Complaints Handling and approves the Report attached Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, previously circulated on Best Practice for Annual Complaints Handling Data 1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025, and 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

8.1 Correspondence from NIAO regarding Change of Engagement Director

Correspondence, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services who advised that C McGeown will be the Director responsible for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough going forward.

The Director of Corporate Services said she wished C Kane, previous Local Government Audit Director a happy and long retirement. The Chair concurred with the remarks made by the Director of Corporate Services.

9. MATTERS FOR REPORTING TO PARTNERSHIP PANEL

There were no matters for reporting to Partnership Panel.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Proposed by Councillor McMullan
Seconded by Councillor Storey and

AGREED – that Audit Committee move '*In Committee*'

* **Press left the meeting at 7.45 pm.**

The information contained in the following item is restricted in Accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Chair advised Audit Committee of its obligations and protocol whilst the meeting was being audio recorded '*In Committee*'.

10. INTERNAL AUDIT (MCHUGHLINDSAY) REPORTS

Confidential reports, previously circulated, were presented by Partner from McHugh Lindsay.

Confidential, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

10.1 Insurance

Partner from McHugh Lindsay referred to Page 3 outlining a satisfactory level of assurance.

Consideration was given to adequacy of insurance cover and the risk of claims not being dealt with promptly or appropriately.

There were 3 priority 3 recommendations.

The Independent Member welcomed the satisfactory level of assurance with minor recommendations.

10.2 Museums

Partner from McHugh Lindsay referred to Page 3 outlining a satisfactory level of assurance.

Consideration was given to security and inventory of items.

There were 4 priority 2 recommendations and 3 priority 3 recommendations.

Partner from McHugh Lindsay provided commentary on remedial action required for the priority 2 recommendations.

The Independent Member welcomed the satisfactory level of assurance and said the report was helpful in terms of tightening up procedures for what was a small team of staff.

At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that she would refer a request for consideration of a Glens Museum to the Director of Leisure and Development.

10.3 Invoicing and Debtors

Partner from McHugh Lindsay referred to Page 3 outlining a satisfactory level of assurance.

Consideration was given to risk of income not completed and invoices not raised; Risk of actual receipts from debtors not being processed and recorded properly; Risks of outstanding and long term debt; Management of debtors.

There were 2 priority 2 recommendations and 2 priority 3 recommendations.

Partner from McHugh Lindsay provided commentary on remedial action required for the priority 2 recommendations, spoke of the experience of the accounts receivable team and referred to the complexity of operating effectively given the different payment streams.

10.4 Town Halls and Civic Buildings

Partner from McHugh Lindsay referred to Page 3 outlining a satisfactory level of assurance.

Consideration was given to ownership/maintenance and managing of renting rooms.

There were 5 priority 3 recommendations and 2 priority 2 recommendations.

10.5 Code of Governance

Partner from McHugh Lindsay referred to Page 3 outlining a satisfactory level of assurance and said the objective was to review compliance with CIPFA guidance framework which defined principles for Councils to adhere to in order to demonstrate effective governance.

Partner from McHugh Lindsay said that she was satisfied that Council code aligns with CIPFA framework.

There were 8 priority 3 recommendations.

11. REVISED CODE OF GOVERNANCE IMPLEMENTING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Audit Risk and Governance Manager.

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to consider the revised Code of Governance for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council following an Internal Audit which contained a number of recommendations for consideration by the Audit Committee. The Code of Governance has been updated to reflect recommendations made.

Background

The Code of Governance was presented and approved on 17 September 2025 Audit Committee. The Code of Governance had been updated to reflect the CIPFA International Framework for Good Governance in the Public Sector was published in 2014.

McHugh Lindsay undertook an internal audit and included a number of recommendations to further align the Code of Governance to guidance. Internal audit and senior management have accepted the recommendations and revised the Code of Governance accordingly.

Additional recommendations contained within the Code of Governance internal audit report will be considered when drafting the Annual Governance Statement for the 2025/26 financial statements.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Audit Committee approve the updated Code of Governance and the associated Code of Governance Schedule

The Audit Risk and Governance Manager provided commentary on the implementation of recommendations from Item 10 stating that recommendations 1, 2 and 4 had been implemented in revised code, recommendation 4 will be published on Council website following the January Council Meeting and 2 remained outstanding.

Proposed by Councillor McMullan
Seconded by Alderman Stewart and

AGREED – To recommend that Council approve the updated Code of Governance and the associated Code of Governance Schedule

12. PRIOR YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update in terms of progress made/being made in relation to recommendations made in Previous Internal Audits.

Background

All outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations are summarised on the attached schedule (Appendix 1, previously circulated), which provides details on the position as at December 2025.

Recommendations which have now been fully implemented, since the last update to Committee, are coloured green. Recommendations which are currently being addressed and scheduled yet to be completed are coloured yellow.

Following every Audit committee meeting, the schedule is updated to include the most recent recommendations from Internal Audit Reports presented at that committee.

This schedule is now available via Sharepoint (real-time and on-line), for SMT/ Head of Service/Manager update and review.

SMT will continue to progress, monitor and review the issues being addressed to ensure these are completed in a timely manner

Current Position

During the period from September 2025 to date, significant progress has been made, with a total of 7 prior year recommendations and 8 current year implemented, with 30 outstanding prior year recommendations and 17 current year recommendations being progressed.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Audit Committee recommends to Council to note the Prior Year Recommendations Progress Report.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that from September 2025 to date Q3 significant progress was being made.

The Independent Member said she was pleased to see 2 really old recommendations dating back 10 years expected to complete in December and referred to the remaining recommendations being manageable. The Independent Member acknowledged the work undertaken and said she looked forward to provision of cleaner report going forward.

Committee NOTED the report.

13. ABSENTEEISM REPORT (QUARTER 2 – 2025-26)

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with Quarter 2 (1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025) information regarding Absenteeism throughout the Council.

Background

Absenteeism within the Council is closely monitored and managed in accordance with Councils Policies and Procedures, and in line with NJC Terms and Conditions.

The ODHR team works closely with each of the Directors, Managers and Supervisors to assist and support through a range of preventative proactive measures alongside the reactive to include referrals to Occupational Health, absence review meetings and referrals for Ill Health Retirement.

Performance Improvement 2025/2026

Progress to date – Quarter 2 (1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025) including Outputs were previously circulated.

Target Outcomes

- A 2.75% reduction in the number of days lost to Council through long term sickness.
- A 2.5% reduction in the average number of days lost per employee through sickness absenteeism.

Quarter 2 Performance Against Targets and in-Year Comparisons

Tables showing Analysis of Quarter 2 Data were previously circulated in respect of:-

- Analysis of Absenteeism Data
- Top 5 reasons for Absence
- Analysis of Stress and Stress Related Absences
- Analysis of the Cost of Absence
- Analysis of exits due to Ill Health Retirement / Capability

This quarterly report will continue to be provided to Audit Committee.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council notes the report presented.

The Director of Corporate Services said there were several proactive measures and policies in place in conjunction with stakeholders. Long term sickness is a significant challenge with a smaller percentage of short term and an increase in the number of employees absent currently.

Committee NOTED the report.

14. CORPORATE RISK MATRIX

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report

This report compares the December risk register to the September risk register documenting the escalation of some risks whilst other risks facing the Council is likely to reduce / de-escalate.

Background

This quarter the senior management undertook a comprehensive review to identify and assess the main risks that could prevent the Council from realising its objectives. Following the review mitigating actions have also level.

The table, previously circulated, compares the December risk matrix to the September risk matrix seeking to highlight the impact the external environment has had on the key business of Council.

There were no new risks added to the Corporate Risk Register between September and December.

The following risk has decreased in priority from September to December: CR11B Environmental Issues, which was a new risk on the Register in September relating to the Blue/Green Algae. DEARA have a similar risk rating. This is based on cold weather and recent testing results carried out in Lough Neagh showing very low volumes of BGA.

These changes may reflect improved controls, reduced urgency, or a shift in organisational focus.

Planning risk has increased in the Quarter ending December 2025, due to a number of legal challenges.

Whilst the narrative on the other Corporate Risk has been updated, the risk rating has remained in the same position from September to December, indicating consistent strategic focus and ongoing management.

Proposals

Agreement of the selection of the changes as proposed in paragraph 2.1 to paragraph 2.5 to the Corporate Risk Register are presented to the Audit Committee for more detailed discussion and agreement.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Audit Committee notes and approves the changes to the Corporate Risk Register.

The Director of Corporate Services referred to an increased risk due to planning decisions pre-action Judicial Review correspondence in relation to

two applications and a reduced environmental risk in relation to bluegreen algae issues.

At the request of Councillor McMullan in relation to CR11 (security cameras) the Director of Corporate Services said that there was currently a review on CCTV with an exercise determining legacy arrangements, implementation of an overarching strategy in compliance with DPIA. The Director of Corporate Services said that work was in progress to appoint 5 key staff to undertake SIA training in January/February to undertake surveillance in accordance with guidelines.

Proposed by Councillor McMullan
Seconded by Councillor Huggins and

AGREED – To recommend that Council notes and approves the changes to the Corporate Risk Register.

15. PROCUREMENT FOR SPECIALIST ICT AUDIT

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Audit Risk and Governance Manager.

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Purpose of Report

To seek the approval of the Audit Committee to appoint a consultant to undertake a specialist ICT internal audit of Councils IT systems.

Background

The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Audit Committee to appoint a consultant to undertake a specialist ICT internal audit to test the robustness of the Council IT systems and procedures. At the Audit Committee on the 11th December 2024 it was agreed that:

'The Council approve the procurement for a specialist ICT audit to be undertaken subject to cost'.

The Audit Risk and Governance Manager advised that she bring costs back to the March Audit Committee for consideration prior to making an appointment.

It proved challenging to obtain costs in relation to this exercise and two separate and distinct procurement exercises were undertaken in order for

Council to secure a price due to the nature of the work. Following the second procurement exercise, one tender submission was received from Precept IT at a cost of £6,720.

This report is seeking the approval of the Audit Committee to approve the appointment of Precept ICT to allow this internal audit to progress as part of the 2025/26 planned work programme.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Audit Committee approve the appointment of the external consultant to undertake a specialist ICT internal audit.

The Audit Risk and Governance Manager advised of an update in relation to the decision approved by Audit Committee to procure the services required.

Proposed by Councillor Storey
Seconded by Councillor Wisener and

AGREED – To recommend that Council recommended that Council approve the appointment of the external consultant to undertake a specialist ICT internal audit.

16. RAISING CONCERNS/FRAUD

The Audit Risk and Governance Manager advised there was no update in respect of Raising Concerns/Fraud.

MOTION TO PROCEED ‘IN PUBLIC’

Proposed by Councillor Storey
Seconded by Councillor McMullan and

AGREED – to recommend that Committee move ‘*In Public*’.

17. ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS (NOTIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 12 (O))

There was no other relevant business.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2026

Date of Next Meeting – Thursday 19 March 2026

There being no further business the Chair thanked Elected Members for their attendance, the meeting concluded at 8.45 pm.

Chair