

**AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2024**

Table of Recommendations

No	Item	Summary of key Recommendations
1.	Apologies	Councillor N Archibald
2.	Declarations of Interest	None
3.	Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held Wednesday 13 December 2023	Confirmed as a correct record
4.	Internal Audit (Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council)	
4.1	Audit Progress Report for 2023/2024 and Audit Plan for 2024/2025	<p>to recommend that Council note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The internal audit progress to February 2024 on the Annual Audit Work plan for 2023-24. •Note the Internal Audit work to be completed for the 2024/2025 financial year.
5.	Correspondence	
5.1	NIAO – Local Government Auditor report 2023	Note
6.	Matters for reporting to Partnership Panel	None
	'In Committee' (Items 7-17.1 inclusive)	
7.	Quarterly Assurance Statement from the Oversight Panel, presented by Chief Executive	<p>to recommend that the update on progress of the implementation of the Council's decisions arising from the outcome of the Extraordinary Audit implementation process is received and noted and that furthermore, the</p>

No	Item	Summary of key Recommendations
		progress update against the recommendations in the report of the Independent Adviser and Transformation Action Plan are received and noted.
8.	Internal Audit (Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council)	
8.1	Peer Review of Internal Audit against UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)	to recommend that Council approve Option: a) Take part in the peer review with another Northern Ireland Council. It is proposed that any peer review conducted by internal audit will be conducted during the summer months.
8.2	Management of Commercial Waste at Household Recycling Centres	Note
8.3	Planning Fraud Risk Guide Internal Audit	Note
9	Internal Audit (CavanaghKelly)	
9.1	Concessionary Trading Internal Audit Report	Note
9.2	ODHR Recruitment & Selection	Note
9.3	Democratic Services	Note
9.4	Reception Services	Note
10.	Direct Award Contracts	Note
11.	Prior Year Recommendations – Progress Report as at March 2024	to recommends that Council note the progress on the Prior Year Recommendations Progress Report.
12.	Internal Audit Resourcing 2024/25	to recommend that Council approve the extension of the co-sourcing contract for 12 months, securing the additional 40 days to deliver the Internal Audit schedule of work.

No	Item	Summary of key Recommendations
13.	Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) – Internal Audit Advisory Review 2022-23 Causeway Coast and Glens Council’s Management of any Potential and or Perceived PCSP Conflicts of Interest	Note
14.	Absence Report (Quarter 3)	to recommend that Council note the report presented.
15.	Corporate Risk Matrix and Register	Note
16.	Legal Cases Activity	to recommend that Council note the Legal Cases Activity Report.
17.	Raising Concerns/Fraud (verbal)	Note
17.1	Payment of Debtor Invoices	to recommend that Council approve the control mechanisms as follows: Control 1 – All in-person payment of debtor invoices (in cash or by cheque) be processed through the on-site cash register at the Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre. Control 2 – The Visitor Information Centres Cash Handling Procedures be updated to include Council’s procedures for in-person payment and collection of debtor invoices. Control 3 – The Visitor Information Centres Cash Handling Procedures also be updated to include provision for a Duty Officer to verify any in-person payment of debtor invoices in excess of £300 (in cash or by cheque). Control 4 – All relevant staff (and agency workers) at the Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre be trained

No	Item	Summary of key Recommendations
		on the updated procedures for in-person payment and collection of debtor invoices (in cash or by cheque).
18.	Any Other Relevant Business (notified in accordance with Standing Order 12(o))	None
19.	Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 12 June 2024	Note

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF
THE AUDIT COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE ON
WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2024 AT 7.01PM**

In the Chair: Councillor C McQuillan

Members Present: Alderman Callan, J McAuley
Councillors Chivers, Kane, Kyle, McGurk, McMullan,
Schenning, Mairs, Storey, Wallace, Wisener

L Mitchell, Independent Member

Officers Present: D Jackson, Chief Executive
M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services
A McPeake, Director Environmental Services
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer
A Ruddy, Audit, Risk & Governance Manager
C Chambers, Risk Officer /Assistant Internal Auditor
S Duggan, Civic Support & Committee & Member Services Officer

In Attendance: P O'Sullivan, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office
C McHugh, Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly

C Thompson, ICT Officer

Press 1no. (R)

Key: (R) = Remotely in attendance

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Councillor N Archibald.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 13
DECEMBER 2023**

Copy, previously circulated.

The Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held Wednesday 13 December 2023 were received and noted.

4. INTERNAL AUDIT (CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL)

4.1 Audit Progress Report for 2023/2024 and Audit Plan for 2024/2025

Copy, previously circulated, presented by Audit, Risk and Governance Manager.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager advised it was good practice to bring the Audit Plan to Audit Committee on a regular basis.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager referred Committee to page 2 and page 3 which listed the audit assignments completed in 2023-2024, to note in-year that eight audits have been completed, there were two backlog audits complete, a total of ten audit assignments in 2023-24. Audit, Risk and Governance Manager advised these did not include the short reports, where it had been noticed there were weakness in internal controls and brought forward to Audit Committee.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager referred to page 4, the planned work for 2024-25 and asked Audit committee to consider the planned work proposed for the new financial year.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager advised within the list, two audits marked yet to be determined, this was a recommendation from the review of governance arising from the Extraordinary Audit, keeping two blank assignments year on year to ensure audits are aligned to emerging risks to Council.

Councillor Storey referred to table 2.2, the areas being assigned a Limited level of assurance, he enquired what was the difference between Limited and Satisfactory in terms of the process.

Audit Risk and Governance Manager clarified there were three level of audit assurance – Satisfactory, Limited and Unacceptable. She advised, Elected Members, unacceptable, to this Committee was very important. Limited not so much as this was judgemental-Priority 1 recommendations Council would want be addressed, it was not overly concerning to have Limited level of assurances. This year there had been two Limited reports, one around Concessionary Trading and the second, Commercial Waste Household Recycling Centres both complex audit areas.

Independent Member queried whether in 2023/2024 there was confidence the plan would be delivered in full. She advised that in 2022-23 there were resourcing issues which led to audits being put into this year.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager advised in 2023-24 there would be sufficient coverage for this years' internal controls assurance to be signed off,

subject to queries, whistle blowing, anything that may come in and well placed to have sufficient audit coverage for the financial year.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Audit Committee recommends to Council to note:

- The internal audit progress to February 2024 on the Annual Audit Work plan for 2023-24.
- Note the Internal Audit work to be completed for the 2024/2025 financial year.

AGREED – to recommend that Council note:

- The internal audit progress to February 2024 on the Annual Audit Work plan for 2023-24.
- Note the Internal Audit work to be completed for the 2024/2025 financial year.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

5.1 NIAO – Local Government Auditor Report 2023

Correspondence, previously circulated, presented for information as read by Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office who invited questions from Elected Members.

Independent Member advised the report was excellent, developed by NIAO that gives Council a lot of information comparing with other Councils across Northern Ireland and encouraged Elected Members to read it. Independent Member referred to page 25, relating to graphs giving comparisons against Councils' absence levels, figure 11, the number of days lost to sickness absence per year, per employee. Looking at graphs she observed a real issue for Causeway Coast and Glens, the upper grey line, highest number of days lost per employee per Council and orange line, relating to this Council, Causeway Coast and Glens compared to other councils were amongst the highest per absence level, per employee.

In response to the Independent Member Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office confirmed her interpretation of the graphs to be correct.

Independent Member advised Audit Committee, with regards to Council's absence information, the report gave valuable comparatives with other Councils in Northern Ireland that Committee should take note of.

Councillor Storey, stated the Audit Office had given an impartial and independent, fair reflection of issues, that recent reports on value for money or the planning service or audit report in relation to procurement was welcome. He advised the issue for Audit Committee and Council was how will it address the issues of concerns in relation to Senior Management Team to take the Audit report and how will it be lesson learned and implemented in terms of actions to follow on from, so that the issues can be addressed.

At this point on the Agenda, the Chair advised Agenda Item 6 Quarterly Assurance Statement From The Oversight Panel, Presented By the Chief Executive be taken '*In Committee*'.

Committee NOTED the report.

6. MATTERS FOR REPORTING TO PARTNERSHIP PANEL

There were no matters for reporting to the Partnership Panel

Proposed by Councillor Schenning
Seconded by Councillor Storey and

AGREED – to recommend that Council move '*In Committee*'.

* **Press was ejected from the meeting at 7.12pm.**

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.

7. QUARTERLY ASSURANCE STATEMENT FROM THE OVERSIGHT PANEL, PRESENTED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented as read by the Chief Executive.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress with implementation of the Council's decisions arising from the outcome of the Extraordinary Audit implementation process. Furthermore, this report seeks to provide a progress update against the recommendations within the subsequent Transformation Action Plan

Further detail was provided within the confidential report.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the update on progress of the implementation of the Council's decisions arising from the outcome of the Extraordinary Audit implementation process is received and noted and that furthermore, the progress update against the recommendations in the report of the Independent Adviser and Transformation Action Plan are received and noted.

Independent Member referred to the table's one hundred separate actions, it was very encouraging seventeen achieved to date with a further seventy on course, enquired regarding thirteen under the amber colour area.

The Chief Executive referred to the time frame to have the work completed by October 2024, he stated a high degree of confidence it would be achieved, with all programmes there was some risk, the amber timeframe and resource risk. Some actions were outwith Council's control, with no direct influence. Actions led by Local Government Staff Commission with a timeframe for completion of April to inform an Organisational review. The Chief Executive advised Council was making good progress, and the Independent Advisor very pleased with the progress made so far.

Alderman Callan sought an understanding of the 'Health Check' and any work undertaken with staff prior to its launch. Alderman Callan referred to the item on additional workload and pressures on officers outside normal duties, enquired whether that had been quantified or if there was a need for additional support.

The Chief Executive advised the work commissioned by the Local Government Staff Commission to assess the organisation behaviours and values against its strategic priorities. The Chief Executive outlined the multi-layered engagement opportunities with staff and offered to share communications with Elected Members.

The Chief Executive advised of additional staff within Information Governance, additional workload being managed through prioritisation, however a consequential impact the Transformation Plan being prioritised over all work and quantified in the programme, including costs.

Councillor Storey referred to the £1 land deal, rather than the £1 land transfer, stating those have to have a long look how they have impacted negatively on the morale and workings of Council. Councillor Storey stated the Audit Office did not give the Department a good report in the Procurement Audit, squandering £2.6bn and there was no special Audit undertaken. Councillor Storey referred to costs and its direct impact, people complaining about car parking charges, if it had not had to spend £1/2 million. Councillor Storey stated the Department will not release the name of the public representative who

reported Council to the Minister, he advised it was a matter of openness and transparency, until it came to the Department.

In response to a query regarding costs, The Chief Executive advised of an estimate of approximately £600,000.

AGREED – to recommend that the update on progress of the implementation of the Council’s decisions arising from the outcome of the Extraordinary Audit implementation process is received and noted and that furthermore, the progress update against the recommendations in the report of the Independent Adviser and Transformation Action Plan are received and noted.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT (CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL)

8.1 Peer Review of Internal Audit Against UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Audit, Risk and Governance Manager.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to consider the review of Internal Audit against the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

Background

All local authorities subject to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (amended) must make provision for internal audit in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) as well as the (CIPFA) Local Government Application Note.

A professional, independent and objective internal audit service is one of the key elements of good governance in local government.

The PSIAS require that an external assessment of an organisation’s internal audit function is carried out every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. External assessments can be in the form of a full external assessment, or a self-assessment with independent external validation.

The Internal Auditors Practitioner’s Group (IAPG) for the 11 Northern Ireland Councils meet on a quarterly basis and have established that several Councils including Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council require this exercise to be completed for the 2024/25 financial year.

This report has been prepared for Audit Committee to consider:

- a) Take part in the peer review with another Northern Ireland Council. It is proposed that any peer review conducted by internal audit will be conducted during the summer months or alternatively:
- b) To approve the procurement of a fully external peer review to be conducted by an accountancy firm.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Audit Committee decide on which method to use to externally review the internal audit service for Council either:

- a) Take part in the peer review with another Northern Ireland Council. It is proposed that any peer review conducted by internal audit will be conducted during the summer months or alternatively:
- b) To approve the procurement of a fully external peer review to be conducted by an accountancy firm.

The Audit, Risk and Governance Manager advised yearly self-assessment questionnaires had been undertaken but can no longer be undertaken for year 5 as it should be an external review. She advised for option a) the timescale of 2-3 weeks and option b) a cost of £5,000-£10,000, subject to procurement.

Independent Member asked what impact option a would have on 2024-2025 Internal Audit Plan, stated a view for option a) for learning across Councils in Northern Ireland.

The Audit, Risk and Governance stated a slight time impact, it was 2-3 weeks over the Summer which was slower for internal audit due to officer leave. The Audit Risk and Governance Manager advised the Councils which were undertaking each review, which had been randomly generated.

Alderman Callan stated preference for option a) to promote collaboration amongst Councils.

Proposed by Alderman Callan
Seconded by Councillor Schenning and

AGREED – to recommend that Council approve Option:

- a) Take part in the peer review with another Northern Ireland Council. It is proposed that any peer review conducted by internal audit will be conducted during the summer months.

8.2 Management of Commercial Waste at Household Recycling Centres

Confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Audit, Risk and Governance Manager as read.

The Audit, Risk and Governance Manager advised this was an Internal Audit, and timely to conduct. She drew Elected Members' attention to Page 3, overall received a Limited Level of Assurance Rating. She advised the report contained six Recommendations, two Priority 1 Recommendations, three medium level and one low level Recommendation.

The Audit Risk and Governance Manager stated the Management of Commercial Waste at Household Recycling Centers was an important area for Council because, if not managed appropriately, it could cost rate payers additional money to dispose of the waste and secondly, Council may lose income if not charging businesses to dispose of their waste. Also, there was an increased risk of businesses outside the Borough driving to Causeway Coast and Glens, and using its facilities to dispose of their commercial waste.

From conducting the Audit, it had been found that on occasions staff had been subject to a level of abuse, when seeking to challenge individuals or businesses.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager referred to two Priority 1 Recommendations:

Priority 1 Recommendation – Council Develop a Commercial Waste Management Policy regarding the controls on the management of commercial waste at Household Recycling Centres. It was important for Council to take a stand to develop a policy in relation to how the Council aims to manage this waste and encourage a reduction in the amount that goes to landfill.

A Lower priority that once a policy in place, there were procedures, guidance and clarification for those on the ground managing the day-day activity.

A second Priority 1 Recommendation at 6.3 recommend the requirement for Council to introduce systems for monitoring waste disposed and implement charging for different types of waste as received. In the absence of Policy and procedures there were no clear systems in place for charging of commercial waste.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager advised previously Council had a booking system in place which helped manage staff workload on a day-to-day basis and acted as a deterrent for commercial waste. That Council should consider the various options available for the charging of commercial waste at Councils Household Recycling Centres, this was a difficult and complex area.

There was a Recommendation to establish an Elected Member/Officer Working group to iron out some of the difficulties experienced on the ground and seek a resolution in this area.

Alderman Callan queried whether the Working Group recommendation would be put before Environmental Services committee. The Audit Risk and Governance Manager advised that was correct.

Independent Member referred to a Limited Assessment, two Priority 1 Recommendations referring to 6.3, charging arrangements for disposal of waste,

she stated this indicated a need for investment, to have a charging mechanism put in place, where there plans for investment in this area.

The Director of Environmental Services advised he would look at the options available, there were pre-paid mechanisms for commercial waste operators, and Council does charge coming in to the compost site at Letterloan, a weighbridge, and invoice. He clarified other options would have to be looked at, were generally weight based, direct to weighbridges or come back to Members for additional weighbridges to accurately assess tonnages to be charged.

It was proposed by Councillor Schenning and seconded by Councillor Kane to recommend that Council establish a Working Group.

Alderman Callan sought clarification of the recommendation which he considered had to be placed before Environmental Services Committee.

The Director of Environmental Services advised a Working Group was already within the Terms of Reference on waste issues through Environmental Services and confirmed it would be expediated.

Councillor Storey referred to the issue regarding CCTV. Councillor Storey stated Council was required to get its basics right and that included the management of waste.

Committee NOTED the report.

8.3 Planning Fraud Risk Guide Internal Audit

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Audit, Risk and Governance Manager.

Further detail was provided within the confidential report.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager referred to Page 3 an overall Satisfactory Level of Assurance, there were five Recommendations, three medium level, two low level, Recommendation 1 Fraud Risk Assessment Internal Audit would work with Planning Department in fulfilling its recommendation. The second was an Annual Declaration for Planning Committee Members to remind them of their requirements in the position held as key, Democratic Services would work with Planning Department on this.

There was an overall Satisfactory Level of Assurance awarded.

Independent Member stated Planning was such an important part of Councils business and there was scrutiny from the public this was very reassuring for Council, a Satisfactory assurance in this area, a good report reflecting Council and Planning Members were doing the right thing in this area.

Committee NOTED the report.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT (CAVANAGHKELLY)

9.1 Concessionary Trading Internal Audit Report

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

Senior Manager CavanaghKelly advised the report was referred to at the December meeting and at that stage did not have management responses.

Senior Manager CavanaghKelly referred Elected Members to page 3 an overall Limited Level of Assurance, there were three Priority 2 medium risk Recommendations and the remaining Priority 3 lower level risks. Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly clarified the audit carried out late last year, finalised in January with management responses, and a lot of action had already been taken to address the recommendations. The main issue that there was not a clear framework of what concessionary trading actually was, she stated a unique expression, to be defined and agreed, and a framework of procedures put around it, how concessionary trading licences would be awarded and managed going forward.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly advised of the issue of Procurement of awarding those licences, and a recommendation ensuring the procedure was clearly documented and agreed with Elected Members at every point. She advised it occurred every three years, and it was important it was well planned before being taking forward. Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly stated at the time of carrying out the audit there was an issue with planning at some of the sites, a recommendation that Elected Members be made aware, with options whether to go forward with the procurement or have it delayed and all put in place. After licences have been awarded there should be a clearly documented process to ensure licence holders comply with terms and conditions and what would happen if not complied with.

Independent Member requested an update on the procurement exercise, whether it had been completed.

The Director of Environmental Services advised good progress had been made and a lot of work undertaken within the past months. He updated Elected Members that at the previous evenings' Environmental Services Committee meeting, the framework had been agreed for procedures, terms and conditions, and thoroughly went through each of the sites methodically for products and planning process. Elected Members had agreed the auction would not take place unless sites had CLEUD or Planning, last month there had been an extension to existing sites for three months to allow sites to go through that process. He stated the plan to hold the auction mid-May for a term of two years and nine months starting 1 July. The Director of Environmental Services concluded this will assist going forward for 2027.

Councillor Kane advised Committee had delved into terms and conditions, there had been a lot of scrutiny of every single part, commenting that an awful lot of work had gone into that from Elected Members and the team and acknowledge how time consuming it was for a lot of people and stated his thanks to the team.

Committee NOTED the report.

9.2 ODHR Recruitment and Selection

Confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly referred Elected Members to Page 3 main risks considered, there were three Priority 3 Recommendations and overall a Satisfactory Level Assurance. She commended ODHR Team for being very organised, record keeping immaculate in such an important area to have good records in. Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly stated the Recommendations were minor, low risk, around developing their own procedures within the Department, to supplement the Local Government Staff Commission Policy which was the main guide for recruitment and Council has their own process that they use to implement that.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly advised one minor authorisation form recommendation they review, in terms of whether HR need to be noting an approval or not.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly looked at retention of records, an important area surrounding GDPR, a recommendation there was an adequate audit trail of their review of records, going forward.

Committee NOTED the report.

9.3 Democratic Services

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

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly referred to page 3, summary, that laid out the risks considered for this area. The audit was focused on administration of Council and Committee meetings and training for Elected Members.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly advised on an overall Satisfactory Level of Assurance, four low level Recommendations and the team to be commended,

she advised the information had been available and forthcoming and a reflection of good record keeping.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly advised of a Recommendation around formalising their own internal guidance, if there was a change of staff or a staff member absent, they would have a record of what to do, operating within very tight deadlines. Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly referred to KPI's and a recommendation to be amended. A recommendation around Declarations of Interest, that when Councillors declare interest in meetings it was currently followed with a form to request additional information, the Recommendation that if they are concerned the information at the meeting was not sufficient, they give guidance to Elected Members on what they need to say at the meeting and remove the form.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly advised of a Recommendation around Elected Member training in relation to the fact Council had been awarded NI Charter Learning and Development, very worthy to note for Council, she stated the assessment of whether Council should receive the Charter was complimentary to Council and had made six areas for improvement - That the Elected Member Development Working Group monitor those recommendations to ensure they are implemented.

Committee NOTED the report.

9.4 Reception Services

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

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly referred to page 3 a summary of Findings and risks considered. She advised of a Satisfactory Level of Assurance, four low level recommendations and two Priority 2 low level Recommendations, that all Reception staff receive Tech One training as they log income. There was a Priority 2 Recommendation around cash recording, to ensure a consistent and proper recording and reconciliation of cash, to include segregation of duties people taking the cash and preparing lodgements. She advised the levels of cash extremely low and in one office, a higher level. Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly noted the insurance cover was for £500 and recommendation reviewed.

Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly stated all recommendations had been accepted, she had visited all offices, staff were very helpful and very good at their job.

Committee NOTED the report.

10. DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS

Confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council approved an updated Procurement Policy in March 2021.

Detail

The revised policy had addressed a number of recommendations that had been made in reference to the old policy. One such recommendation was the inclusion of guidance around single tender actions or Direct Award Contracts (DAC). The policy gives guidance 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.

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 Annexe 6 – Direct Award Contract Form 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 1 January 2021 and these are listed below, it should be noted that seven of these required Council approval at the point of award which was granted.

The Chief Finance Officer detailed four new Direct Award Contracts awarded.

Committee NOTED the report.

11. PRIOR YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS – PROGRESS REPORT AS AT MARCH 2024

Confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services for information.

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.

Further detail was provided in the confidential report.

The Director of Corporate Services referred to the PYR schedule, which had now further detail included, to ensure alignment with Prior Year Recommendations with actions arising out of the Transformation Action Plan and associated timescale of October 2024.

Recommendation(s)

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

AGREED - to recommends that Council to note the progress on the Prior Year Recommendations Progress Report.

* **Senior Manager, CavanaghKelly left the meeting at 8.05pm.**

12. INTERNAL AUDIT RESOURCING 2024/25

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Audit, Risk and Governance Manager.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Audit Committee recommends to the Council that it approves the extension of the co-sourcing contract for 12 months, securing the additional 40 days to deliver the Internal Audit schedule of work.

Audit, Risk and Governance Manager sought approval to extend the contract for a further year with current provider CavanaghKelly, on the proviso of 40 days, and additional 40 days, in total 80 audit days, a cost implication of a 3% increase.

Proposed by Councillor McMullan

Seconded by Councillor McGurk and

AGREED – to recommend that Council approve the extension of the co-sourcing contract for 12 months, securing the additional 40 days to deliver the Internal Audit schedule of work.

13. NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD (NIPB) – INTERNAL AUDIT ADVISORY REVIEW 2022-23 CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS COUNCIL'S MANAGEMENT OF ANY POTENTIAL AND OR PERCEIVED PCSP CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Chief Executive as read.

Independent Member referred to section 2.3 in relation to procurement and a separate Management letter sent, highlighting the number of issues and suggested the letter come to Audit Committee for completeness.

The Chief Executive advised he would undertake that and that all recommendations within the letter had been dealt with.

In response to Alderman Callan, the Chief Executive clarified the report does go back to the Policing Board and they are aware of the recommendations updated and implemented. The Chief Executive provided a summary of the issue.

Committee NOTED the report.

* **Senior Manager, Cavanagh Kelly rejoined the meeting at 8.09pm.**

14. ABSENCE REPORT (QUARTER 3)

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

It is recommended that Council notes the report presented.

The Director of Corporate Services provided commentary on the statistics.

- Top 5 reasons for absence and reduced significantly in comparison to last year Referred to the age profile of the workforce, proactive and reactive measures in place and Policies and Procedures. The area was continuing to review discussed quarterly and case management conference with Occupational Health provider.

The Chair commended the actions of Council for its outreach through Inspire, he queried the Mental Health Action plan 2020-2023 and whether it would be renewed.

The Director of Corporate Services advised this was a joint initiative and that while the date was 2023, the principles were still in place for proactive work and support mechanisms in place, she would bring a report to the June meeting.

The Chief Executive referred to the average age of the organisation, chance of serious illness and average age of employees who cannot afford to retire until pension age of 67. The Chief Executive advised the retention figure of Council was very good.

AGREED – to recommend that Council note the report presented.

15. CORPORATE RISK MATRIX AND REGISTER

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services for information.

The Director of Corporate Services Corporate Risk Matrix updated for January, February and March and details providing the information which led to the high level summary.

16. LEGAL CASES ACTIVITY

Confidential by virtue of paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services for information.

It is recommended that the Audit Committee recommends to Council to note the Legal Cases Activity Report.

The Director of Corporate Services referred to the number of legal cases opened and closed that were dealt with in-house, First Registration of Council Land and Registration of Council Car Parks.

Alderman Callan stated he had asked for it previously, the ongoing costs in relation to legal cases that Council has previously dealt with and ongoing to understand the ongoing costs.

The Director of Corporate Services apologised and confirmed this would be included going forward.

AGREED – to recommend that Council note the Legal Cases Activity Report.

17. RAISING CONCERNS/FRAUD

The Audit, Risk and Governance Manager reported verbally one new fraud

Committee NOTED the update.

17.1 Payment of Debtor Invoices

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was presented by the Audit, Risk and Governance Manager.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Audit Committee approve the control mechanisms as follows:

Control 1 – All in-person payment of debtor invoices (in cash or by cheque) be processed through the on-site cash register at the Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre.

Control 2 – The Visitor Information Centres Cash Handling Procedures be updated to include Council's procedures for in-person payment and collection of debtor invoices.

Control 3 – The Visitor Information Centres Cash Handling Procedures also be updated to include provision for a Duty Officer to verify any in-person payment of debtor invoices in excess of £300 (in cash or by cheque).

Control 4 – All relevant staff (and agency workers) at the Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre be trained on the updated procedures for in-person payment and collection of debtor invoices (in cash or by cheque).

AGREED – to recommend that Council approve the control mechanisms as follows:

Control 1 – All in-person payment of debtor invoices (in cash or by cheque) be processed through the on-site cash register at the Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre.

Control 2 – The Visitor Information Centres Cash Handling Procedures be updated to include Council's procedures for in-person payment and collection of debtor invoices.

Control 3 – The Visitor Information Centres Cash Handling Procedures also be updated to include provision for a Duty Officer to verify any in-person payment of debtor invoices in excess of £300 (in cash or by cheque).

Control 4 – All relevant staff (and agency workers) at the Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre be trained on the updated procedures for in-person payment and collection of debtor invoices (in cash or by cheque).

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

There were no matters of Any Other Relevant Business.

MOTION TO PROCEED ‘IN PUBLIC’

Proposed by Councillor McMullan
Seconded by Councillor Kane and

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

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2024

Committee NOTED the date of the next meeting.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 8.21pm.

Chair