



To: Members of the Audit & Governance Committee

***Notice of a Meeting of the Audit & Governance
Committee***

Wednesday, 4 June 2025 at 1.00 pm

Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#)
Please note, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

Committee Officers: Committee Services
Email: committees.democraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Membership

Chair – Councillor Roz Smith
Deputy Chair - Councillor John Shiri

Councillors

Batstone
Crichton
Ted Fenton

James Fry
Hingley
McLauchlan

Rawlins

Co-optee

Dr Geoff Jones

Notes:

- ***Date of next meeting: 16 July 2025***



AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
- 2. Declaration of Interests - see guidance note**
- 3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 14)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 and 20 May 2025 and to receive information arising from them.

4. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to present a petition must be submitted no later than 9am ten working days before the meeting.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting.

Requests should be submitted to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

5. Update on Statement of Accounts 2024/25 (Pages 15 - 18)

Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

This report provides two updates regarding the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts.

Enterprise Oxfordshire has been a council-controlled entity since 1 April 2024. However, because its financial activity has been assessed as not material the council's external auditor has advised that group accounts are not required for 2024/25.

As set out in the update on Local Audit reform elsewhere on the agenda the deadline for publishing the unaudited accounts for 2024/25 has been extended to 30 June 2025. Oxfordshire County Council anticipates meeting this deadline, with the public inspection period scheduled from 1 July to 12 August.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

- (a) Note the update on the accounting treatment for Enterprise Oxfordshire in the 2024/25 financial year.
- (b) Note the publication date of the Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 and the associated public inspection period.

6. Local Audit Reform: Audit Consultation Outcome (Pages 19 - 24)

Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer.

This report sets out an update on Local Audit Reform following the national consultation that ran from December 2024 to January 2025.

It also provides background to the issues that have impacted on the audit and opinion on the council's accounts from 2020/21 onwards and explains the on-going impact for the audit of the 2024/25 accounts and potentially future years.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

- (a) Note the update on Local Audit Reform and the establishment of a Local Audit Office.
- (b) Note the on-going backstop arrangements following the disclaimed opinions for the council's accounts for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

7. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service 2024/2025 Annual Report (To Follow)

8. Risk Management Update (Pages 25 - 30)

Report by Lorna Baxter, Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

This report sets out updates to Risk Management and an overview of the latest strategic risk register which contains the Council's most significant risks. The strategic risk register is proactively managed by the Senior Leadership Team and reported into the Strategic Leadership Board as part of the Council's Business Management and Monitoring Reports. These combined reports contain performance, risk, and finance progress updates against the delivery of the current strategic plan priorities.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the Risk Management Update .

9. Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report (Pages 31 - 64)

Report by Chief Internal Auditor

This is the annual report of the Chief Internal Auditor, summarising the outcome of the Internal Audit work in 2024/25, and providing an opinion on the Council's System of Internal Control. The opinion is one of the sources of assurance for the Annual Governance Statement.

The basis for the opinion is set out in paragraphs 22 – 35, followed by the overall opinion for 2024/25 which is that there is **satisfactory** assurance regarding Oxfordshire County Council's overall control environment and the arrangements for governance, risk management and control.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to consider and endorse this annual report.

10. Internal Audit Strategy & Plan 2025/26 (Pages 65 - 80)

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

This report presents the Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26. A separate plan for Counter-Fraud activity will be presented to this Committee in July 2025.

Appendix 2 sets out the annual Internal Audit plan for 2025/26.

The key focus of audit activity during the year includes:

- Financial Management
- Capital
- Major Programmes
- Contract Management
- Governance
- IT Security
- Service Strategic Risks

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to Comment and note the Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26.

11. Internal Audit Charter 2025/26 (Pages 81 - 100)

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

This report provides the Audit & Governance Committee with an update on the implementation of the new Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector. It presents both the Internal Audit Charter and the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme for 2026/26. These are subject to annual review.

The committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) Note the update on implementation of the Global Internal Audit Standards
- b) Approve the Internal Audit Charter for 2025/26
- c) Note the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.

12. Audit Working Group Update (Pages 101 - 104)

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

The Audit Working Group (AWG) met on 26 March 2025. The group received an update on the implementation of management actions arising from the audit of Strategic Contract Management which was undertaken in 2024/25. The group also received an update from the Counter Fraud Team, on current and recently completed cases and on the development of the counter fraud risk register.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report.

13. Annual Governance Statement - 2024/25 (Pages 105 - 156)

Report by Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Audit & Governance Committee has the responsibility of approving the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) each year.

Local authorities are required to prepare an AGS to be transparent about their compliance with good governance principles. This includes reporting on how they have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the previous year and setting out any planned changes in the coming period.

The Audit & Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25, subject to the Monitoring Officer making any necessary amendments in the light of comments made by the Committee, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, and the Section 151 officer.

14. Ernst & Young Update (Pages 157 - 274)

The items to be discussed:

1. Oxfordshire County Council Provisional Audit Planning Report Year Ending 31 March 2025 (E&Y)
2. Oxfordshire Pension Fund Provisional Audit Planning Report Year Ending 31 March 2025 (E&Y)
3. Oxfordshire County Council Auditors Annual Report Year Ending 31 March 2024 (E&Y)

15. Audit & Governance Committee Work Programme (Pages 275 - 276)

The Audit and Governance Committee to note, comment and agree the work programme for future meetings.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Committee to note that the date of the next meeting is 16 July 2025.

Close of meeting

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.