April 2025

Annual Letter to the CJC of the Work of the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee

Dear Members,

As Chair of the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee, I am writing to provide you with a summary of the notable findings and activities of the Sub-Committee in its first year since being established.

At the first meeting in July 2024, I was elected as Chair and Sherrie Woolf was elected Deputy Chair for the 2024/25 municipal year. I would like to thank Sherrie for her contribution and knowledge of financial matters which she was able to share. Her final meeting was in January 2025 and she was replaced by a fellow lay member, Andrew Blackmore, for the remainder of the municipal year. Andrew is able to assist the Sub-Committee in scrutinising and reviewing the work, with a background in risk management being particularly helpful. The Governance and Audit Sub-Committee has recently appointed a new Lay Member, Ms Cheryl Hucker, who is due to attend her first meeting in April 2025.

The membership of our Sub-Committee, both in terms of the councillors and the lay members, has considerable experience of audit, governance and risk committees in local authorities. Many of our Members, also have a career background in these areas. This external view and experience is a valuable resource that we are encouraging officers to utilise whenever possible.

We are grateful to officers for working with us to help us understand organisational assumptions which in turn enables us to review and scrutinise the CJC's financial affairs. In addition to the Induction session held at the beginning of the 2024/25 municipal year which included governance, finance and audit, we have held two additional Sub-Committee briefing sessions. These were in September 2024 on how risks are managed and in December 2024 on investment requests and how business cases are developed at the CJC. In my capacity as Chair, I also attend, as an observer, Investment Board and Corporate Joint Committee. This has allowed me to gain a broader understanding of the full governance structure within CCR and organisational priorities, which gives comforting levels of assurance.

During the course of our four meetings held to date, we have worked with officers to improve the information that is available to us in fulfilling our functions. One example of this has been the requested inclusion of a Corporate Risk Register report at every meeting. We have also reviewed a number of reports prior to them being considered at the CJC meetings. These include Annual Business Plan quarter performance reports, Treasury management quarterly reports and the 2023/24 Joint Committee Revenue Budget Final Out-turn Report. We have also reviewed the work of Internal Audit and External Audit.

As a Sub-Committee, we have also approved a Work Programme for the full municipal year, which sits alongside the introduction of an Actions Log. These documents are monitored at each meeting and periodically throughout the year.

We will be looking to take our Development Programme further in the near future, with the aim of including chairs of other CCR Boards and internal and external audit. We will also be exploring opportunities for more cross-working, on an informal basis, with other Sub-Committees, Boards and Groups of CCR.

We look forward to a second year where not only will it be possible to scrutinise at an earlier stage but the meeting cycle will be adjusted to ensure our meeting schedule and work programme allows for all important matters to be considered by the Sub-Committee prior to the CJC.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Lay Members and the Elected Members of the Governance & Audit Sub-Committee for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. All meetings have been well attended and all Members have been fully engaged and come together from their different backgrounds and perspectives to ensure that the Sub-Committee operated cohesively with constructive questioning and challenge throughout.

Yours Sincerely,
Alan Davies