



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Date: Wednesday 28 May 2025

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD

Membership

Councillors will be appointed to the Committee at the Annual Council meeting on Wednesday 21 May 2025. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be appointed at the meeting of the Committee being held at the conclusion of the Annual Council meeting.

Sarah Thompson – Independent Person (no voting rights)

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. Minutes (Pages 7 - 14)

To confirm as correct records the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 19 March 2025 and 21 May 2025 (to follow as meeting held after agenda publication).

4. Chairman's Announcements

To receive communications from the Chairman.

5. Requests to Address the Meeting

The Chairman to report on any requests to address the meeting.

6. Urgent Business

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

7. Head of Internal Audit Annual Report 2024/25 (Pages 15 - 56)

Report of Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Purpose of report

This report includes the Head of Internal Audit annual report (appendix 1), which summarises internal audit work undertaken in 2024/25 and provides an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

It also includes an updated internal audit charter (appendix 2), for the committee to approve. The charter has been updated to ensure that it reflects the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector, which came into effect on 1 April 2025.

Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves to:

- 1.1 Note the results of internal audit work undertaken, and the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit that Reasonable Assurance can be provided on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control.
- 1.2 Note the outcome of Veritau's quality assurance and development arrangements, including the confirmation that the internal audit service conforms to public sector internal auditing standards.
- 1.3 Note that two significant control weaknesses have been identified by internal audit during the year which are considered relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement, these being: the council's health and safety management system and its handling of strategic site applications (pages 5-6, appendix 1).
- 1.4 Approve the draft internal audit charter.

8. Counter Fraud Annual Report (Pages 57 - 66)

Report of Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Purpose of report

This report presents the counter fraud annual report for 2025/26.

Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves to:

- 1.1 Note the annual report.

9. Annual Health and Safety Report 2024-25 (Pages 67 - 78)

Report of Assistant Director of Human Resources

Purpose of report

To provide the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee with the Council's Health and Safety performance over the 2023-24 year and its plan for the current year.

Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To review the content of the report.
- 1.2 To provide feedback if any further detail or additional information is required in future reports which will be submitted quarterly.

10. Treasury Management Report - Annual Performance Report 2024/25 (Pages 79 - 92)

Report of Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Purpose of report

To provide information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2024-25 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

To demonstrate that all treasury management activities undertaken during the reporting period complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the council's approved Treasury Management Strategy.

Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note the contents of this Treasury Management Annual Performance Report.
- 1.2 To recommend the report to Council

11. Review of Committee Work Programme (Pages 93 - 94)

To consider and review the Work Programme.

12. Rutten Lane planning application: fact finding review outcomes and action plan (Pages 95 - 104)

Report of Assistant Director – Planning and Development

Purpose of report

This report presents the outcomes from Veritau's fact-finding review into the circumstances surrounding the handling of the Rutten Lane planning application and subsequent appeal.

It also provides the committee with information on the Development Management service's draft action plan, which has been prepared in response to Veritau's review and to a separate lessons learned exercise carried out by the service.

While this report is public, the three appendices have been exempted. This is on the grounds that they contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). This information is classed as exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as revised by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006). In addition, both exempt appendices 2 and 3 are working drafts. This includes an action plan for the management of strategic planning applications which will be developed further with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.

Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves to:

- 1.1 Note the findings and conclusions from Veritau's fact-finding review, which have been summarised in this report and included in full in exempt appendix 1.
- 1.2 Note that a strategic planning applications action plan (exempt appendix 2) has been drafted by the council's Development Management service to help manage delivery of the identified improvements, and that this will be finalised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

13. Exclusion of public and press

The following item contains exempt information as defined in the following paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972.

3– Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Members are reminded that whilst the following item has been marked as exempt, it is for the meeting to decide whether or not to consider each of them in private or in public. In making the decision, Members should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to the information. In considering their discretion members should also be mindful of the advice of Council Officers.

Should Members decide not to make a decision in public, they are recommended to resolve as follows:

“That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

14. **Rutten Lane planning application: fact-finding review outcomes and action plan - Exempt Appendices** (Pages 105 - 162)

Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members Lounge at the end of the meeting.

Information about this Meeting

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221534 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item.

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Evacuation Procedure

If you hear the fire alarm, please leave the building via the nearest available exit. The fire assembly point is outside the Premier Inn, adjacent to the canal.

Access to Meetings

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named below, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off.

Webcasting and Broadcasting Notice

The meeting will be recorded by the council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the council's website. The whole of the meeting will be recorded, except when confidential or exempt items are being considered. The webcast will be retained on the website for 6 months.

If you make a representation to the meeting, you will be deemed by the council to have consented to being recorded. By entering the Council Chamber or joining virtually, you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.

The council is obliged, by law, to allow members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record, and report on proceedings. The council will only seek to prevent this should it be undertaken in a disruptive or otherwise inappropriate manner.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221534

Shiraz Sheikh
Monitoring Officer

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