This report is public	
Draft Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26	
Committee	Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee
Date of Committee	18 March 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	6 March 2026
Report of	Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer)

Purpose of report

This report presents the draft annual report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the year 2025/26. It has been prepared to enable the committee to demonstrate to Council how it has fulfilled its terms of reference.

1. Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves to:

1.1 Review the draft annual report, agree any required amendments to its content, and request officers to finalise it accordingly, in preparation for the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee Chair's presentation to Council

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Per the constitution, the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (AARC) is a key component of Cherwell District Council's corporate governance framework.

2.2 Its purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment, the integrity of financial reporting, and governance processes. By overseeing internal and external audit, it makes an important contribution to ensuring the effective assurance arrangements are in place.

2.3 AARC is expected to fulfil a number of responsibilities in connection with this purpose. Broadly, these are across the areas of governance, risk, and control, internal audit, external audit, financial reporting, and treasury management. It is also specifically required, under accountability responsibilities, to publish an annual report on its work, including a conclusion on the compliance with the CIPFA guidance. This guidance is taken to mean CIPFA's position statement on audit committees in local authorities (2022 edition) and the accompanying 'Audit committee: practical guidance for local authorities and police' (2022 edition).

2.4 This report has been prepared to allow the committee to demonstrate to Council that it has achieved its purpose by fulfilling its delegated functions during 2025/26, and that its work aligns with the principles in CIPFA's position statement (and accompanying guidance).

2.5 It is for members of AARC to determine and agree that the report provides a complete and accurate representation of its work during 2025/26 before it is presented to Council. In making this determination, members of AARC are advised to revisit CIPFA's position statement, accompanying guidance, and the committee's terms of reference.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance, 2 March 2026			
Legal	There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director of Law, Governance and Monitoring Officer, 3 March 2026			
Risk Management	There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 3 March 2026			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		N/A
ICT & Digital Impact		X		N/A

Data Impact		X		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		X		N/A
Council Priorities	This report relates to the council's efficient and effective functioning which supports the priorities set out in the 2025/26 business plan. The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee fulfils a vital role in overseeing, and obtaining assurances, on the continued effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	No consultation has been required in the preparation of this report.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 Under the constitution, Council has delegated a number of functions to its sub-committees. The AARC is one such committee, and it has a key role to play in Cherwell District Council's governance framework. Council specifically requires an annual report to be presented to it in order to gain the assurance it needs that the committee has fulfilled this role.

3.2 CIPFA's 2022 position statement on audit committees in local authorities sets out the purpose of an audit committee, the importance of its independence from executive decision making, its core functions, its membership (including attributes and characteristics), its engagement with key stakeholders, and its influence and impact.

3.3 CIPFA's 2022 audit committee practical guidance expands upon the position statement, giving both officers and committee members more information on how to interpret and apply the requirements of the position statement.

3.4 The position statement strongly encourages audit committees to support transparency by reporting regularly on their work to those charged with governance.

3.5 This report aims to capture the work of the committee during 2025/26 and so demonstrate that it continues to fulfil its terms of reference, and to meet the principles and practice expected of it per CIPFA's position statement.

4. Details

4.1 The detail of this report is included in appendix 1 – Draft Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 The nature of this report is such that alternative options are not appropriate. To discharge its functions under the terms of reference for AARC, and to demonstrate conformance with CIPFA's requirements, the committee must prepare an annual report for presentation to Council.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 This report has been prepared so that the committee can agree its draft annual report for 2025/26 before it is presented to Council. The recommendation in the report has been made to encourage all committee members to participate in the production of AARC's annual report, ensuring that it is a complete and accurate record of the work it has undertaken during the year.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Ed Lambert-Martin, Audit Manager (Veritau)
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Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), 6 March 2026