

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	AGC/23/5
MEETING	AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	17 APRIL 2023
SUBJECT OF REPORT	FORWARD PLAN 2023-24
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Finance, People & Estates
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That, subject to any additions/amendments as indicated at the meeting, the Forward Plan for 2023-24, as appended to this report, be approved.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	The appendix to this report sets out the proposed Forward Plan for submission of items to meetings of this Committee during the next (2023-24) municipal year
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Nil.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	Not applicable.
APPENDICES	A. Forward Plan 2023-24
BACKGROUND PAPERS	The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1. The current Terms of Reference for this Committee provide that it has responsibility for, amongst other things:

- internal and external audit arrangements for the Authority (including approval of annual financial statements);
- Standards arrangements (Members' Code of Conduct);
- Corporate Risk Register;
- the Authority's arrangements under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 (including annual reporting); and
- receipt of an annual report from the Authority's Local Pensions Board.

1.2. A Forward Plan, as included at Appendix A to this report, sets out proposed reporting arrangements for these items to meetings of the Committee during the 2023-24 Municipal Year.

2. **FACTORS CONSIDERED IN PREPARATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN**

Financial Statements

2.1. The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022 require, amongst other things:

- for the final (i.e. following the public consultation period) 2022-23 financial statements to be approved by the Authority (or Committee thereof) and published by no later than 30 September 2023 (Regulations 9(2) and 10(1)[as amended]);
- for any certificate or opinion issued by the local auditor on the financial statements to be published by the same date (Regulation 10(1)(a)[as amended]); and
- for the Annual Governance Statement (for this Authority, this is incorporated into the Annual Statement of Assurance) to be published by the same date (Regulation 10(1)(b)[as amended]).

2.2. Regulation 10(2) provides that, in the event that the audit of accounts has not been concluded by 30 September 2023, the Authority must publish as soon as is practicable a notice on its website indicating that it has not been possible to publish the relevant documents by 30 September, the reasons for this and to publish the documents together with the auditors opinion as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of the opinion.

2.3. For the previous (2021-22) financial year, it was not possible to publish the final financial statements and auditors opinion by the designated date as a result of capacity issues faced by the external auditors. Consequently, it was necessary to publish a notice in accordance with Regulation 10(2).

- 2.4. It has been necessary in past years to arrange additional meetings of this Committee to address the issue of delays in submission of the final financial statements. To seek to avoid this in the forthcoming municipal year, the Forward Plan indicates two possible dates (in September and November 2023) to approve the final financial statements.
- 2.5. Additionally, the Code of Audit Practice 2020 was amended for the financial year 2020-21 to provide for the external auditor to publish its value for money statement by no later than three months after the issue of its opinion on the financial statements. This has also been factored into this Forward Plan accordingly.

Annual Statement of Assurance

- 2.6. The Committee usually considers the draft Annual Statement of Assurance (ASA) in advance of submission of the final financial statements. In previous years, this has been submitted to the March/April/May meeting of the Committee. In 2023-24, the Audit & Governance meeting is scheduled to be held on 17 April 2023 with a publication date of 5 April 2023 as this has been impacted by the Easter holiday.
- 2.7. As a result, a decision has been taken to delay submission of the draft ASA to the July 2023 meeting to facilitate a considered and informed approach to this important document. This accords with the provisions of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which state that the Annual Statement of Assurance should be submitted to the Committee in advance of the final statements. Further to this, submission of the financial statements has been delayed in both the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years, thus a later submission of the ASA will be more timely.

Corporate Risk Register

- 2.8. The Committee requested the provision of risk management training at its meeting on 29 November 2022 (Minute AGC/22/xx refers). This will be held prior to the start of the meeting in July 2023 (commencing at 09:30hours) so that the Committee is more informed when considering the six monthly update on the Corporate Risk Register. The training will be delivered by the Service's Corporate Risk Manager. The start time for the July meeting has been amended to 10:30hours to facilitate this.

Proposed Dates of Meetings

- 2.9. The proposed dates set out for meetings in this Forward Plan are indicative and subject to approval by the Authority at its Annual General Meeting on 10 June 2023.

3. **CONCLUSION**

- 3.1. The proposed Forward Plan appended to this report sets out, for consideration, items aligned to the Terms of Reference for this Committee for submission to meetings in the 2023-24 municipal year. It also seeks to account for any delays that may be experienced for approval of the Authority's financial statements for 2022-23.
- 3.2. The Committee is invited to consider and - subject to any amendments as may be indicated at the meeting - approve the appended Forward Plan.

SHAYNE SCOTT
Director of Finance, People & Estates