

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Wednesday, 24th September, 2025 at the Council Offices,
Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Bill O'Donovan (Chairman)
Cllr Rhian Jones (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr C.W. Card
Cllr Sue Carter
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Sarah Spall
Cllr P.G. Taylor
Cllr Jacqui Vosper

Non-Voting Member

Mr. Tom Davies – Independent Member (Audit)

18. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2025 and 23rd July 2025 were agreed and signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

19. INTERNAL AUDIT - AUDIT UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Neil Pitman, Head of Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP), the Council's internal auditors.

The Committee received SIAP's Report No. SIAP25/04, which set out the Internal Audit Progress Report, for the August 2025 accounts. The Report provided an overview of internal audit activity against assurance work completed in accordance with the approved audit plan and key updates pertinent to the discharge of the Committee's role, in relation to internal audit.

During discussion, questions were raised by Members regarding audit review sponsors, cyber security and outstanding audit actions. It was noted that there needed to be wider awareness around outstanding audit actions and there should be performance reporting to Cabinet by Service Managers. The Committee noted that the Chair wished to meet with the Leader of the Council to discuss outstanding audit actions.

ACTION:

What	By Whom	When
Provide a key for the sponsors in the audit review, for clarity.	Neil Pitman, Head of Partnership at SIAP	November 2025
The Chair of the Committee to meet with the Leader of the Council to discuss outstanding audit actions.	Cllr Bill O'Donovan, Chair of the Committee	Before the next meeting on 26th November

The Committee received SIAP's Report No. SIAP25/05, which outlined the proposed approach for the Southern Internal Audit Partnership's external quality assessment. The external quality assessment needed to be performed at least every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team.

The Committee received SIAP's Report No. SIAP25/06, which presented the Internal Audit Strategy 2025-28. The Committee noted that it was a plan of action designed to achieve objectives over the medium term. The strategy included a vision, strategic objectives, and supporting initiatives for the internal audit function to support the fulfilment of the internal audit mandate.

RESOLVED: That:

- (i) outstanding audit actions form part of Service Managers' performance reporting to Cabinet;
- (ii) the Internal Audit Progress Report be noted;
- (iii) the arrangements for the pending external assessment of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership against the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector, be noted; and
- (iv) the Internal Audit Strategy 2025-2028, be noted.

20. **CORPORATE POLICY AND GUIDANCE ON SURVEILLANCE AND THE USE OF THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000**

The Committee considered the Corporate Manager – Legal Report No. LEG2503 which set out a review of the Council's corporate policy on the use of covert investigatory techniques, including surveillance, within and outside the scope of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

The Committee was advised that much of the surveillance carried out by officers was overt, where officers would go about Council business openly. It was noted that all RIPA authorisations needed to be approved by the Magistrates Court before any surveillance could take place. The Committee was advised that no covert surveillance had been undertaken by the Council during 2024/25. The Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) policy and procedure was up-to-date and complied with current guidance. In June 2023, the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office confirmed that it was content with the Council's policies and RIPA activities.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Surveillance and RIPA Policy Report No. LEG2503, be noted.

21. ANNUAL OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT REVIEW LETTER 2025

The Committee considered the Monitoring Officer's Report No. CS251908, which summarised the outcomes and findings of the Annual Review Letter 2024/25 from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

It was noted that the LGSCO had received two complaints in respect of Rushmoor Borough Council. Both complaints were closed on the Ombudsman's initial enquiry.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the Committee note the Annual Review Letter; and
- (2) the Council commends officers on the continued improvement in services demonstrated by the lack of LGSCO involvement.

22. UPDATE ON APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM MANAGING DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Committee considered the Leader of the Council's Report No. DEM2507 which provided an update on the appointment of the Interim Managing Director and Head of Paid Service.

The Committee noted that, at its meeting on 10th April 2025, the Council approved the appointment of Ian Harrison as the Council's Interim Managing Director and Head of Paid Service for an initial period of six months with effect from 11th April 2025. At the same meeting, it was also agreed that the post of Corporate Manager – Legal Services be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer for an initial period of six months from 11th April. The Committee were advised that as the initial period was ending, it was timely to review the position and agree the next steps.

Since April, there had been a significant demand on the Interim Managing Director to carry out work linked to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), particularly following the departure of the Assistant Chief Executive. In view of this, it had not yet been possible to complete the work to review the organisation's management structure, which was required as part of the initial period of the interim appointment, to ensure organisational alignment to deliver objectives in the Delivery Plan and the future requirements of LGR. The Report proposed that the Interim Managing Director would conclude their work to review the management structure over the next few months, which would also provide the basis for Group Leaders to collectively consider the permanent arrangements for the appointment of a Head of Paid Service for the Council. It was recommended that an extension be made to the appointment of the Interim Managing Director post to conclude the work on the management structure and ensure cover for the elections in 2026.

During discussion, questions were raised regarding the £11,094 additional cost. The Committee noted that the additional cost was related to the role of Interim Managing Director and Head of Paid Service but not the Corporate Manager – Legal Services role.

- (i) **RESOLVED** that the Committee approve an extension to Ian Harrison's appointment as Interim Managing Director and Head of Paid Service until the Annual Council Meeting in May 2026, or until alternative arrangements are agreed by the Council arising from the conclusion of work on the management restructure, if that is sooner;
- (ii) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that Ian Harrison, Interim Managing Director, continue to be designated as the Council's Head of Paid Service until the Annual Council Meeting in May 2026, or until alternative arrangements are agreed by the Council if that is sooner. The role to include the statutory responsibilities of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer; and
- (iii) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that the post of Corporate Manager – Legal Services continue to be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer until otherwise designated by the Council.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

CLLR BILL O'DONOVAN (CHAIRMAN)
