

AUDIT, RISK AND GDPR SUB-COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 17th FEBRUARY 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the **AUDIT, RISK AND GDPR SUB-COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **TUESDAY, 17th FEBRUARY 2026** at **7.00 pm**

PRESENT

Councillors: Arun Chandran, Richard Hutchinson, Carl Robinson and Ken Robson.

OFFICERS

Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mr. Steve Ragg (Internal Auditor)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Admin. Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

No members of the public were in attendance

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, that Councillor Richard Hutchinson be appointed Chairman of the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Richard Hutchinson be appointed Chairman of the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

Councillor Hutchinson took the chair.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Richard Hutchinson, that Councillor Ken Robson be appointed Vice Chairman of the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Ken Robson be appointed Vice Chairman of the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Tunde Akinsanya, Tony Beddard and Neil Collinson.

4. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No requests for dispensations had been received.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

7. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub-Committee, held on 22nd April 2025, be received.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Finance Manager submitted a report updating members on the implementation of any outstanding or new internal audit recommendations since the last meeting of the Audit Sub-Committee held on 22nd April 2025.

Members were asked to note that there were no outstanding recommendations from the previous audit reports and one new recommendation, which will be rectified with the forthcoming Constitution review at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2026. This recommendation was also covered in the Internal Auditor's report which followed next.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the report be received.

9. INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

A report was submitted by the Internal Auditor to update members on the work completed in the year to date. The Internal Auditor confirmed that all of the Council's financial systems were well controlled and effective, and he was able to complete the Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return to certify this. The exception being Section C which applies to the Councils' risks as this cannot be completed until the annual review which will follow in March, which he will be returning to sign off along with the A.G.A.R.

He noted that Section B for Financial regulations showed a discrepancy between the information contained in the Council's Standing Orders relating to Business and Procedures and Standing Orders relating to Contracts and Procurement which will need to be rectified.

The Internal Auditor reported that he will not be undertaking the Internal Audit function in the new financial year. He thanked officers and staff adding that he has enjoyed his time here and that everyone was professional, friendly and councillors are in good hands.

Councillor Carl Robinson thanked the Internal Auditor for his assistance and the detailed reports adding that the work done was very good.

The Finance Manager thanked the Internal Auditor adding it had been great working with him.

The Internal Auditor was thanked for his detailed reports.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the report be received.

10. RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Corporate Management Team submitted a report providing information for the purpose of monitoring the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

It was noted that two new risks have been added to the risk register since the Council approved the current risks on 12th March 2025 which are: -

1. Failure to enhance security arrangements at annual Fireworks Display.
Category: High risk downgraded to medium via various safety improvements at 2025 event.
2. Failure to mitigate Health and Safety Risks for the Santa Tours Event linked to continuing to run the event in the traditional touring format.
Category: High risk mitigated by changing the event to the new hybrid format in 2025.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the report be received.

11. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION UPDATE

The Corporate Management Team submitted a report providing an update on General Data Protection Regulation issues. Work is ongoing regarding the implementation of a number of recommendations in relation to making the Council's I.T. systems, and the personal data it processes, more secure.

This includes attaining the nationally recognised, government backed, IT security standard accreditation, Cyber Essentials. In addition, a new section, known as 'Assertion 10', is being added to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, setting out specific requirements around digital and data management, including a requirement for all councils to have a suitable IT policy, requirements around email management, website accessibility, freedom of information and transparency, and data protection and GDPR.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the report be received.

Chairman