

Audit and Governance Committee

Chair's Annual Report

2023/24 and 2024/25

The past two years have been busy and rewarding for the Audit and Governance Committee, containing a mixture of regular updates from the Council's finance, corporate governance, and internal audit teams, together with more bespoke reports on the Council's Constitution, contracts, and on the Council's 'No Purchase Order – No Pay' approach.

We have considered the Council's Key Corporate Risks, to ensure that the Council is prepared to deal with the challenges that it faces; we've regularly considered the Council's Treasury Management strategy and information; we've received updates on the internal audit reports that have been issued across the years, together with updates on the excellent work carried out by the Council's counter-fraud team; and we've seen a number of reports coming forward for changes to the Council's Constitution, and although reservations have been expressed over the manner by which some changes have been made, by and large the changes are expected to improve the efficiency of the council, with more amendments to come in the future.

As the committee has learned, York has been in the privileged position to have its accounts signed off by its external auditors within a reasonable timeframe, at a time when so many authorities have a number of years of accounts outstanding; and the committee has had regular updates from the Council's External Auditors to provide confidence and reassurance in the Council's accounts. We've also considered the draft versions of the Council's Annual Governance Statements, providing assurance that the Council's governance processes are regularly updated and fit for purpose.

In more bespoke reports, we considered the response to the LGA Peer Challenge and the LGA Assurance Report, considered the circumstances surrounding the end of the Council's contract with the Salvation Army, and continue to press for a fuller report into the circumstances surrounding the ending of the contract, approved the process for the appointment of a new Independent Member of A&G, and approved the commencement of a Polling District and Polling Places review, the outcome of which is due to be determined in March of this year. We also considered the Council's response to the Enforcement

Notice issued by the Information Commissioner's Office in respect of Freedom of Information requests, and were pleased to note the early completion of the action plan designed to remedy any difficulties with the Council's Fol process.

Overall, the committee has significantly contributed to the Council's continuing good governance, and will continue to challenge where it believes such challenge is necessary.

The committee would like to express its thanks to outgoing independent member, Mr Joe Leigh, and Councillors Mason, Melly, and Whitcroft for their work during this period.