

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Audit and Governance Board held on Wednesday, 19 November 2025 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), Connolly (Vice-Chair), Abbott, V. Hill, Ratcliffe, Thornton and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Guest, E. Dawson, M. Murphy and G. Ferguson

Also in attendance: M. Derrick – Grant Thornton UK LLP

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
AGB23 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
AGB24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2025-26 HALF YEAR UPDATE	
<p>The Board considered a report from the Director of Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Half Year Report as at 30 September 2025. The report had previously been presented to the Executive Board at its meeting on 13 November 2025 and was noted.</p>	
<p>These reports updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market during the first half of the financial year to 30 September 2025, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.</p>	
<p>The report provided supporting information on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, short term borrowing rates, longer term borrowing rates, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken</p>	

during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

AGB25 RECRUITMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER

The Board considered a report of the Director - Finance, that provided an update on the process to recruit an Independent Member to the Board. This followed the review and update of the Board's terms of reference and composition to ensure that they complied with Cipfa's recommended practice. It was noted that the post had been advertised in early November and the closing date for applications was 28 November 2025. It was hoped that interviews would be held in December 2025 and would be undertaken by a Panel comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair and Director of Finance.

RESOLVED: That the update on progress with the recruitment of an Independent Member to the Board, be noted.

AGB26 EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

The Board received an update report regarding the completion of the audit of the Council's 2024/25 year-end accounts from Mr Derrick on behalf of the Council's external auditors Grant Thornton. He advised that it was anticipated that an Audit Certificate for 2024/25 would be issued to the Council shortly.

On behalf of Grant Thornton, he thanked the Council's Finance Team for their support during the audit of the Council accounts for 2024/25.

RESOLVED: That the verbal progress update from the Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP, be received.

AGB27 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a report from the Head of Audit and Operational Finance, updating Members on the internal audit activity since the last progress report to the Board on 24 September 2025. It also highlighted any matters that were relevant to the Board's responsibilities as the Council's Audit Committee.

Members were referred to appendix 1, which listed all the planned work for the year and its current status. The

schedule of audits had been updated to reflect the progress made in completing audits since the last update to the Board. By the end of October 2025, 591 days of audit work had been completed, which represented 56.3% of the total planned days for the year.

The report's appendix set out the progress against 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan. Since the last progress report Internal Audit had finalised 11 audits, each of which included an overall assurance opinion. Full copies of the Internal Audit reports were included in the Part II of the agenda as they contained exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report and comments made be noted

AGB28 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100

(1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

AGB29 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (PART 2)

The Board received a report from the Head of Audit and Operational Finance, which provided full copies of the Internal Audit reports completed since the previous update on 24 September 2025.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit work completed during the reporting period be noted.

Meeting ended at 6.50 p.m.