

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2025

Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 25 September 2025, at 2.00pm, in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

Chairperson: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

**In attendance
in Chamber:**

Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor O Hanlon

Councillor J Brennan
Councillor K Murphy

**In attendance
Via Teams:**

Councillor P Byrne

Councillor L Devlin

**Officials in attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital & Procurement
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Corporate Services
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

**Also in attendance
in chamber:**

Ms K Doey NIAO
Ms C Hagan Sumer NI

AC/077/2025: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Howie, King and O'Hare and from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism.

AC/078/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

AC/079/2025: ACTION SHEET OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 31 JULY 2025

Read: Action Sheet arising from Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 31 July 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a query from Councillor Bowsie, Mrs Kelly advised the update report on Mourne Mountain Gateway Project would come to a future Audit Committee following tabling at the SPR Committee Meeting.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet for Audit Committee Meeting held 31 July 2025.

AC/080/2025: ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 2025/26

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Assessment of Performance 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a query from Councillor Bowsie regarding the introduction of an employee satisfaction survey, Mrs Murphy advised that Council had an internal Health and Wellbeing Working Group who had plans to carry out an employee survey, stress risk assessment and review of health and wellbeing provision within the Council as well as reviewing the previously carried out risk assessment.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the update stating it would be beneficial to receive comparisons from previous surveys to understand how staff satisfaction and morale was improving within the Council.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the Assessment of Performance 2024-25, including the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back, Going Forward'.

CORPORATE SERVICES – OPEN SESSION

AC/081/2025: OFFICERS REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Officer's Register of Interests. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Bowsie proposed that the ICO guidance stating that the content of senior officers' declarations of interest did not need to be uploaded to the website be tabled at the next Audit Committee. This was seconded by Councillor K Murphy.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor K Murphy it was agreed that ICO guidance issued in respect of Senior Officers' Declarations of Interest be tabled at the next Audit Committee Meeting.

Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to note the Conflicts of Interest Policy & Procedure as approved by Council in 2023.

AC/082/2025: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER – S&E DIRECTORATE ALSO TO BE TABLED

**Statement of Accounts for year ending 31 March 2025
for signing by the Chief Executive and Chairperson.**

Items restricted in accordance with Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during the following items which related to exempt information by virtue of Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during these items of business.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

NIAO – CLOSED SESSION

AC/084/2025: REPORT TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE 2024/25 - DRAFT

Read: Correspondence from NI Audit Office, regarding Report To Those Charged With Governance 2024/25 – Draft. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to note the draft Report To Those Charged With Governance 2024/25.

CORPORATE SERVICES (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/085/2025: UPDATE OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding an Update on Audit Recommendations. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to note the progress in implementing both internal and external audit recommendations.

AC/086/2024: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS REPORT

Read: Report Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Direct Award Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the following:

- The Q2 Financial Year ending March 2026 in relation to Direct Award Activity.
- To note the DAC register as at 31 August 2025
- To note the developmental work bring carried out, including the Active DAC register as at 31 August 2025.

AC/087/2025: PROCUREMENT ACTION PLANS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Procurement Action Plans. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to note the update and progress in relation to Procurement and the Directorate Procurement Action Plans

AC/088/2025: UPDATE ON FRAUD AND WHISTLEBLOWING

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Update on Fraud and Whistleblowing. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the following:

- The update in relation to fraud and raising concerns cases as detailed at Appendix 1
- The progress on actions arising from the NIAO Internal Fraud Risk self-assessment
- The update in relation to the National Fraud Initiative

AC/089/2025: SUMER NI SUMMARY REPORT

Read: Sumer NI Summary Report **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the Sumer NI Summary Report including:

- HR Policy Review
- PCSP Audit
- Mid-Year Follow Up

AC/090/2025: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2025/26 - REVISION

Read: Internal Audit Plan 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26 - Revised**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.30pm

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 November 2025.

Signed: **Ms J Kelly**
Director Corporate Services

Signed: **Ms B Slevin**
Independent Chairperson