

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2025

**Minutes of Special Audit Committee Meeting held on Friday 23 May 2025, at
2.00pm, in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

Chairperson:

In attendance via Teams: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

**Committee Members in
attendance in Chamber:**

Councillor C Bowsie

**Committee Members in
In attendance via Teams:**

Councillor T Howie Councillor A Mathers
Councillor K Murphy Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor G Sharvin

**Officials in attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration &
Tourism
Mrs S Murphy – Director, Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director Active & Healthy
Communities
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance
via Teams:**

Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance &
Performance

**Also in attendance
via Teams:**

Ms K Doey NIAO
Ms C Hagan Sumer NI

AC/051/2025: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Devlin and Hanlon.

AC/052/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FOR CONSIDERATION

AC/053/2025: RISK REGISTER

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

Mrs Kelly referred to section 2.28 of the Officer's Report, which detailed that the current risk in relation to the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project (MMGP) and the review of the risk undertaken as an action from the previous Audit Committee meeting. She advised that the MMGP was included in risk CR1, which was scored Red – 20, however advised that controls were already in place in relation to capital projects, including a Project Risk Register, Gateway Reviews, and an Internal Audit of Project Governance completed in 2022/23, which received a satisfactory level of assurance. She stated that due to the fact the MMGP was a major project with huge significance for tourism in the District, there had been two meetings of the Project Board and ongoing discussions with the Department over the last number of weeks. She advised that at this stage the level of risk remained unchanged while these discussions were taking place.

Mrs Kelly advised that other controls in place included the establishment of Project Boards, outline of strategic business cases, funding agreements, and contracts for funding. She explained that an additional action had been included under CR1, relating to working with Department for the Economy (DfE) and Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partners to consider next steps.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to approve the updates to the Corporate Risk Register highlighted within the summary at Appendix 1. The Full Corporate Risk Register can be evidenced at Appendix 2.

AC/054/2025: AUDIT COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2024/2025

Read: Report from Ms B Slevin, Independent Chair of Audit Committee, regarding Audit Committee Self-Assessment 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

The Chairperson reported that the implementation of the new checklist from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) had taken longer than anticipated due to the comprehensive nature of the documentation. She highlighted that the checklist incorporated both previous recommendations and new items.

From previous recommendations, the following points were noted:

- Encouragement for Members to serve the full four-year tenure on the Audit Committee to retain knowledge and skills.
- Progression of training for all Members, including internal and on-board training.
- Continued efforts to ensure internal audit reports were completed and presented to the Audit Committee in a timely manner.
- Timely submission of reports to Democratic Services to allow Members adequate time for review.

From the new NIAO checklist, the following areas were identified:

- Improved understanding for the Committee in relation to cyber and digital risks and their impact on the Council.

- The Chairperson concluded that the Audit Committee had been assessed as working effectively for 2024/25 and welcomed any comments or questions from Members.

The Chairperson agreed with Councillor Sharvin's comments and confirmed that both suggestions would be taken forward for consideration.

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

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

Read: Internal Audit Reports **(Copy circulated)**

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Reports, to include the following:
- Follow Up Report with officers providing a 6-month mid-year review on the 2024/25 actions/internal audit recommendations to the December Audit Committee
 - Refuse Collection Overtime Report
 - Newry BID Final Report with officers to provide an update report at the September Audit Committee Meeting
 - Annual Assurance Report

AC/056/2025: PROGRESS ON INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Progress on Internal Audit Reports. **(Copy circulated)**

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the update and progress in relation to addressing audit recommendations.

FOR NOTING

AC/057/2024: LGA 2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Read: Report Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Local Government Auditor Report Recommendations. **(Copy circulated)**

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the recommendations from the LGA and the update from Council Officers.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.27pm.

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025.

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

Signed: **Ms B Slevin**
Independent Chairperson