

From: Michael Brown, Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee

To: Governance and Audit Committee, 3 November 2026

Subject: Draft Annual Report from the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee to County Council

Status: Unrestricted

Summary: The Chair's Annual Report provides County Council with an overview of the work undertaken by the Governance and Audit Committee during 2026 and highlights the key governance, audit, risk management and assurance matters considered throughout the year

1) Introduction

- 1.1. The report demonstrates the Committee's ongoing role in providing independent assurance over the Council's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements, while supporting transparency, accountability and continuous improvement.
- 1.2. The attached report has been prepared as an example of good governance practice and provides an overview of the Committee's activity and achievements during 2026.
- 1.3. The report is intended to highlight the assurance role undertaken by the Committee during the year, rather than revisit operational matters or areas identified for improvement, which have been considered separately through the Committee's regular work programme.

2) Key Highlights

- 2.1. During 2026, the Committee maintained oversight of key governance and assurance matters, including the Annual Governance Statement, Corporate Risk Register, Internal and External Audit, Counter Fraud, Treasury Management, company governance and the Oracle Cloud Programme. Across six formal meetings, Members provided challenge and scrutiny to support effective governance arrangements.
- 2.2. The Committee received positive assurance from both Internal and External Audit. The Acting Head of Internal Audit issued an Adequate Assurance Opinion for 2025/26, confirming that the Council's governance, risk management and control arrangements remain effective overall. External Audit reported no material misstatements in the Statement of Accounts and indicated that an unqualified audit opinion is anticipated.
- 2.3. The Committee also maintained oversight of the Council's preparations for Local Government Reorganisation and received assurance that

appropriate governance arrangements are being developed to support effective oversight during this period of significant change.

3) Conclusion

- 3.1. A significant focus during the year has been the continued development of the Governance and Audit Committee. This has included Member training, a review of Committee effectiveness, engagement with external providers and dedicated sessions to strengthen understanding of the Committee's role and responsibilities.
- 3.2. The Committee recognises the importance of ongoing development to ensure it remains effective in discharging its responsibilities within an increasingly complex governance environment.
- 3.3. Looking ahead, the Committee will continue to monitor delivery of governance improvement actions arising from the Annual Governance Statement and maintain oversight of key strategic risks facing the Council. Particular areas of focus will include Local Government Reorganisation, financial sustainability, SEND-related pressures, governance and oversight arrangements, and continued development of Committee effectiveness.

Recommendations

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to:

1. DISCUSS, COMMENT and APPROVE the Draft Update Report from the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee to County Council.
2. DELEGATE authority to the Monitoring Officer to finalise the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report to County Council, in consultation with the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee.

2) Appendices

Appendix: Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee's Draft Annual Report to County Council

3) Relevant Director

Petra Der Man
petra.derman@kent.gov.uk