

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
AUDIT, STANDARDS & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 27 JANUARY 2026

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor West (Chair) Loughran (Deputy Chair), Atkinson, Baghoth, Guilmant, Hewitt, Meadows, and Robinson

Other Members present: Councillors Rowkins

PART ONE

42 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

42a Declarations of substitutes

42.1 Councillor Robinson was present as a substitute for Councillor Helliwell.

42b Declarations of interests

42.2 There were none.

42c Exclusion of the press and public

42.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

42.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public are not excluded from the meeting.

43 MINUTES

43.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2025 be approved and signed as the correct record.

44 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

44.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

First of all, to say that members will have all received an invitation to the annual training and engagement session regarding the role of Internal Audit and our responsibilities in that regard as a committee. This will take place on 5th March, and I think it's an opportunity to discuss or understand the plan for the year ahead from Internal Audit. So, it won't necessarily just be a repetition of training but it's certainly a matter of engaging your views in what Internal Audit will be doing, so I hope that members will be able to attend that.

We have a number of substantial items before us today, when do we not but we do seem to have quite a lot today, firstly the External Auditors Annual (value for money) Report for 2024/25. This highlights a number of key recommendations on areas of significant weakness, including financial sustainability which is red for the 3rd year running. So, I'm sure we'll be tucking into discussion of that.

Also on our agenda is an update on the budget planning process. Members will note the purpose of the report before us and recommendations, which make clear our role is not to scrutinise the specific budget proposals but to consider whether the council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources, whether the council is ensuring sound budget management and whether steps are being put in place to secure long term financial sustainability. So, I see this to mean that we are giving oversight to the process and achievement of overall goals rather than the individual specific proposals.

I would like to welcome Councillor Rowkins who is standing in for Councillor Taylor, who is unfortunately unable to join us. Councillor Rowkins is here to help support the presentation of the Auditors Annual Report and perhaps also discussion of the budget process too, so welcome.

Members will be aware that on our agenda today we are asked to approve the Code of Corporate Governance, together with giving feedback on the Risk Management Framework, it is our role to provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management framework. These are key areas of our oversight function which I'm sure members will pay particular attention to. We also have before us the Annual Standards Update and the Annual Surveillance Report, so all very significant items on the agenda.

Finally, I wish to let you know that I have received today a date for my cochlear implant surgery, it's been a long time coming. Subject to pre-op checks going ok, which hopefully they will this time, my surgery will take place on 11th February. Our next committee meeting is 21st April, so with a fair wind I may be able to chair that, but it really is very hard to know what the outcomes will be with my new bionic hearing. It can take some time to get use to it, so we just have to see what happens. But if I'm not able to chair, the honour will pass to our deputy chair, Councillor Loughran.

45 CALL OVER

- 45.1 The Democratic Services Officer called the agenda items to the committee. All items were reserved for discussion.

46 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

46.1 No public representations were received.

47 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

47.1 No member representations were received.

48 AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT (VALUE FOR MONEY) YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2025 (2024/25)

48.1 The Committee considered the External Auditor's Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2025 which reports on the council's value for money arrangements including an assessment of financial and governance arrangements.

48.2 Councillors Atkinson, Bagtho, Guilman, Loughran, Meadows, Robinson, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

48.3 RESOLVED –

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee note the Auditor's Annual Report (Value For Money) for the financial year ending 31 March 2025.

49 ANNUAL SURVEILLANCE REPORT 2025

49.1 The Committee considered the Annual Surveillance Report appraising the Committee of the activities that have been undertaken utilising the powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) since the last report to Committee in January 2025 and introducing an updated Policy and Guidance document.

49.2 Councillors Guilman, Hewitt, Meadows, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

49.3 RESOLVED –

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee:

- 1) Approves the continued use of covert surveillance as an enforcement tool to prevent and detect crime and disorder investigated by its officers, providing the activity is in line with the Council's Policy and Guidance and the necessity and proportionality rules are stringently applied.
- 2) Note the surveillance activity undertaken by the authority since the report to Committee in January 2025 as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report.
- 3) Approve the continued use of the Policy and Guidance document as set out in Appendix 1 in its updated form.

50 GENERAL FUND DRAFT BUDGET AND RESOURCES UPDATE – 2026-27 TO 2029-30

50.1 The Committee considered an update on the budget planning process for the 2026/27 annual budget and council tax setting process together with Medium Term Financial Plan projections over the next 4-year period, considering whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, whether the Council ensuring sound budget management and whether the Council is putting on place steps to secure long term financial sustainability.

50.2 Councillors Atkinson, Meadows, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

50.3 RESOLVED –

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee note the draft budget report set out in Appendix 1 to this report having provided comment on the draft budget report, specifically in respect of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness, putting in place sound budget management and ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the organisation.

51 CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

51.1 The Committee considered an update to the Council's Code of Corporate Governance, which forms part of the Council's constitution and sets out how the Council's governance arrangements work towards meeting the seven principles of good governance, based on the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016' published by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA). The report also included the Risk Management Framework.

51.2 Councillors Guilman, Hewitt, Loughran, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

51.3 RESOLVED –

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee:

- 1) Approve the Code of Corporate Governance as included in appendix 1.
- 2) Note the current Risk Management Framework as included in appendix 2. Any feedback from the Committee will be taken into account when refreshing the Risk Management Framework for approval by Cabinet.

52 STANDARDS UPDATE

52.1 The Committee considered an update on Standards-related matters, including a review of complaints received in during 2025 alleging that Members have breached the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

52.2 Councillors Guilmant, Meadows, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

52.3 RESOLVED –

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee note the report.

53 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

53.1 No items were referred to Full Council for information.

54 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

54.1 No items were requested for the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.15pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

