

MINUTES OF: THE AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 3rd December 2025

PRESENT: Councillor Driver (Chair)
Councillors D Ashworth (sub), Bauld (sub), Holland (sub), Looker (sub), Norton and Procter

IN ATTENDANCE: Chris Warren, Director of Resources (s151 Officer), RBC
Kimberly Haworth, Head of Financial Services, RBC
Andy Dalecki, LCC Internal Auditors
Mark Baskverville, LCC Internal Auditors
Katie Kingston, Forvis Mazars External Auditors
Glenda Ashton, Committee Officer, RBC

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Walmsley

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Councillors Kenyon, Payne, M Smith, Woods, and Simon McManus, Co-opted Member.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2025

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 3.1 There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- 5.1 There were no public questions.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

- 6.1 The refreshed Debt Management Policies were reviewed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 10th November. They would be listed for approval at February Cabinet.

7. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER UPDATE QUARTER 2 2025/26

- 7.1 The Director of Resources outlined the report which asked the Committee to note the Council's Corporate Risk Register, risk consequence, mitigation action and residual level of risk.
- 7.2 The following comments were made and clarifications provided:
- Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT) were working to a slight deficit but were generally working within budget. This was an improvement on previous years.
 - A strategic leisure review was underway with initial findings being presented to Cabinet and RLT Board members on 11th December.

- The positive improvements made by RLT and progression of the leisure review were noted. The Trust had worked hard to recruit new leisure members which was welcomed.
- A new Environmental Health Officer had been recruited which would alleviate pressures on the team.
- A financial pressure had been included in this year's outturn forecast to enable the cemeteries team to draw off as necessary. Next year's budget would have provision in to ensure appropriate team sizes to deal with cemeteries and trees.
- Actions from the cemeteries investigation were being progressed.
- A long-term opportunity may be achievable in relation to rent/rates but this would not be before the end of the decade.
- A number of Tick-Tock videos had been posted to engage younger residents. The innovative approach to engage different audiences was welcomed.

RESOLVED:

1. The Committee noted the Council's Corporate Risk Register for Quarter 2 2025/26.
2. Members noted the risk consequence, mitigation action and level of risk as detailed in Appendix 1.

Councillor Norton joined the meeting

8. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2025/26 PROGRESS REPORT

- 8.1 The Audit Manager, Lancashire County Council, outlined the report which asked the Committee to consider the Internal Audit report on progress to deliver the 2025/26 audit plan.
- 8.2 The following clarification was provided:
 - Issues raised following the 'IT: Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards' audit had been dealt with immediately. The Director of Resources was comfortable the risk had been managed at an appropriate level.

RESOLVED:

1. The Committee considered the Internal Audit report on progress to deliver the 2025/26 audit plan.

9. DRAFT AUDITOR'S REPORT 2024/25

- 9.1 The Audit Manager, Forvis Mazars, outlined the report which asked the Committee to consider the draft Auditor's Report for 2024/25.
- 9.2 The following comments were made and clarifications provided:
 - There was good cooperation and regular meetings between auditors and officers.
 - There were realistic opportunities for RLT to repay their debt with the Council once their assets were sustainable.
 - It was not unusual for quarterly Financial Monitoring reports to be taken straight to Cabinet. An initial review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not necessary.
 - Following the leisure review, governance arrangements with RLT would be drawn up and recommendations worked on.
 - Disclaimed audit opinions were a national issue.
 - The process of building back assurance without full audits taking place was complicated.

- The framework to build back assurance was for the auditing profession to design and deliver. The Council's role was to work with the auditors to provide information as quickly as possible.
- The Government had issued backstop dates to address the backlog of local audits. A proof in total approach had been proposed by the relevant stakeholders to enable unqualified opinions instead of transaction testing.
- The completion of 7 years of full audit work would have a huge resource drain for officers and auditors.
- Officers were thanked for their cooperation and work with the auditors.

RESOLVED:

1. The Committee considered and noted the External Auditor's Draft Report for 2024/25.

10. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the following items of business under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 since the items involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

11. STANDARDS COMPLAINTS UPDATE (VERBAL)

- 11.1 An update was provided in relation to Standards Complaints.

RESOLVED:

- That the update was noted.

12. WHISTLEBLOWING UPDATE (VERBAL)

- 12.1 An update was provided in relation to Whistleblowing.

RESOLVED:

- That the update was noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.10pm

Signed (Chair)

Date