



**Full Council**  
19 September 2024

**Report from the Corporate Director  
of Finance and Resources**

**Audit and Standards Advisory Committee – Vice Chair’s Report**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Council
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Minesh Patel, Director of Finance and Resources Tel: 020 8937 4043 Email: <a href="mailto:minesh.patel@brent.gov.uk">minesh.patel@brent.gov.uk</a>

**1.0 Executive Summary**

1.1. This report provides a summary of the activities carried out by the Council’s Audit and Standards Advisory Committee and the Audit and Standards Committee since the start of the 2024-25 Municipal Year and Chair’s Annual Report provided on 8 July 2024.

**2.0 Recommendation(s)**

2.1 Council is asked to note the contents of the report.

**3.0 Detail**

**3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

3.1.1 The Council’s Audit and Standards Advisory Committee (ASAC) and the Audit and Standards Committee (ASC) play an important role in ensuring the good governance of the Council. The committees are a key component of the Council’s governance framework. They contribute to the overall success of the Council by providing an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements to provide assurance and confidence to those charged with governance.

3.1.2 The ASAC is responsible for considering and advising the relevant council bodies on various governance matters relating to audit activity, the council's regulatory framework, and members' standards of conduct. The ASC is responsible for various governance matters including reviewing and approving the Annual Statement of Accounts, adopting the council's Annual Governance Statement and promoting high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members.

## **3.2 Background**

3.2.1 The ASAC has met twice since the start of the 2024-25 Municipal Year, and the ASC has met once. A summary of the items discussed and considered at these meetings is set out below.

### **3.2.2 Audit and Standards Advisory Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

a. **Standards Report (including gifts and hospitality)**

The purpose of this report was to update the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on gifts and hospitality registered by Members in Q4 2023-24. The report also provided an update on member training.

b. **Annual Counter Fraud Report 2023-24**

This report summarised the counter fraud activity undertaken across multiple fraud types (including internal fraud, housing tenancy fraud, external fraud, blue badge fraud, and proactive work) for the financial year 2023-24.

c. **Internal Audit Annual Report**

This report summarised the activity of the Council's Internal Audit Function for the financial year 2023-24. In addition, the report set out the Annual Internal Audit opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework for governance, risk management and control, provided by the Council's Head of Internal Audit. This statement is used to support the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

The report also presented a revised Internal Audit Charter, reflecting recent changes in the role of the Head of Internal Audit.

d. **External Audit Enquiries of Management**

The purpose of this report was to finalise the responses provided by the Council to the external auditors Enquiries of Management in order to meet expectations of the Financial reporting Council (FRC).

e. **Draft Statement of Accounts 2023-24 Update**

In accordance with good practice, the Committee required the draft Statement of Accounts for 2023-24 for members initial consideration and feedback, in advance of the main audit which was scheduled to commence at the end of June.

f. Annual Report of the Chairs of the Audit and Standards Committee and Audit and Standards Advisory Committee

This report summarised the work of both Committees for the municipal year 2023-24 in accordance with the requirements and principles set out within CIPFA's position statement regarding Audit Committees.

g. Annual Governance Statement 2023-24

This report set out the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24 as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Committee was asked to consider the report in advance of referral to the Audit and Standards Committee for formal approval.

h. External Audit Progress and Sector Update

The purpose of this report was to provide a progress update in respect of Grant Thornton delivering their responsibilities as the Council's External Auditors.

3.2.3 Audit and Standards Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024

a. Annual Governance Statement 2023-24

This report sought formal approval of the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24, following its consideration by the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee.

3.2.4 Audit and Standards Advisory Committee – 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024

a. Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit Management Plan Update

This report informed the Committee of the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit which has arisen mainly from overspend against the High Needs Block of the Grant that is used to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The report also provided the historical context to the deficit and an update on the progress that has been made against the Deficit Management Plan.

b. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023-24

This report set out the outturn for the Council's Treasury Management Activities for 2023-24 updating Members on both borrowing and investment decisions.

c. External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

The Committee received a verbal update providing progress in delivering Grant Thornton's responsibilities as the Council's external auditors.

3.2.5 Forward Plan Items

The following items are due to be presented to the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024:

- Standards Update (including Gifts and Hospitality)
- Internal Audit Progress Update
- Stakeholder and Guarantor governance report of i4b and First Wave Housing
- Audit Findings Report
- Emergency Preparedness

**4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

4.1 None.

**5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1 The report is for noting and so there are no direct financial implications.

**6.0 Legal Considerations**

6.1 The report is for noting and there are no direct legal implications.

**7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

7.1 None.

**8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

8.1 None

**9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

9.1 None

**10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 None

**Report sign off:**

***Minesh Patel***

Corporate Director of Finance and Resources