



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Audit Committee 2024 Annual Report

January 2025

Chairperson's Statement



On behalf of the Audit Committee, I am pleased to present our report to the elected members of Galway County Council and the Chief Executive, for the year ended 31 December 2024.

We provide an independent view of the budgetary and financial reporting processes, the internal controls and the Internal Audit function, efficiency and value for money and the management of risks. The aim over the term of the committee is to contribute to enhancing the corporate governance structure in place in Galway County Council. The role of the Audit Committee is set out in our report.

As 2024 was an election year, a new Audit Committee was established post-election, in line with the [S.I. No. 244/2014 – Local Government \(Audit Committee\) Regulations 2014](#). The appointment of Galway County Council's current Audit Committee was ratified by the Council at its meeting held on 22nd July 2024. The term of the committee is concurrent with that of the elected Council.

The Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014 requires the Audit Committee to submit a report to the Council and the Chief Executive within three months of the end of the year on its activities and findings in the previous calendar year.

The current committee met on two occasions during 2024 to execute the remainder of the 2024 work programme. Two members of the previous audit committee remain in their positions, which was welcomed for a smooth transition into this new term.

During the year, the committee received full cooperation from Liam Conneally, Chief Executive and his staff in relation to all aspects of our work. We particularly would like to thank Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services, Ms. J. Brann, Senior Executive Officer Corporate Services and E. Curran, AC Secretary/Head of Internal Audit for their continued support to the Committee.

I would especially like to thank the Audit Committee members for their commitment and co-operation during 2024 and look forward to continuing to fulfil our duties for the upcoming term.

1. Membership of the Audit Committee



Left to right – Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr. O. Turner, Cllr. M. Hoade (Audit Committee Members), Liam Conneally Chief Executive, Dr. M. Moloney, (Audit Committee Chairperson), Cathaoirleach Albert Dolan, Ms. S. Roarty (Audit Committee Member), Ms. E. Ruane Director of Services, Ms. E. Curran, Head of Internal Audit, Mr. S. Duffy (Audit Committee Member)

The Audit committee is established by resolution of the Council upon nomination by the Corporate Policy Group and following consultation with the Chief Executive. The term of the committee is concurrent with that of the current Council which commenced on 22nd July 2024.

The committee consists of five members, three external members and two Local Authority members who possess an appropriate mix of desired skills, knowledge, and experience in the areas of Finance/Audit/Risk Management.

The committee is independent in its activities and accountable to the Council for its performance. Appointment to the committee is by official letter signed by the Cathaoirleach of the local authority.

The composition of the Committee since July 2024 is as follows:

Dr. Martina Moloney, Chairperson	Board member of The Heritage Council, Former Chief Executive of Galway & Louth County Councils, Former member of - The Arts Council, National Oversight & Audit Commission
Mr. Seamus Duffy	Director of Ballinasloe Area Community Development, Financial Adviser & former bank manager
Ms. Sarah Roarty	Board Director for Iarnród Éireann bringing independent judgement to bear on issues of strategy, performance, resources, key appointments and standard of conduct for the state transport body. Serves as Chairperson of Strategy, Chairperson of Safety and a member of the Audit and Risk committee.
Cllr. Mary Hoade	Elected member, Galway County Council
Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr. Ollie Turner	Elected member, Galway County Council

The Committee was supported and assisted by

- Ms. J. Brann, A/Director of Services, Corporate Services for Q1-Q2 2024, followed by Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services, Corporate Services for Q3-Q4, 2024
- Ms. E. Curran Head of Internal Audit and the Internal Audit Unit team

2. Role and functions of the Audit Committee

The Audit Committee plays a crucial role in the governance framework of Galway County Council (GCC) and is independent in the carrying out of its functions. The committee provides an independent assessment of the activities of management in relation to the control environment, risk management, financial reporting, financial management. It also supports the work of the Internal Audit Unit and advises the Chief Executive in relation to the operation and development of the Unit.

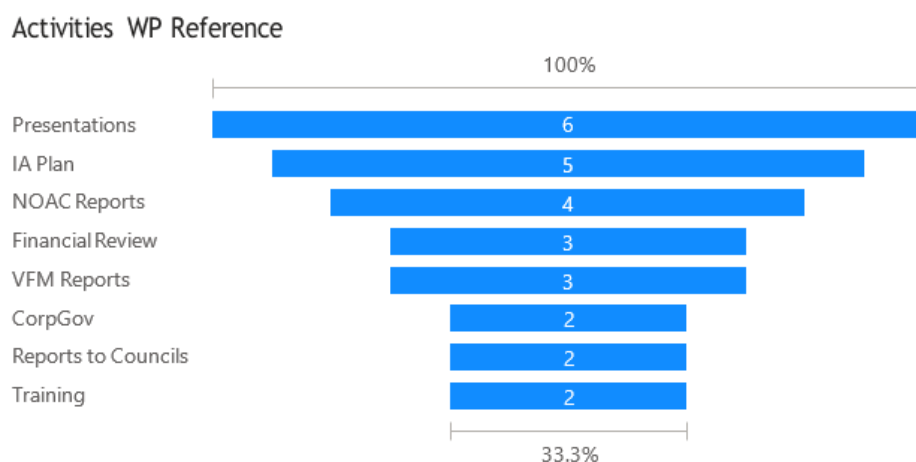
The statutory functions of the committee are as follows:

- To review financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures within GCC
- To foster the development of best practice in the performance of the Internal Audit function
- To review the audited financial statement, auditor's reports in relation to GCC and assess any actions taken by the Chief Executive in response to such statements or reports and reports its finding to the Council.
- To assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to GCC's performance of its functions.
- To consider whether processes are in place to manage risks efficiently, in accordance with organisations guidelines and business plans.
- To review performance indicators and value for money reports when prepared

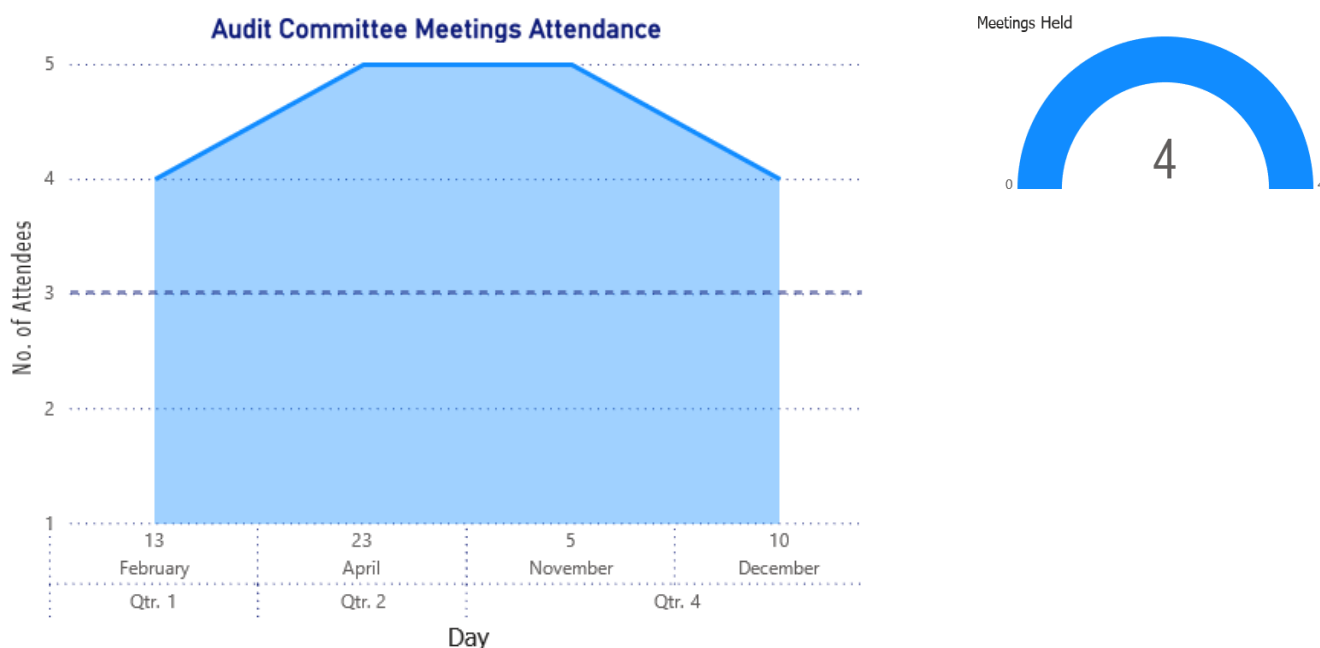
The roles and responsibilities of the Committee are set out in the Audit Committee Charter. The Charter was last reviewed by the Committee in November 2024 and is included in [Appendix 3](#).

Activities in 2024

The Audit Committee (AC) Tracker has been developed to monitor the progress of the AC Work Programme. Below is a summary of the activities undertaken during the year, with further details included in the tables in [Appendix 2](#). In addition to its statutory functions, the focus of the newly appointed Audit Committee is to have senior management attend AC meetings, to review matters arising from issued audit reports (internal & external), NOAC & VFM reports, along with identified risks included in the Corporate Risk Register. This will continue in the 2025 Work Programme with priority being given to Risk Management.



3. Meetings & Attendance



Comments	Year	Quarter	Month	Day
Absent - Cllr. L Carroll	2024	Qtr. 1	February	13
Absent - Cllr. O. Turner	2024	Qtr. 4	December	10

Meetings were conducted in person during 2024, with one member being facilitated to attend remotely on one occasion.

There were 4 no. Audit Committee meetings held in 2024, on dates as outlined above. There was strong participation from all Committee members at each meeting.

The Audit Committee considers progress against its annual work programme, the annual Internal Audit Plan, and the recommendations in Audit Reports at each meeting throughout the year.

4. Principal Matters considered by the Audit Committee in 2024

Audit Committee Work Programme

The Audit Committee Work Programme takes account of the statutory functions of the Audit Committee as set out in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and the Committee is satisfied that their responsibilities were discharged through the implementation of the work programme. Details of the completed 2024 Work Programme is summarised in [Appendix 1](#).

Audit Committees Activities - 2024

Throughout the year many areas form the in-depth discussions at committee meetings. Several presentations were provided to the committee, details of which are contained in [Appendix 2](#). The committee also met with the Chief Executive, Head of Finance and Local Government Auditor at various points during the year. The Head of Internal Audit attends all the meetings and provides regular updates on the work of the Internal Audit function and progress reports on the Local Government Auditor's management letter recommendations.

Any issues raised by members during our work were followed up by the AC secretary and satisfactory response received. A summary of principal matters considered during the year is outlined below.

Meeting held 13th February 2024

- The Head of I.C.T. gave the members an overview of Cyber Security and Galway County Council. He provided a schematic of the evolution of various security enhancements that has taken place within the organisation since 2015. An overview of IPB Cyber Insurance was provided, outlining the pros, cons and limitations of the cover. The committee were advised that the I.C.T. unit are working with IPB and acknowledge the Local Governments Auditor recommendation to obtain ISO 27001. The committee considered all commentary and concluded the discussion that cyber security is a high-risk area. It was agreed that the programme of works currently underway would continue within the I.C.T. unit to aspire to attain a suitable standard, which would be determined by the experts in the field and relayed to the executive the need to ensure that the I.C.T. unit has suitable Cyber Security personnel and that the Department should be tasked with reviewing this matter as it affect all local authorities.
- In the absence of the Risk Control Officer, the Internal Auditor gave an overview of the IPB Claims Trend Insurance report for Q4 of 2023. The members sought clarity on two points of information within the report – (i) the figures provided with respect to Q1 & Q2 pothole claims which were five time greater that previous year and (ii) Liability road claim of Q3, 2023 which seemed excessively high. These two items were referred to the Risk Control officer, who attended a subsequent meeting and clarified both issues raised to the satisfaction of the committee.
- The Committee noted the Local Government Audit Service's Value for Money report relating to
Overview of the Rates Revisions in Local Authorities
The Internal Auditor presented the executive summary of the report to the committee, followed by a representative from the Finance unit, accompanied by the Head of Finance, who gave an overview of the valuation process. A discussion ensued regarding the workings of Táilte Éireann, their relationship with the Council and what the consequences there are if valuations were delayed. It was acknowledged by the committee that there is a reliance on Táilte Éireann (T.É.) but were satisfied that there is a good relationship with T.É and hopes the collaboration continues between both organisations.

- The Internal Audit Plan 2024 was presented to the committee by the Internal Auditor. The committee agreed and approved the plan as presented and welcomed that risk based Strategic Audit Plan will be prepared during the year to align with the new upcoming Council and Audit Committee.
- The committee's Annual Report for 2023 which had been circulated prior to the meeting was reviewed and agreed by the members.
- The committee reviewed the Local Government Auditor's management letter recommendations in conjunction with the Internal Auditor. The committee continued to raise concern with regard unfunded capital balances presenting from AFS 2022 and requested that the presence of the Director of Services for Infrastructure & Operations at the next committee meeting.

Meeting held 24th April 2024

- The Head of Finance presented the unaudited Annual Financial Statement for 2023 to the members. The financials at year end, resulted in a surplus of €3,278, with a cumulative surplus on the general Revenue reserve of €46,204. The collection rate of 86% was back to pre-pandemic levels of collection. Arrears for commercial rates decreased by €457K and there is an expectation that arrears will continue to fall in 2024, due to the introduction of the once-off Increased Cost of Business grant proposed for 2024 which requires the payment of rates in order to be eligible. An in-depth discussion was had with the members regarding staff turnover, work-force planning, payroll costs, debtors, other income sources - traffic management, tourism, climate change – flood & storm contingency provision and library services.
- Unfunded Capital Balances – The Director of Services for Infrastructure & Operations addressed the committee with regard the legacy outstanding debt and how he is continuing to liaise with the TII on the reports submitted with the intention to recover some of funding.
- Risk Control Officer addressed the audit committee to clarify some of the findings of the IPB Insurance Report for 2023
- Procurement – High Court Judgement regarding public lighting contract – Ref [2024] IEHC79 was brought to the attention of the committee by the Chairperson and questioned the Head of Finance if Galway County Council was vulnerable to which assurance was given that there were no zero-rated contracts and confirmed that the Council had not been exposed in this area. It was reaffirmed by the Director of Service for Infrastructure & Operations that the duty to investigate is as an important a factor as the duty to seek clarity, with the contracting authority having the discretion on whether to eliminate a tender or not.
- The NOAC report regarding the Internal Audit Function in Local Authorities was brought before the committee and the Head of Internal Audit went through the recommendations contained within and the current position of the council with respect to them.

Meeting held 5th November 2024

- Inaugural meeting of the new Audit Committee, post local elections of June 2024. Meeting addressed protocol requirement under the Local Government Reform Act with the election of Dr. Martina Moloney as the new Audit Committee Chairperson, schedule of meetings

agreed, training, annual review of the audit committee charter and updated revision of the Audit Committee's Protocol for Protected Disclosures.

- The A.C. Secretary presented the audit committee's work programme, its progress to date and the scheduling of activities and reporting requirement for year end.
- Two NOAC reports were released since the previous meeting, and these were brought before the committee.
 - (i) Review of the Implementation of Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plans 2019-2024. An overview of the report was presented to the members, with and update with respect to Galway County Council provided by the Director of Services for Corporate services.
 - (ii) Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2023 – a summary and comparison report were prepared by the AC Secretary and was presented to the members, highlighting areas of progress for the local authority whilst also highlighting area for improvement. The committee agreed to use this information to form part of their agenda when inviting the various Directors to the AC meetings and in preparing their Work Programme for 2025.
- The Head of Internal Audit gave an overview of the finding contained within IA24.01 – Fuel cards and the recommendations. The committee agreed to include it, along with the use Low Value Purchase cards under periodic review.
- The Local Government Code of Governance issued in September 2024 was circulated to the members and the Chairperson drew attention to the document stating that it's a very useful and timely document and its content will be taken into consideration when reviewing the AC Work Programme for 2025.

Meeting held 10th December 2024

- Local Government Auditor's Statutory Report & Management Letter on the Annual Financial Statement for 2023 – presented by Mr. D. Cahill, Local Government Auditor.
- The Local Government Auditor commended the Internal Audit Function and the standard of reporting and his satisfaction with the workings of the Audit Committee.
In his report, the Local Government Auditor focused on the following:
 - Financial Standing
 - Major Revenue Collections
 - Transfer of Water & Sewerage function to Uisce Éireann
 - Capital Account – unfunded balances
 - Asset Management
 - Development Contributions debtors
 - Loans payable
 - Governance – Internal Audit, Statement of Internal Financial Control (SIFC), Corporate Governance working group, Risk Management, Data Protection, Ethics, Procurement, Revenue Commissioners, alleged misuse of public funds.
 - Recommendations as set out in Management Letter
- The committee held in-depth discussions regarding the content of his report, with emphasis on the deficit in capital account and monitoring of recoupment claims, pending valuations

by Tailte Éireann and its effect on resources, the SIFC and the potential role of the Audit Committee regarding same, risk management, Ethics, Procurement, Public Spending Code and Cyber Security.

- The committee reviewed the management letter and confirmed that they will continue to monitor the progress of the recommendations contained therein, throughout 2025.
- Two Value for Money (VFM) reports published were brought before the committee (i) Overview of the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme and (ii) Debt Management of Collections in Local Authorities.
- Risk Management System & Corporate Governance working group – a presentation was provided by L. Keady, A/Senior Executive Officer Corporate Services, who have an overview of the new implemented Risk management System ViClarity and online system for submitting Ethics Declarations. The committee welcomed the progress made in monitoring risk management and held discussion with regards risks associated with staff turnover, climate action, housing etc.
- NOAC Audit Committee Chairperson training held on 21st November 2024, which emphasised the CCMA commitment in relation to the development of the Internal Audit Function, along with the Public Spending Code, principles of leadership values and value for money, ringfencing of rents, development contribution waiver scheme and the LA's oversight role of Approved Housing Bodies.

The committee covered a wide spectrum during 2024 and will continue to fulfil its responsibilities for the duration of its term, with primary focus for 2025 on risk management.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Unit is a function of the Corporate Services Directorate. Each year the annual Internal Audit Plan is designed and prepared in consultation with Management of the Council, Local Government Auditor and the Audit Committee and forms part of the work programme for the Audit Committee. The Internal Audit Plan for 2024 was presented and agreed by the committee on 13th February 2024. NOAC issued a report on the Internal Audit function in local authorities in March 2024. The committee will continue to periodically review the recommendations of the NOAC report and acknowledges that the information gathered through Internal Audit Reports provides the Committee with significant insight into the management and operations of the Council.

The committee continually discusses the implementation of Internal Audit's recommendations throughout the organisation and places a strong emphasis on the timely follow up of any outstanding actions.

The Internal Audit Charter was updated in December 2024 in line with the recommended template issued by the Institute of Internal Auditors. Due to the unavailability of the Head of Internal Audit for the December meeting, its review by the committee is scheduled for first meeting of 2025, along with the Internal Audit Plan 2025. The charter sets out the role and responsibilities of the Internal Audit Unit along with management's responsibilities and reporting arrangements.

Statutory reports to Council

The Audit Committee Annual Report 2023, work programme and Charter was reported to the Council for noting at the plenary meeting held on the 25th March 2024. [Minute 4305](#)

The Audit Committee statutory report on the Local Government Auditor's 2023 Annual Financial Statement has been completed and was brought before the Plenary on 27th January 2025. [Minute 4495](#).

Annual Assessment of Effectiveness of Audit Committee

Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations requires the Audit Committee to undertake an annual review of its own effectiveness and report to the Council on its findings.

Members of the committee were invited to complete a questionnaire to evaluate their work during the year. The questionnaire was broken down into 16 sections and summary of evaluation is as follows:

Section	Total # of Q's	Very Good	Good	Clarification by AC Secretary
1 – Role of the Audit Committee	6	5		1
2 – Membership, Independence, Objectivity & Understanding	2	2		
3 – Relationship with the Executive & Other participants	4		2	2
4 – Managing Conflict of Interest	4		2	2
5 – Skill and Experience	3	3		
6 – Access to Additional Skills	5	2	1	2
7 – Training & Development	4	4		
8 – Scope of Work	7	7		
9 – Relationship with External Audit	4	4		
10 – Fraud	3	3		
11 – Internal Control	3	3		
12 – Financial Reporting	3	3		
13 – Communication	5	5		
14 – Role of the Audit Committee Chairperson	4	4		
15 – Audit Committee Support	3	3		
16 – Member Contribution	4	4		
TOTALS	64	52	5	7

The AC Secretary provided clarification to the Members on a small number of items from the questionnaire, where there were minor inconsistencies in responses and/or misinterpretation of the question by the Members.

The findings concluded that the committee deals with appropriate issues and that it conducts its business in a professional manner with meetings that are well organised and that actions of the Audit Committee reflect independence from management.

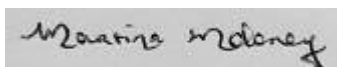
The Head of Internal Audit collated the results of the questionnaire which indicated the overall performance of the Audit Committee as Very Good.

5. Conclusion

The Audit Committee is satisfied that throughout the course of our work in 2024, we delivered effectively on the statutory functions of the committee, as set out in the Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014 and Local Government Reform Act 2014.

I would like to express thanks to; -

- the Local Government Auditor, Mr. D. Cahill for his attendance at the December's Audit Committee meeting and for the engaging discussions had in relation to the statutory report and the clarifications provided on items outlined in his audit report
- the Head of Finance and their staff for all their oversight in monitoring the Council's finances
- Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services, Ms. E. Curran, Head of Internal Audit, and the Internal Audit Team for their continued support to the Audit Committee members.
- Mr. Liam Conneally, Chief Executive for his cooperation throughout the year and his commitment to enhance public services for County Galway.
- Mr. Des Mahon former Chairperson of the Audit Committee and the other members of the Committee for their work during 2024.



Dr. M. Moloney
Chairperson of the Audit Committee

Date: 19/02/2025

Appendix 1 - Audit Committee Work Programme 2024

AUDIT COMMITTEE COMPLETED WORK PROGRAMME 2024							
	Annually	Quarterly	When Necessary	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
	Frequency						
Audit Committee Meetings		✓		13th Feb 24	23rd Apr 24	5th Nov 24	10th Dec 24
Audit Committee Attendance		✓		80%	100%	100%	80%
Conflict of Interest - any conflicts noted at meetings		✓		N	N	N	N
Audit Committee Training							
Audit Committee Training Dates			✓			✓	✓
Chairperson Training/Seminars/Workshops			✓				✓
(A) Approval of the Annual Internal Audit Plan							
Draft Annual IAP2024 on Agenda for consideration & Approved	✓			✓			
Internal Audit Charter reviewed by Committee	✓						✗
(B) A review of the Annual Financial Statement							
Unaudited Annual Financial Statement (AFS) - Presentation of AFS by Head of Finance	✓				✓		
(C) A review of the Audited Financial Statement and auditor's report							
Presentation of Ext Auditor's report by Ext Auditor & review of audited AFS	✓						✓
AC reports to Council on its consideration of audited AFS, Auditor's report or Auditor's Special Report	✓						✓
Chairperson of AC <u>may</u> be invited to attend Council meeting to clarify any issues that may arise			✓				
(D) The preparation of the Annual report prepared under Regulation 15 of the Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014							
AC prepares AC Annual Report within 3 months of the expiration of the year of operation	✓			✓			
AC reviews its performance & effectiveness and report to the LA on its findings - with assistance of Internal Auditor & Secretary of AC - copies of report to CEO for consideration at next meeting of the Council	✓			✓			
Chairperson of AC <u>may</u> be invited to attend Council meeting when review of AC Annual Report is being considered			✓				
(E) The review of periodic Internal Audit Reports							
Any available IA reports to be reviewed at AC meetings		✓		✓	✓	✓	

Review tracker of progress on recommendations in previous IA reports		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Review progress on recommendations made in third party external audit reports			✗		✓		
(F) The review of relevant findings and recommendations of the National Oversight and Audit Commission							
AC reviews any relevant findings & recommendations of NOAC			✓		✓	✓	
AC considers responses of CE to NOAC findings & recommendations and take further action, as appropriate			✓		✓	✓	
Review efficiency & VFM including annual review of performance indicators by reference to comparable authorities & against targets			✓	✓			✓
(G) The review of Corporate Governance and Risk Management							
Review the systems that are operated by Galway County Council for the management of risks	✓						✓
(H) The review of the Audit Committee Charter							
AC Charter reviewed annually & forward to Plenary Council for adoption at the next Plenary meeting	✓					✓	
Work programme will be prepared by AC on an annual basis & will be adopted with or without amendment by the Plenary Council	✓						✓
AC Annual Evaluation to be completed	✓						✓
(I) Meeting Schedule							
AC meets quarterly with additional meetings arranged as required		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Meet separately with the Internal Auditor		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Meet separately with the Local Government Auditor	✓						✓
Meet separately with the Chief Executive			✓	✓		✓	
AC will invite other Council staff to make presentations as appropriate			✓	✓	✓		
(J) Any other actions necessary to discharge its functions							
AC will take any other actions necessary to discharge the functions of the Committee, particularly with regard to improving efficiency & effectiveness of the operations of the AC as required			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Request senior management from various Directorates to attend the AC meeting			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of outside expertise and/or continuous assessment of the performance of the AC			✗				

Legend	
✓	Required/Complete
✗	Optional
✗	Not complete/not required

Appendix 2 – Audit Committee Activities

Presentations & Reports

NOAC Reports	MAR2024 - Internal Audit Function in Local Authorities	Presentation by IA in relation to statistic for GCC and comparison with IA units in other Local Authorities	2024	Qtr. 2
NOAC Reports	MAY2024 - Review of the Implementation of Corporate Plans 2019-2024	IA presented a brief overview of NOAC Report and recommendation contained within along with Executive response to recommendations	2024	Qtr. 4
NOAC Reports	NOAC KPI - GCC KPI Comparison's report	IA presented Comparison Report on GCC KPI for 2019-2023, including national averages	2024	Qtr. 4
NOAC Reports	SEPT2024 - Local Authority Performance Indicators Report 2023	AC Chairperson gave a brief introduction into the NOAC report, followed by more detailed review in comparison report prepared by IA	2024	Qtr. 4
Presentations	Corporate Risk Register	Presentation on the Corporate Risk Register by Ms. L. Keady	2024	Qtr. 4
Presentations	Cybersecurity in Galway County Council	Presentation by Head of IT, Mr. M Martyn giving overview of cybersecurity in GCC	2024	Qtr. 1
Presentations	Infrastructure & Operations - Unfunded Capital Balances	Review of TII Unfunded Capital Balances by Director of Services, Mr. U. Finn	2024	Qtr. 2
Presentations	IPB Insurance Report 2023	AC requested Risk Control Officer, Mr. E Lydon to attend meeting to clarify statistics in Q4 IPB report	2024	Qtr. 2
Presentations	IPB Insurance Report 2023	Presented by IA on behalf of Risk Control Officer, Mr. E Lydon	2024	Qtr. 1

Presentations	Rates Revision status & procedures for GCC	Rates Revision status & procedures for GCC by Mr. S. Canney, including clarifications on VFM report - Rates Revision in Local Authorities	2024	Qtr. 1
VFM Reports	Debt Management of Collections in Local Authorities	VFM Report on Debt Management of Collections in Local Authorities. Focus mainly on major income streams - Rates, Rents, Loans & Development Contributions, how debt management is being monitored in LAs, outlines the Debt Management Systems (DMS) in place, best practice, and recommendations to enhance debt collection in local authorities.	2024	Qtr. 4
VFM Reports	DEC2023 - Overview of the Rates Revisions in Local Authorities	IA provided an overview of the contents of the report & advised that presentation from S. Canney Finance, will give more specifics with respect to GCC.	2024	Qtr. 1
VFM Reports	Overview of Energy Efficiency & Retrofitting Programme	VFM report on the progress of the Energy Efficiency & Retrofitting Programme since its inception in 2013, included Midlands Retrofit Programme introduced in 2020	2024	Qtr. 4

Operational Functions

CorpGov	Audit Committee Charter Annual Review	AC Charter reviewed and adopted	2024	Qtr. 4
CorpGov	Audit Committee Protocol for dealing with Protected Disclosures	Audit Committee Protocol reviewed and updated for new term	2024	Qtr. 4
Financial Review	Audited AFS2023 - Review with Local Government Auditor	Presentation on by Local Government Auditor Mr. D. Cahill on the AFS2023 Statutory Report and Management Letter	2024	Qtr. 4
Financial Review	LGA Management Letter Review & Update	Review of recommendation from Audited AFS2022	2024	Qtr. 2
Financial Review	Unaudited AFS2023 - Review with Head of Finance	Overview of Unaudited AFS2023 by Head of Finance, Ms. K. O'Connor	2024	Qtr. 2
IA Plan	IA Recommendations Update	IA24.01 - HIA gave update on audit review - 4 Recommendations remain o/s	2024	Qtr. 4
IA Plan	IA Report Recommendations	IA21/07 Vacant Homes Plan Review, Recommendation on 3 & 4 closed out IA23/05 TVRS & ORIS Review 2019-2022 - Recommendation 1,3 & 4 closed out	2024	Qtr. 2
IA Plan	IA Reports reviewed at AC meetings	IA24.01 - Fuel Card Compliance Review	2024	Qtr. 4
IA Plan	IA Reports reviewed at AC meetings	IAU updates on IA24.01 - Fuel Card Review, IA24.02 - Public Spending Code	2024	Qtr. 2
IA Plan	IAP2024 Review & Approval	Internal Audit Plan 2024 reviewed and approved	2024	Qtr. 1
Reports to Councils	AC Performance & Evaluation	Undertaken as part of the Report to Council on AC Activities for 2023	2024	Qtr. 1

Reports to Councils	S15 LG (AC) Regulations 2014 - Audit Committee Annual Report	Plenary Meeting 25th March 2024, minute ref 4305	2024	Qtr. 1
Training	NOAC Workshops for AC Chairperson	National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) - half day event for the Chairs of Local Government Audit Committee's on 21st November 2024 in the Midlands Park Hotel in Portlaoise.	2024	Qtr. 4
Training	Training - IPA	Bespoke Training for Audit Committee with IPA - Dr. T. Ward	2024	Qtr. 4



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Audit Committee Charter

Rev 2.0

October 2024

This Audit Committee charter is based on the SI 244, Audit Committee Regulations 2014 , the statutory obligations within relevant Local Government legislation and the 'Guidance for Audit Committee in Local Authorities June 2014', issued by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government.

1. Purpose

As part of the governance arrangements that operate within Galway County Council, the audit committee has an independent role to advise the Council on financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters.

2. Functions

The functions of the audit committee are as prescribed by section 59 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014:

2.1 To review the financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures within the local authority.

- This can incorporate a review and consideration of all aspects of the financial cycle within Galway County Council from budget preparation and adoption, monitoring of income and expenditures through the completion of the annual financial statements.
- The audit committee may request review of financial management and reporting arrangements in addition to auditing existing financial policies procedures and protocols as it considers necessary.

2.2 To foster the developments of best practice in the performance by the local authority of its internal audit function:

- Review with Management and the Head of Internal Audit the charter, activities, staffing and organisational structure of the Internal Audit function, its compliance with relevant professional standards and bring any recommendation to the attention of the Chief Executive. In this regard, the Committee should ensure that no limitations are placed on the work of the Internal Audit unit.
- Approve the audit plan and monitor its implementation.
- Periodic reviews of internal audit reports, findings & recommendations, and management responses.
- Review on an ongoing basis the audit engagement process.

2.3 To review any audited financial statement, auditor's report, or auditor's special report in relation to the local authority and assess any actions taken within that authority by its chief executive in response to such a statement or report and to report its findings to the authority:

- Review with management and the external auditor the results of the statutory audit.
- Review with management and the external auditors the management letter and all matters required to be communicated to the committee under generally accepted auditing standards.
- Report to the council on its findings at the next practicable meeting of Council.
- The Committee to carry out follow up examinations to ensure issues raised were dealt with by Management.

- 2.4 To assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to the local authority's performance of its functions:**
- Review management's arrangement to ensure and demonstrate economy, efficiency, and effectiveness across the organisation.
 - Request special reports from management or internal audit as considered appropriate.
 - Consider findings and recommendations made by the VFM Local Government Audit Service.
- 2.5 To review systems that are operated by the local authority for the management of risks:**
- Evaluate the scope and effectiveness of the framework established by Management to identify, assess, monitor, and effectively manage risk.
 - Review the corporate risk management policy and receive reports/presentations from Management on corporate and all directorates risk registers.
- 2.6 To review the findings and recommendations of the National Oversight Audit Commission and the response of the Chief Executive to these and take further action as appropriate:**
- Review the relevant findings of NOAC and ensure that its work programme takes NOAC's findings and recommendation into account.
 - Request special reports from management or internal audit as considered appropriate.

3. Composition of Audit Committee

3.1 Membership

The audit committee was established by resolution of the Council upon nomination by the Corporate Policy Group and following consultation with the Chief Executive. The term of the committee is concurrent with that of the current Council which commenced on 21st June 2024 and will terminate on 31st May 2029

The committee consists of 5 members, three external members and two elected members of Council.

The maximum duration for external nominees to the Audit Committee shall be two consecutive terms.

3.2 Committee Chairperson

The Chairperson of the committee shall be elected by its members and shall be one of the external members. The Chairperson's role is to:

- Provide strong leadership and clarification to members on audit committee's responsibilities.
- Plan and manage the audit committee meetings.
- Oversee the provision of briefing to the committee in advance of meetings.
- Develop the effectiveness of the audit committee and seek to demonstrate the value of the internal audit function to the organisation.
- Ensure that the audit committee has the appropriate skills and knowledge.
- Inform the Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive of any vacancy that arises on the committee and request the Corporate Policy Group in consultation with the Chief Executive to commence the process for replacing the member.
- If requested attend a meeting of the Local Authority where the audit committees' annual report is being discussed to provide a summary of the report and clarify such issues as may be necessary.

The Chief Executive to make available a member of staff to be known as the secretary of the audit committee whose role is:

- Assisting the chairperson with the preparation of meetings.
- Circulation of agendas, reports etc. and accurately minuting decisions of the committee.
- Assisting the chairperson with the preparation of reports of the audit committee

It is the duty of the Chair to ensure that the training needs of the Audit Committee and of individual members are reviewed on an annual basis and reported to the Chief Executive and Council. Where training needs are identified, the Chief Executive will facilitate the provision of such training, where practicable.

4. Meetings

The Committee will ordinarily meet on a quarterly basis and may hold additional meetings if required. Meetings will normally be held in County Hall, Prospect Hill, Galway at times and dates which will be agreed by the Committee and the Secretary. In exceptional circumstances where it is not possible to hold a physical meeting, a remote/hybrid meeting will be held.

The **quorum** necessary for the transaction of business shall be **3** members. In the absence of the Chair, the members of the Audit Committee present shall select a Chair for the Meeting.

The Committee may invite the Chief Executive, Members of Management, internal and external auditor, or others to attend meetings and provide information as necessary.

All committee members are expected to attend each meeting, but no less than 75% of meetings in a single year. A member may be disqualified where he or she fails to attend 75% of the meetings of the committee in any calendar year.

4.1 Working Procedures and Access

The committee should adopt its own working procedures, which may include as necessary the commissioning of external professional expertise and advice following consultation with the Chief Executive and by resolution of the council.

Each year the committee will develop a detailed annual work programme, and this will be provided to the Council at the start of each year.

The audit committee shall have access to documents or other data and information as it reasonably requires in order to discharge its functions.

The Chief Executive will ensure staff facilitate the Committee in relation to briefings required by them in a timely and efficient manner.

The committee will invite members of management, internal and external auditor, and others to attend meetings and provide information as necessary.

The chairperson of the committee must hold a separate end of year meeting with the Chief Executive to review the performance and achievements of the committee during the year and to discuss the key issues and focus for the coming year.

The Local Government Auditor and the Head of Internal Audit may communicate with the Committee as they consider necessary. The Local Government Auditor or the Head of Internal Audit unit may, with the agreement of the Chair of the Committee request a meeting do discuss a matter of exceptional importance.

5. Independence

The Committee shall be independent in the performance of its functions and responsibilities and shall not be subject to direction or control from any other party. The Committee is accountable to the Council.

6. Confidentiality

The agendas, papers, reports, documentation, and discussions of the committee are confidential and will contain sensitive material and information necessary to allow members to carry out their duties. Members and those in attendance shall not, without the approval of the Chairperson, discuss matters arising with third parties or directly or indirectly disclose to these parties, information obtained in the course of their duties, either during the term of their membership or at any time afterwards.

All requests from the media relating to the role and function of the Audit Committee, shall be submitted in writing to the County Secretary, Corporate Services Unit, Galway Council County for consideration, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Audit Committee, and a reply, if deemed appropriate, shall issue in the form of a written statement from the Corporate Services Unit.

7. Conflicts of interest

All possible conflicts of interest are to be notified to the Chief Executive prior to the first meeting of the committee. If the personal circumstances of a member changes in any way that may result in a conflict of interest for them in the exercise of their audit committee duties, then they are to immediately declare the circumstances to the Chairperson of the Audit Committee.

Audit committee members should at the outset of each meeting declare any matter arising on the agenda in which they have an interest in, and regard should be had to the ethics and standards in public office requirements.

The Chairperson of the committee should determine an appropriate course of action with the member who declares a conflict of interest i.e., member to leave the meeting for duration of time whilst the issue of interest is being discussed or the member is requested to step down if the conflict of interest is likely to endure for a long period of time.

8. Reporting

The following reports must be prepared by the audit committee and formally circulated to the Council / Chief Executive.

1. Report on the Audited Financial Statement (section 60 Local Government Reform Act 2014).

The committee must discuss this report with the auditor who prepared it and note its findings in a report to the council. In doing so the committee should identify areas where it considers needs action for improvement and make recommendations as to the steps to be taken. Response of management must also be noted.

2. Audit Committee's Annual Report (regulation 15 of the local government (audit committee regulations 2014)).

The committee must prepare a report on its activities and findings during the year within a period of 3 months from the year's end. The report should include an assessment of the committee's own effectiveness and performance in so far as it relates to the work programme agreed by the Council and formally be submitted to the Council and Chief Executive.

At the request of the local authority the chairperson shall attend the meeting at which the report is being considered.

9. Freedom of Information/Data Protection

The Committee will have regard to the statutory requirements in relation to Freedom of Information and Data Protection and ensure that its obligations in this regard are fully and properly implemented.

10. Protective Disclosures

The audit committee shall ensure that procedures are in place whereby employees of the local authority may in confidence raise concerns about possible irregularities in financial reporting or other matters.

Any reports made direct to the Audit Committee about possible irregularities in financial reporting or other matters will be addressed in accordance with the Audit Committee Protocol for dealing with Protected Disclosures.

11. Review of Performance and Effectiveness

The Audit Committee will undertake an annual review of its own performance and effectiveness and will report to Council on its findings.

Where the assessment highlights the need for improvement in the role, operational processes, or Membership of the Committee, it is the duty of the Chair to take action to ensure that such improvements are implemented. The Chair, in consultation with the Chief Executive will decide on appropriate training and/or actions required to improve the performance and effectiveness of the Committee.

12. Qualified Privilege

A member of the audit committee is entitled to qualified privilege in relation to any statements made by them at any meeting attended in the capacity as a member of the audit committee.

13. Review of Audit Committee Charter

The Audit Committee's charter will be subject to annual review by the Committee and Council.

Signed: Mariana Meloy
Chairperson
Galway County Council Audit Committee

Signed: Liam Conneally
Liam Conneally, Chief Executive
Galway County Council

Date: 5.11.24