

CIVIC AFFAIRS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE30 June 2025
5.30 - 6.45 pm

Present: Councillors McPherson (Chair), Gawthroe Wood (Vice-Chair), Bennett, Bick, Dalzell, Robertson and Sheil

Officers:

Head of Legal Practice: Tom Lewis

Head of Shared Internal Audit: Jonathan Tully

Chief Finance Officer: Jody Etherington

Committee Manager: James Goddard

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

1 Apologies

There were no apologies from Councillors. The Head of Legal Practice was present instead of the Democratic Services Manager.

Councillor Robertson asked why the Independent Person was not present?

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

5 Proposed Amendments to Members Allowances

The Committee received a report from the Head of Legal Practice.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Councillor Bennett:
 - a. Suggested a Green Councillor could sit on the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).
 - b. Queried if all relevant information had been given to the IRP to make recommendations.
 - c. Circumstances had changed since the IRP did their work – should they revise the recommendation?
- ii. Liberal Democrat Councillors:
 - a. Took issue with the Labour Group increasing councillor Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA).
 - b. Queried if Labour Group raised concerns about SRA with IRP?
 - c. Queried why the three previous Leaders accepted the old allowance whereas the new Leader had an increased SRA?
- iii. Labour Councillors:
 - a. The recommendations were Labour Group proposals as set out in the Officer's report.
 - b. The Labour Group disagreed with IRP recommendations so put in their own proposals as Labour Group thought the Leader had responsibilities and powers not recognised by IRP.
 - c. Councillor remuneration was looked at each year by the Labour Group.

Resolved (by 4 votes to 3) to recommend that Council:

- 1. The uplift in the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to the Leader to 4 times the basic allowance.

Resolved (by 4 votes to 3) to recommend that Council:

- 2. Amend the overall number of SRA's that can be claimed to a maximum of 3.

Resolved (unanimously) to recommend to Council:

- 3. Removal of the allowance paid by the City Council to members of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) for those sitting on the CPCA Overview & Scrutiny and Audit & Governance Committees.

6 Internal Audit Update

The Committee received a report from the Head of Shared Internal Audit Service.

Councillor Robertson noted a typographical error on P26 of the agenda pack Housing Advisory ~~Scrutiny~~ Board.

The Head of Shared Internal Audit Service said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The City Council was mandated by law to provide information to Central Government as part of the National Fraud Initiative. All councils uploaded datasets via the secure Cabinet Office system. Internal Audit quality checked the data in advance as the Cabinet Office could issue penalties if they received inaccurate or poor-quality information. The City Council complied with the regulations and data specifications. Officers were happy to discuss how to improve data sets in future.
- ii. The Council had an important role to play in tackling modern slavery. There are various agencies to report concerns to and this will be context specific, Details are set out in internal policies.
- iii. Recruiting people to the role of internal audit continues to be challenging. A review of the team has introduced two apprenticeship posts, and recruitment should start once a new training scheme is finalised. Officers were happy to talk to possible candidates.
- iv. Clarified the role of City Council Internal Audit Officers in the Disabled Facility Grant review that was funded by the County Council as part of the overall Better Care Fund. They could not influence how fast claims were processed through the county system. The City Council Internal Audit team checked that the grant received was spent in compliance with grant conditions and provided assurance back to the County Council.
- v. An asbestos review had been undertaken. The existing system was cumbersome for reporting. Officers were looking to see if a better system was available in future.
- vi. A response was awaited from the Department for Work and Pensions regarding housing rent corrections. Figures would be reviewed when a response was available. The Internal Audit team will continue to work with the Project Team.

Unanimously resolved to:

- i. Note the progress update and approve the forward plan of Internal Audit work; and
- ii. Approve the supporting Charter and the Code of Ethics.

7 Civic Affairs & Audit Committee Rolling Work Programme

The Committee reviewed the work plan. No additions or amendments were required.

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm

CHAIR