

Governance Committee Self Assessment for 2024/25

1 Summary

1.1 This report presents the draft Governance Committee self assessment of effectiveness for 2024/25, against the CIPFA audit committee template self assessment tool. An annual self assessment is considered best practice.

Recommendation that:	a	Members review the draft self assessment presented at Annex 2 and endorse this, subject to any proposed amendments.
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2 Background

- 2.1 Good governance is the means by which local authorities ensure that they are providing the right services to the right people in a timely, open, honest and accountable manner.
- 2.2 The Governance Committee forms a key part the Authority’s governance framework. It is considered best practice for the Governance Committee to perform an annual self assessment of its effectiveness.
- 2.3 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) have produced a statement on functions of an audit committee as a template for coverage and ways of working for audit committees in the public sector. This is presented at Annex 1. Alongside this, CIPFA have also developed a self assessment template for use by audit committees to both test and demonstrate their effectiveness. This forms the basis of the self assessment matrix presented at Annex 2.
- 2.4 Annex 2 has been populated with responses. These were based on responses back from Governance Committee Members as well as the Chief Finance Officer and Authority Solicitor. Members of the Committee are asked to review the draft responses and either endorse them as they stand or propose amendments.
- 2.5 The responses as drafted have not produced anything indicating significant weaknesses in the scope or methods of the committee. Most of the actions noted will be satisfied through completion of the self assessment. The main element of feedback related to skills and training. The following improvement action will be included in the Annual Governance Statement to follow up during 2024/25:
 - use away hours as an informal opportunity to discuss upcoming reports and to address technical training needs.

3 Policy Context

3.1 The Authority is committed to high standards of corporate governance. This is a key feature of our Organisational Strategy aim to lead by example and to be innovative and agile in our approach as an organisation.

4 Options

4.1 Members may amend the draft responses or accept them as set out at Annex 2.

5 Proposals

- 5.1 Members are asked to review the draft responses to the self assessment and either propose amendments or accept the responses and actions as set out.

6 Best Value Implications

- 6.1 All authorities are required to undertake a review of their governance arrangements each year. Annual self assessment of effectiveness of Governance Committee will provide further evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement and may flag areas of improvement.

7 Financial Considerations

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications.

8 Risk

- 8.1 The annual review of governance supports the Authority's risk management processes by identifying weaknesses in our governance arrangements and putting in place an action plan for their improvement. This self assessment forms part of that process.

9 Legal Considerations

- 9.1 The annual review of governance and the publication of an Annual Governance Statement is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and is based on "proper practice" set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework. This forms part of that process.

10 Human Resources

- 10.1 There are no direct HR implications.

11 Diversity Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct diversity implications.

12 Sustainability

- 12.1 There are no direct sustainability implications.

Background Papers	CIPFA/SOLACE framework 2016
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Date Written	31 March 2025

See separate doc CIPFA position statement on Audit Committees

Governance Committee Self Assessment 2024/25

		Does not comply	Partially complies	Fully complies	Comments	Further actions
Audit committee purpose and governance						
1	Does the authority have a dedicated audit committee that is not combined with other functions (eg standards, ethics, scrutiny)?	X			The terms of reference do include some standards functions, but these are not operational and are judged appropriate for an Authority the size and complexity of LDNPA	None
2	Does the audit committee report directly to the governing body (PCC and chief constable/full council/full fire authority, etc)?			X	Governance Committee minutes are reported to full Authority	None
3	Has the committee maintained its advisory role by not taking on any decision-making powers?			X	Yes, see 1 above	None
4	Do the terms of reference clearly set out the purpose of the committee in accordance with CIPFA's 2022 Position Statement?			X	Terms of reference are clearly set out in the Authority Handbook, section D, scheme of delegation to Officers and Committees. Purposes are consistent with 'Purpose of the audit committee" per the CIPFA position statement	None
5	Do all those charged with governance and in leadership roles have a good understanding of the role and purpose of the committee?			X	The meetings are attended by senior officers and the Chair of Authority often attends as a non-voting participant.	None
6	Does the audit committee escalate issues and concerns promptly to those in governance and leadership roles?			X		None

		Does not comply	Partially complies	Fully complies	Comments	Further actions
7	Does the governing body hold the audit committee to account for its performance at least annually?			X	This self assessment will forms the basis of the Committee explicitly demonstrating this on an annual basis. Governance will be asked to formally recommend that they endorse the outcome of the self assessment, which will be reported on to full Authority within the Governance Committee minutes. This is judged adequate for an Authority of LDNPA's size and complexity.	None
8	Does the committee publish an annual report in accordance with the 2022 guidance, including:	X			See 7 above. It is not judged that production of an annual report is a good use of resources; given the Authority's size and complexity an annual self assessment is judged to be sufficient, the outcome of the committee's work is self evident in other documents including the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Audit annual audit opinion. Any significant recommendations arising from the self assessment would be included in the AGS action plan.	Include any significant recommendations from self assessment in AGS action plan.
8.1	compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022	X				
8.2	results of the annual evaluation, development work undertaken and planned improvements	X				
8.3	how it has fulfilled its terms of reference and the key issues escalated in the year?	X				
Functions of the committee						
9	Do the committee's terms of reference explicitly address all the core areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement as follows?			X	Yes, it is considered that the Core functions per the 2022 position statement set out in 9.1 to 9.8 below are all within the remit of Governance Committee. See also further comments by item below.	None
9.1	Governance arrangements			X		None
9.2	Risk management arrangements			X	Effectiveness of risk management arrangements is covered by Governance Committee (eg within the scope of internal audit assurance reviews), review of the corporate risk register sits with Resources Committee as an operational matter.	None

		Does not comply	Partially complies	Fully complies	Comments	Further actions
9.3	Internal control arrangements, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial management • value for money • ethics and standards • counter fraud and corruption 			X		None
9.4	Annual governance statement			X		None
9.5	Financial reporting			X	Statutory financial reporting is within the remit of Governance Committee; budget monitoring is considered an operational matter overseen by Resources Committee.	None
9.6	Assurance framework			X	All key constituent elements of the assurance framework are included within Governance Committee scope, as per 9.1 to 9.8 in this section.	None
9.7	Internal audit			X		None
9.8	External audit			X		None
10	Over the last year, has adequate consideration been given to all core areas?			X	A risk based internal audit plan is agreed each year to provide assurance over internal control, including risk management arrangements; the AGS and statement of accounts come through the committee as part of the annual cycle.	None
11	Over the last year, has the committee only considered agenda items that align with its core functions or selected wider functions, as set out in the 2022 guidance?			X		None
12	Has the committee met privately with the external auditors and head of internal audit in the last year?			X	The Committee is aware of the option to meet privately. The Chair had a private discussion with external audit as part of preparation for the 2024/25 external audit planning process	None
Membership and support						

		Does not comply	Partially complies	Fully complies	Comments	Further actions
13	Has the committee been established in accordance with the 2022 guidance as follows?					
13.1	Separation from executive		X		National Park Authorities are not constituted with an Executive, Governance Committee is a subset of the full Authority Membership; no members have specific policy portfolios so there is separation from operational delivery.	None
13.2	A size that is not unwieldy and avoids use of substitutes			X	Full constituted this would be 8 Members, quorate at 2 but with 1 secretary of state and 1 local authority member; currently 7 with a standing invite to the Authority chair and 2 independent persons.	None
13.3	Inclusion of lay/co-opted independent members in accordance with legislation or CIPFA's recommendation			X	See above.	None
14	Have all committee members been appointed or selected to ensure a committee membership that is knowledgeable and skilled?		X		Respondents indicated that there was support from the S151 Officer and that there was a range of members, with some recently appointed and some more experienced with a new chair and vice chair. It was noted that further training would be beneficial.	None
15	Has an evaluation of knowledge, skills and the training needs of the chair and committee members been carried out within the last two years?		X		Respondents indicated that perhaps more could be done to ensure skills are up to date.	
16	Have regular training and support arrangements been put in place covering the areas set out in the 2022 guidance?		X		Respondents indicated that further training would be beneficial, particularly given the wide scope of knowledge required.	
17	Across the committee membership, is there a satisfactory level of knowledge, as set out in the 2022 guidance?			X		None

		Does not comply	Partially complies	Fully complies	Comments	Further actions
18	Is adequate secretariat and administrative support provided to the committee?			X	Respondents noted good support was in place with succession planning taking place to replace the current Member Support Officer	None
19	Does the committee have good working relations with key people and organisations, including external audit, internal audit and the CFO?			X	Respondents indicated that there is a good level of communication and understanding between members, officers and auditors.	None
Effectiveness of the committee						
20	Has the committee obtained positive feedback on its performance from those interacting with the committee or relying on its work?			X	The Committee chair confirmed there had been positive feedback on the work of Governance Committee.	
21	Are meetings well chaired, ensuring key agenda items are addressed with a focus on improvement?			X	Respondents indicated that the new chair and vice chair are in place and the committee is run to the best of their ability and knowledge.	None
22	Are meetings effective with a good level of discussion and engagement from all the members?			X	Respondents confirmed that Members were supported in developing their understanding of what is a complex organisation	None
23	Has the committee maintained a non-political approach to discussions throughout?			X	Respondents noted that there is a good working relationship despite elected members representing a range of political parties.	None
24	Does the committee engage with a wide range of leaders and managers, including discussion of audit findings, risks and action plans with the responsible officers?			X	Senior Officers attend the committee, other Officers provide responses to assurance reviews and follow up of prior recommendations. They may not necessarily attend committee but there is a high level of input and ownership of internal recommendations by service managers with all assurance reviews and recommendations included on Strategic Leadership Team agenda.	None

		Does not comply	Partially complies	Fully complies	Comments	Further actions
25	Does the committee make recommendations for the improvement of governance, risk and control arrangements?			X	Yes, as part of the internal audit framework; recommendations are made following reviews and the committee monitors the subsequent implementation	None
26	Do audit committee recommendations have traction with those in leadership roles?			X	See point 24 above. Progress on completion of recommendations is presented within the internal audit update report.	
27	Has the committee evaluated whether and how it is adding value to the organisation?			X	Respondents understood that this was the purpose the annual self assessment. They noted that producing an annual overview and reflection on their own role in the Governance process was a good thing. They also noted that the committee performs well and gives value for money.	
28	Does the committee have an action plan to improve any areas of weakness?			X	Yes, actions flagged from this process will be highlighted and actioned.	
29	Has this assessment been undertaken collaboratively with the audit committee members?			X	Yes, all Members of the committee were invited to provide responses and these formed the basis of a draft response prepared by Officers. Committee then have a further chance to review and input	None