

COMHAIRLE CONTAE ÁTHA CLIATH THEAS
SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL



South Dublin County Council

Audit Committee

2023 Annual Report

Circulation List

Colm Ward, Chief Executive
Elected Members of South Dublin County Council

Date: March 2024

Section 1: Chairperson's Statement

I am pleased to present the fifth and final annual report of the current audit committee to the elected members of South Dublin County Council and the Chief Executive.

The appointment of South Dublin County Council's current Audit Committee was ratified by the Council at its meeting held on 8th July 2019. The term of the committee is concurrent with that of the elected Council and will terminate on 31st May 2024.

The Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014 require the Audit Committee to submit a report to 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 four occasions during 2023 to execute its work programme:

- 22nd of February
- 14th of June
- 25th of October
- 13th of December

Our aim over the term of the committee is to contribute to enhancing the corporate governance structure in place in South Dublin County Council.

On behalf of the Audit Committee, I would like to thank the Chief Executive and members of the Management Team who attended meetings to present and discuss information which were a valuable contribution to the work of the Committee.

I would like to thank the members of the Audit Committee for their contribution during 2023.

I would also like to thank the staff of Internal Audit for their work in supporting the Audit Committee and the coverage of work they were able to deliver during 2023 with the support of their colleagues across the organisation.

Eilis Quinlan

Chairperson of the Audit Committee

Section 2: Membership of the Audit Committee

The Audit Committee comprises of seven members, four of which are external to the organisation and three serving elected representatives.

The composition of the Committee in 2023 was as follows:

1. **Eilis Quinlan**, (Chair) Quinlan & Co Chartered Accountants
2. **Ann Horan**, Chairperson of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland
3. **George Kennington**, Partner Audit, Crowe Ireland
4. **Martin Nolan**, Head of Compliance, Bright Software Group
5. **Councillor David McManus**
6. **Councillor Guss O'Connell**
7. **Councillor Teresa Costello**

The following is a schedule of attendance at meetings by the members:

Member	Meetings attended (eligible)
Eilis Quinlan	2 (4)
Ann Horan	4 (4)
George Kennington	3 (4)
Martin Nolan	4 (4)
ClIr David McManus	4 (4)
ClIr Guss O'Connell	3 (4)
ClIr Teresa Costello	4 (4)

In addition, Ann Horan attended the County Council meeting on 11th of December 2023 to present the Committee's report on their consideration of the audited Annual Financial Statement 2022 and the Auditor's report.

Section 3: Role of the Committee and Operating Framework

The Audit Committee assumes a vital function within the governance structure of South Dublin County Council and operates independently in executing its duties. Its primary responsibility involves conducting an impartial evaluation of management's performance concerning the control environment, risk management, financial reporting, financial management, and internal audit. By directly reporting to the Council, the committee upholds its independence from the executive branch.

The statutory functions of the committee are as follows:

- To review the financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures
- To foster the development of best practice in the performance of the Internal Audit function
- To review the audited financial statement, auditor's reports and assess any actions taken by the Chief Executive in response to such statements or reports and report its finding to the Council
- To assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to the organisation's performance of its functions.
- To review systems that are operated by SDCC for the management of risk
- To review the findings and recommendations of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) and the Chief Executive's response to issues raised

The roles and responsibilities of the Committee are set out in the Audit Committee Charter.

The Committee's work programme to the 31st of May 2024 was approved at its meeting held on the 13th of December 2023. The programme of works takes cognisance 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 will be discharged through the implementation of the work programme.

Section 4: Principal Matters Considered by the Audit Committee in 2023

In line with the Audit Committee Standing Orders, meetings were conducted online using Microsoft Teams during 2023.

The Audit Committee Annual Report 2022, Charter and Work Programme 2023 was reported to the Council for noting at its meeting in March 2023.

The Audit Committee considers progress against its Annual Work Programme, the Annual Internal Audit Plan, and the findings and actions in Audit Reports at each meeting throughout the year.

There are also ad-hoc and cyclical issues that the Committee considers at its meetings. Further details in this regard are outlined below.

Audit Committee Meeting 22nd February

Among the issues and topics covered at the February meeting were:

- The Chief Executive Danny McLoughlin attended the February meeting and gave the Committee an update on the current position of the organisation.
- The Director of Environment, Water and Climate Change Teresa Walsh also attended the February meeting and gave the Committee an update on the current position in relation to her directorate.
- The Committee approved the following documents to be presented to the March 2023 County Council meeting:
 - Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022
 - Audit Committee Charter and Standing Orders
 - Audit Committee Annual Work Programme 2023
- The Committee noted and discussed the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2023 and the Local Government Audit Service's Value for Money report relating to the provision of social housing by approved housing bodies.
- The Committee reviewed the Internal Audit charter and the progress made on the current audit plan.

Audit Committee Meeting 14th June

Among the issues and topics covered at the June meeting were:

- The Director of Land Use, Planning and Transportation Mick Mulhern attended the June meeting and gave the Committee an update on the current position in relation to his directorate.
- The Committee noted the Local Government Audit Service's Value for Money report relating to Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans issued by Local Authorities.
- The Public Spending Code Quality Assurance report for 2022 for South Dublin County Council.
- Consideration of audit reports.
- Progress made against historical and current audit actions.

Audit Committee Meeting 25th October

Among the issues and topics covered at the October meeting were:

- Presentation of the Local Government Audit Service's Audit Report from the audit of the SDCC Annual Financial Statement 2022 by the Principal Local Government Auditor. Following the presentation the Committee had a discussion with the Local Government Auditor and the Head of Finance to expand on the information provided.
 - This information was then used to inform the Audit Committee's Annual Report on the audited AFS and auditor's report for 2022 for presentation to Council in December.
- The Law Agent Sean O'Shea also attended the October meeting to give the Committee an update on the current position of the Law Department within SDCC.
- The Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management presented the South Dublin County Council Annual Report for 2022.
- Consideration of audit reports.

Audit Committee Meeting 13th December

Among the issues and topics covered at the December meeting were:

- The Head of Finance Ronan Fitzgerald attended the December meeting to present the adopted Annual Budget for 2024, the 3-year Capital Programme 2024 – 2026, and to advise on the overall current financial position of the organisation.
- The Director of Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development Jason Frehill attended the December meeting and gave the Committee an update on the current position in relation to his directorate.
- The Committee reviewed its effectiveness through the results of a consultation undertaken with the Committee Members.
- The Committee approved the Audit Committee Work Programme for 2024.
- The Internal Audit Plan for 2024 was approved.
- The Committee considered the Council's Risk Management Policy and Procedures.
- The Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management presented a report on the NOAC Performance Indicators 2022 and the performance of SDCC in this context.
- The Director of CPCM briefed the Audit Committee on the ways in which South Dublin County Council is assessed and appraises itself in terms of providing value for money.
- Consideration of audit reports.

Audit Committee Training

The training needs of the committee and of individual members are reviewed on an ongoing basis in addition to any training needs identified as part of the assessment of the Committee's effectiveness and performance.

The Committee will request briefings from Management as necessary to ensure the Committee has an overview on key priority areas and the management of risks in the organisation.

Audit Committee's Assessment of its Effectiveness & Performance

As an ongoing step in the review of its effectiveness and performance, the Committee reviews its progress against its annual work programme at each meeting.

The Committee formally reviewed its effectiveness in December 2023.

The Internal Auditor presented the results of the self-evaluation exercise which led to the Committee discussing the results and agreeing on their satisfaction with their progress against the annual work programme.

Section 5: Conclusion

The Committee has exercised its duties and functions during 2023, as set out in the Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014.

Where necessary the Committee has considered and implemented changes to improve the way in which its duties are discharged, working closely with the Internal Auditor who acts as Secretary to the Committee.

The Committee has not been advised by Management of any materially adverse instances occurring in the financial and operational management of Council activities and has nothing to report in this regard to the Council arising from its work during 2023.

Eilis Quinlan

Chairperson

SDCC Audit Committee