

Finance and Governance Committee Report to Full Council

Purpose

To seek approval from Full Council to commission a internal audit and compliance appraisal focused on statutory records and the Scribe accounting system, as noted by Full Council on 26 June 2025 (Minute ref: 027/25) following comments and recommendations from the Internal Auditor.

Background

A similar assurance review was completed in February 2022. The Internal Auditor has recommended the Council consider that a review of this nature be repeated in order to maintain ongoing assurance over compliance and record keeping. On 26 June 2025 Full Council noted the Internal Auditor's advice that further auditing should be considered. Officers have since undertaken an internal review to establish the appropriate scope. Finance and Governance has considered the outcome of that review and now brings forward a recommendation for a targeted piece of assurance work, an operational overview of statutory records and the Scribe accounting system. The work will include attention to the management and reconciliation of accounting and physical records, including the prevention and resolution of inconsistencies between statutory cemetery and digital records.

Proposed scope

The appraisal will test compliance against the Council's statutory requirements and relevant internal financial controls. It will review the accuracy and completeness of entries, examine reconciliation processes for both accounting and cemetery records, assess the adequacy of record keeping and evidence trails and provide practical recommendations to strengthen controls, ensure that statutory obligations are met and provide an overview of staff training needs.

Resourcing and procurement

The Responsible Financial Officer has confirmed that a suitably qualified auditor can undertake this work at a cost of £3,300. This level of expenditure exceeds the delegation of Finance and Governance and therefore requires approval by Full Council. Procurement will proceed under Financial Regulation 11.1(ii) as a specialist service. Subject to approval, the RFO and Clerk will finalise the brief, confirm the timetable directly with the auditor and oversee delivery. The findings and action plan will be reported back to Finance and Governance and then to Full Council.

Legal, governance and risk considerations

Undertaking this targeted appraisal supports the Council's duty to maintain an effective system of internal control and to ensure compliance with statutory accounting and governance requirements. It will provide independent assurance, address identified inconsistencies between physical and digital records and reduce the risk of error, non compliance or reputational harm. Where personal data is reviewed, the work will be conducted in accordance with data protection requirements and access will be limited to what is necessary for audit purposes. Not proceeding would leave known issues insufficiently tested and may delay corrective action.

Financial implications

The estimated cost is £3,300 based on £550 per day. Funding can be met from the existing audit and professional fees budget lines. Value for money will be secured through a defined scope, time limited engagement and a requirement for clear, actionable recommendations.

Recommendation to Full Council

That Full Council approves the commissioning of an internal audit and compliance appraisal of statutory records and the Scribe accounting system as set out in this report. That Full Council authorises expenditure up to £3,300 under Financial Regulation 11.1(ii) and delegates to the RFO

and Clerk the authority to finalise the brief, appoint the auditor and manage the engagement. That the RFO reports the auditor's findings and an implementation plan to Finance and Governance at the next available meeting, with subsequent reporting to Full Council.