

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE
MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL
in the Community Hub Meeting Room, Victoria Park
held on Wednesday 3 December 2025 at 6pm**

Councillors

Cllr David Watkins
Cllr David Mead
Cllr Anne Cherry

Apologies

Cllr Emma Green

Also Attending

Linda Blake – Town Clerk
Julia Winkworth – Minute Clerk

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr Emma Green.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

18. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the following meeting be approved and adopted as a correct record of the proceedings, and these were signed by the Chair:

- Audit Committee meeting Wednesday 16 July 2025

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

It was **AGREED** to alter the order of the agenda to bring forward agenda items 5 and 6, Risk Management Arrangements around Objectives and Identification of Risks from Devolution Process respectively; and then return to item 4.

19. RISK MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AROUND OBJECTIVES

Report AC01/25 was received and accepted.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Full Council accept the risk management arrangement around its objectives as shown in Appendix A with committee amendments in red:

UNADOPTED

1. Aim – To provide effective, transparent and accountable local governance for the Town.					
Objective	Risk Description/Threat to achieving objective	Level of risk 1-5 low to high	Consequence of failing to achieve objective	Response strategy in place	Any further suggested actions
a) To set an annual budget and annual precept	Lack of Resources Lack of staff knowledge/unavailability of staff Poor Planning Lack of clear information External influences e.g. inflation/cost of living/costs incurred above those expected Unforeseen events	3 increase to 4	Council fails to fulfil statutory duty Negative public opinion Inefficient service delivery Resource wastage Unnecessary increases in Council Tax	Trained and engaged staff Planned schedule of meetings published well in advance to allow budget input from Council Committees before final council decision Established policies and procedures Use of contingency budget and building of reserve funds	Chair and Deputy Chair of Policy and Resources to undertake budget training
b) To improve visibility of the council's work and achievements	Lack of Resources Lack of staff knowledge/expertise Lack of clear direction and aims Poor Councillor engagement	2	Lack of effective community engagement Lack of public awareness of council achievements and commitments	Trained and engaged staff Community Engagement Sub-Committee in place to help input into strategy Regular review of website along with policies and procedures	Regular reviews if not visible enough
c) To produce annual accounts and submit the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)	Lack of staff knowledge/expertise Lack of available time/resources Poor Planning Unavailability of staff	2	Qualified External Audit Negative public opinion Special Measures	Staff Training to keep up to date with statutory changes Worcestershire CALC provide advice and training Planned schedule of meetings	

UNADOPTED

	Loss of data/compromising of IT Systems			Plan in place to cover key staff absence Engagement of independent and competent internal auditor IT maintenance, contract in place. Regular data backups, firewalls and advanced data protection	
d)To regularly review Town Council policies and procedures to ensure effective governance.	Poor Planning Lack of Resources/time Pressure on committee agendas Poor staff/Councillor engagement	2	Inefficient Service delivery Increase in complaints Negative public opinion Qualified Audit	Schedule and set dates for policy reviews Regular engagement with NALC/CALC Internal audit review	Regular overview and scrutiny of planned reviews
e)To manage council finances to ensure the effective use of resources	Lack of staff knowledge/expertise Lack of resources Weak or inefficient control systems Poor budget monitoring Security of IT Systems	2	Inefficient service delivery and failure to ensure best value Resource Wastage Unnecessary increases in Council Tax Negative public opinion	Regular reporting to Policy and Resources Committee Regular Contract reviews Strong budgeting/correct procurement procedures Staff Training Policies in place with robust control measures/segregation of duties Internal Audit External Audit	

UNADOPTED

				IT Maintenance Contract and SAGE Support package in place	
--	--	--	--	---	--

UNADOPTED

2. Overall Aim – To promote and develop a sense of community engagement encompassing diversity and inclusion.					
Objective	Risk Description/Threat to achieving objectives	Level of Risk 1-5 low to high	Consequence of failing to achieve objective	Response Strategy in place	Any further suggested action
a)To communicate with other local councils to ensure that the best collaborative outcomes are achieved for the community	Poor Communication Lack of engagement Lack of commitment from other councils Uncertainties surrounding Local Government re-organisation/Devolution	3	Lack of partnership/joined up working Resource wastage Loss of assets and services Inefficient service delivery for the taxpayer of Malvern Increase in complaints Negative public opinion	Regular liaison meetings with MHDC Invitation to MHDC/WCC Councillors to Town Council meetings Devolution Panel in place Partnership working meetings hosted by the Mayor	Improvement in Officer contacts and working relationships with MHDC & WCC Councillors to build relationships with fellow ward councillors at all tiers of government
b)To communicate with local community groups to ensure collaborative outcomes for local residents	Poor Communication Lack of engagement Pressure on staff/voluntary resources Lack of clear strategic direction from Council Failure to identify and engage correct groups/organisations	1	Loss of potential opportunities from joint/shared working Negative public opinion	Community Engagement Sub-Committee in place Variety of communication/engagement strategies in use to target different user group	Councillor input into the establishment of Strategy outlining plan for collaborative outcome
c)To implement ways of listening	Lack of staffing/councillor resources	1	Failure to effectively engage with public	Community Engagement Sub-Committee in place	Plan for expansion of engagement

UNADOPTED

to or engaging with local residents e.g. community engagement at events like 'Bands in the Park'	Lack of public interest Not choosing the right methods/places for engagement		Failure to deliver residents needs Negative opinion Complaints	Community Engagement Strategy approved by Council Councillor rota at 'Bands in the Park'	strategy to be developed by Community Engagement Sub-Committee Produce information on Councillors in 'Who's Who' type page
d)To support and develop the current grants scheme	Lack of staff resources Lack of clearly stated policy/aims Lack of clarity in application process Insufficient budgets	1	Poor take-up of grants Failure to target and help groups to help themselves Negative public opinion Wasted resources	Annual review of grants policy Effective staff management of scheme Review of grants budget undertaken annually	Ask for stakeholder feedback to ensure scheme effectiveness
e)To organise inclusive and accessible events for all abilities and needs	Lack of staff knowledge/experience Poor Planning Restrictions in terms of geography/topography/accessibility	2	Negative public opinion Complaints Non-compliance with statutory requirements	Effective event planning with risk assessments Identification of potential barriers to inclusivity and measures to mitigate these	Engagement with community groups

UNADOPTED

3. Aim – To protect, maintain and enhance the environment, local facilities and characteristics of the Town.					
Objective	Risk Description/Threat to achieving objectives	Level of Risk 1-5 low to high	Consequence of failing to achieve objective	Response Strategy in place	Any further suggested action
a)To develop an ongoing programme for the renewal and refurbishment of Town Council assets	<p>Lack of staff knowledge/engagement</p> <p>Pressure on budgets</p> <p>Poor Planning</p> <p>Weak Budgeting</p> <p>Unforeseen events</p> <p>Security of IT Systems</p>	3	<p>Deterioration/wear and tear of Town Council assets</p> <p>Increase in repair and maintenance costs</p> <p>Health and Safety issues</p> <p>Negative public opinion</p> <p>Complaints</p> <p>Wastage of resources</p> <p>Loss of public facilities</p>	<p>Robust annual review of Town Council assets in need of repair and refurbishment, as part of the budget process</p> <p>Clear and robust budget process</p> <p>Regular inspection programmes</p> <p>IT Maintenance Contract in place</p>	Raising of Councillor awareness through asset tours
b)To ensure health and safety provisions are implemented and maintained at Town Council sites	<p>Lack of staff knowledge/engagement</p> <p>Poor enforcement of policies and procedures</p> <p>Changes to legal requirements that if not adopted could have financial or operational consequences</p>	2	<p>Failure to comply with Law</p> <p>Fines</p> <p>Accidents</p> <p>Loss of facility</p> <p>Complaints</p>	<p>Trained staff/Ongoing staff training</p> <p>Robust Health and Safety policy in place which is regularly reviewed</p> <p>Membership of professional organisations to ensure up to date compliance</p> <p>Risk Assessments</p> <p>Regular inspection and testing programme</p>	

UNADOPTED

				Effective management to ensure staff are aware of and follow safety protocols	
c)To review the Town Council's planning policy to provide a more effective and timely process	<p>Lack of Councillor knowledge/engagement</p> <p>Inability to enforce councillor training</p> <p>Changes to National Planning Policy</p>	3	<p>Poor decision making</p> <p>Negative public opinion</p> <p>Failure to adequately represent electorate in planning matters</p> <p>Environmental impacts</p> <p>Ineffectual planning process</p> <p>Insufficient housing</p>	<p>Planning policy in place</p> <p>Training provided for Councillors</p> <p>Weekly planning list issued to all Councillors</p> <p>Planning matters considered within Operations and Planning Committee</p> <p>Partnership working/communication with MHDC</p>	Further Councillor Training
d)To maintain and where possible, enhance the characteristics of the Town e.g. Malvern in Bloom	<p>Lack of finance</p> <p>Lack of council commitment</p> <p>Lack of resources</p>	2	<p>Negative public opinion/reputational risk</p> <p>Negative effects on Street Scene and visibility</p>	Annual entry to Heart of England in Bloom competition provides impetus	

UNADOPTED

	Crossover with other government organisations		No positive developments with the Town	Robust budgeting to give adequate finance Staff knowledge/experience Issues raised within Operations and Planning committee where relevant	
e)To work towards full accessibility within all Town Council facilities	Constraining/mitigating factors which restrict full accessibility Lack of up-to-date knowledge/scrutiny Lack of available finance	4	Failure to provide inclusive facilities Negative public opinion	Robust tendering process Effective budgeting process Public consultation on large capital projects	Regular communication with relevant stakeholders to ensure scrutiny

20. **IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS FROM DEVOLUTION PROCESS**

Report AC02/25 was received and accepted.

Committee were asked to review the risks from the Devolution Process discussed at the last meeting.

It was **AGREED** to add the following risk to the list below, highlighted in red:

‘proposed asset or responsibility not in tune with the local community and its requirements as being a risk’

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to agree the risks from Devolution as listed below:

Risks

- Town Council could end up with more assets than we are able to maintain effectively and not have the budget for ongoing maintenance and repairs / replacement as necessary.
- There could be a loss of opportunity if the Town Council do not move fast enough to negotiate on assets which would be valuable for community/localism or financial possibilities.
- Assets such as buildings, toilets etc could be lost to the community. If these assets are transferred to the unitary authority and they do not wish to maintain them within Malvern, they could be closed or sold.
- The Town Council would inherit cost incurring assets but lose out on income generating assets.
- Loss of localism.
- Possible increase in precept and how this would be received by the taxpayers of Malvern.
- Lack of co-ordinated thinking and the three tiers of Councils not working together overall to get the best outcome for the public
- Extra responsibilities being taken on, which may require skills sets and expertise not currently held by Town Council staff.
- Proposed asset or responsibility not in tune with the local community and its requirements.

21. **REVIEW OF AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AS ATTACHED**

A discussion took place regarding the number of committee members with a view to seeking a further member at the Annual Council meeting in 2026 to assist in completing the overview and scrutiny required of the Audit committee.

It was **AGREED** to defer this item until the next Council Year starting in May 2026.

22. **DATE OF NEXT AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING**

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Audit Committee would be on Wednesday 25 February 2026 at 6.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 7pm.

.....
(Chairman)