

<b>Title of report</b>	Audit and Assurance Committee report to Council
<b>Public</b>	Public
<b>Summary/purpose of report</b>	To make recommendations from the Audit and Assurance Committee
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>The Committee recommends that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the Council accepts that the assurance report presents a true and fair view of the SSSC's performance towards achievement of strategic objectives, financial management and risk identification and management.</li> <li>2. the Council notes that Committee             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. recommends that a review of the level of general reserve should take place during budget setting for 2025/26</li> <li>b. noted the Risk Register was dated at 30 October 2024 and included the calculation of risks associated with the FPP Notices issue</li> <li>c. approved the extension, to 31 March 2025, of time allowed to complete recommendation 1 of the Internal Workforce Planning Management Information audit report</li> <li>d. endorsed the procurement update and performance report 2023/24.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>Author</b>	Lindsay MacDonald, Chair, Audit and Assurance Committee
<b>Link to Strategic Plan</b>	<p>The information in this report links to:</p> <p>Outcome 1: <b>Trusted</b> People who use services are protected by a workforce that is fit to practise.</p> <p>Outcome 2: <b>Skilled</b> Our work supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice.</p>

	<p>Outcome 3: <b>Confident</b> Our work enhances the confidence, competence and wellbeing of the workforce.</p> <p>Outcome 4: <b>Valued</b> The social work, social care and children and young people workforce is valued for the difference it makes to people’s lives.</p>
<b>Link to Risk Register</b>	Risk 3: We fail to meet corporate governance, external scrutiny and legal obligations.
<b>Impact Assessments</b>	An Impact Assessment (IA) was not required.
<b>Documents attached</b>	<p>Apx 1 - Assurance report at 30 September 2024</p> <p>Apx 2 - Risk Register as at 30 October 2024</p> <p>Apx 3 - Assurance Map as at 30 September 2024</p>
<b>Background papers</b>	<p><a href="#">Draft AAC minutes 29 Oct 2024</a></p> <p><a href="#">Procurement report and performance report 2023/24</a></p>

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. As set out in the Executive Framework Document and Scheme of Delegation, accountability for strategic oversight remains with the SSSC Council. The Council has delegated responsibility for oversight and scrutiny of achievement of operational key performance indicators, monitoring of Financial Performance and Strategic Risk Management to the Audit and Assurance Committee.
2. This report records the business and any recommendations of the items which were not considered as confidential matters of the Audit and Assurance Committee to SSSC Council following the Committee's meeting on 29 October 2024.

## **ASSURANCE REPORT**

3. The Committee reviewed the assurance report as of 30 September 2024 relating to the activities of the SSSC. Appendix 1 to this report is the assurance report considered by the Committee.

### **Finance**

4. Committee noted payroll savings of £592k however by filling some vacancies with agency staff there was a cost of £88k, reducing actual salary savings. It was noted that staff costs now included Fitness to Practice Panel Members allowances.
5. Committee also discussed the level of general reserves which was set at 2-2.5% and while it was noted there was no evidence for setting at this level, it was agreed that this should be considered for review in light of benchmarking against other public bodies, who set their levels much higher. The Committee recommends that the review will be carried out at budget setting stage.

### **Strategic Performance Indicators**

6. Committee noted that some of the figures did not yet show improvements from the launch of the Future Proofing Programme (FPP), however these should be available by February 2025. A new model to report the registration figures would be looked into in view of the enhanced information which would be ingathered through the FPP.
7. Committee also noted that a separate report on the qualified status of the workforce will be submitted to November Council meeting.

## **HR data**

8. Committee noted the staff turnover figures noting that some staff had been seconded into FPP posts and there was also a higher than usual level of maternity leave in the Regulation directorate. Some long-term staff absences were attributed to ongoing HR issues.

## **Risk Register**

9. Committee noted that the Risk Register was as at 30 October 2024, in order to include the risk associated with the recent FPP issues which were reported separately to Committee.

## **Assurance Map**

10. Members noted the Assurance Map.

## **AUDIT REPORTS**

11. The Committee was presented with the following audit reports from Henderson Loggie:  
Future Proofing Programme Systems control  
Complaints  
Internal Audit Progress report
12. The Future Proofing System Controls report was the final version of the report which was submitted in draft to the previous meeting in August. There remained only one recommendation regarding control of refunds and it was noted that this work had a completion date of 31 March 2025.
13. The report on Complaints provided a good level of assurance and positive comments from the auditor on the learning from complaints and staff training provided.
14. The follow-up review provided detail on the progress against the 2024/25 audit plan.
15. The Committee reviewed the internal/external audit tracker and approved the extension time to complete for one action. as requested by management.
16. The Committee took assurances from the auditor's reports and the management's tracker on completion of recommendations and also that processes are in place and recommended actions and timescales adhered to, or proper procedure is followed to request a change or extension to these.

## **PROCUREMENT UPDATE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24**

17. The Committee took assurance from the positive report on procurement that the proper processes were in place for procurement of services including the use of the Central Government Procurement Shared Service (CGPSS) which ensured that due processes and due diligence had been carried out with regard to the companies included in the database.

### **HORIZON SCANNING**

18. Committee noted
  - Risks from the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be considered for inclusion in the Risk Register.
  - Updates on the National Care Service (NCS) and the need for the SSSC to keep abreast of delays and changes in order to help ensure the continuation of care services.
  - David Archibald will update the Chair on changes to the role and remit of the Audit and Assurance Committee and its members, brought about by the changes in global internal audit standards which will come into effect in spring 2025.

### **CONSULTATION**

19. No specific stakeholder engagement was necessary in the preparation of this report as this forms a summary of the matters discussed at the Audit and Assurance Committee earlier in the meetings cycle.

### **RISKS**

20. We have an averse risk appetite to governance matters. This report gives assurances to Council that the Committee is carrying out its remit.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Resourcing**

21. There are no resource implications arising from this report.

#### **Compliance**

22. There are no compliance implications arising from this report.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IA)**

23. An IA was not necessary as this report relates to internal governance matters.

## **CONCLUSION**

24. This report, appendices and background minutes give assurances to Council that the Audit and Assurance Committee is carrying out its remit in accordance with the terms of reference contained in the Code of Corporate Governance.
25. The Committee requests that Council takes assurance, following consideration of the documents, that the Committee has been presented with a fair view of the operational and financial performance and risks facing the SSSC.