

Chairman - Councillor M G Dodson

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

R A James

A R McNaughton

P A Leason

D P Rouxel

A M Loughran

Also present:- Councillors R P Cooke (Resources Portfolio) and J M Pert

Officers in attendance:-

C Forrester	-	Chief Executive - Resources and Section 151 Officer
N Samrai	-	Head of Housing and Corporate Assets
J Aupers	-	Head of Transformation and Assurance
S Baddeley	-	Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager
J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer

AAC12 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2025 as published on 8 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

AAC13 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K M Aspin (substituted by Councillor R A James).

AAC14 Property Management and Rentals Audit - Verbal Update

Head of Housing and Corporate Assets, Nirmal Samrai, attended the meeting as requested to address the Property Management and Rentals audit arising from discussions at the previous meeting, and subsequently read from the prepared statement attached to these minutes as a **SCHEDULE**.

RESOLVED:- that the comments of the Head of Housing and Corporate Assets be noted.

AAC15 Updated Strategic Risk Register

Considered the report of the Head of Transformation and Assurance setting out details of the Council's Strategic Risk Register as at end of June 2025.

The Head of Transformation and Assurance highlighted Risk 6 (Local Government Reorganisation) and the associated action plan.

Councillor M G Dodson was pleased to see the reduction in the target score of Risk 2025-10 (Failure to deliver good governance).

Members duly voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee the Strategic Risk Register and the progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks be noted.

AAC16 Governance Improvement Plan - Progress Report for Quarter 1 2025-26

Considered the report of the Head of Transformation and Assurance advising Members on the progress in the delivery of the Governance Improvement Plan at the end of Quarter 1 2025-26.

The Head of Transformation and Assurance confirmed a slowing in progress in delivering said action plan, due to the continuing impact on the workload of Officers in dealing with LGR and expected the situation to be similar in quarter 2.

Members duly noted the 4 areas of work which were more than 3 months behind schedule.

Members then voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee the progress made in the delivery of the Governance Improvement Plan as set out in appendix 1 of the report be noted.

AAC17 Internal Audit Charter, Strategy and Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

Considered the report of the Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager presenting the updated Internal Audit Charter and updated Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) a new Internal Audit Strategy.

The Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager referred Members to the associated appendices noting the new requirement for the production of an Internal Audit Strategy to support the strategic objectives and successes of the Council.

Members duly voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee:

- (a) the updated Internal Audit Charter be approved;
- (b) the contents of the updated Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and the Internal Audit Strategy be noted.

The Chairman of the Committee suggested that such future documents highlight those changes made from previous versions in order to assist Members deliberations.

AAC18 Internal Audit Update - August 2025

Considered the report of the Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager presenting for information a progress report on the work of Internal Audit up to 31 August 2025.

The Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager led Members through the associated appendices, detailing those audits deemed to currently have partial assurance. Members considered the content in detail, with Officers responding to questions raised appropriately, with specific reference made to:-

- Development management determinations
- Food safety arrangements
- Civil contingencies
- IT service desk

Members duly voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee the progress report be noted.

CHAIR

Briefing note for Cabinet - Fire Risk Assessments - SBC

Contact Officer:

Purpose of note

To inform Members on the progress of the completion of Fire Risk Assessments for the Stafford portfolio of public and commercial buildings.

Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

Following a deep dive of compliance within the SBC Corporate Assets Team in September 2024 it became clear that there were no Fire Risk Assessments for the portfolio of Public or Commercial buildings.

Legal Background

The Regulatory Reform Order came into force in October 2006, it applies to almost all buildings except individual private homes. This includes workplaces, public buildings, shops, schools, hospitals, care homes and common areas of flats.

The RRO aims to ensure the safety of people in non-domestic premises by making fire safety a proactive, ongoing responsibility for those in control of buildings

The key requirements of the order place certain duties on the “responsible person”, usually the employer, owner, or person in control of the premises.

The responsible person must ensure that a fire risk assessment is carried out to identify fire hazards, assess risks and implement measures to reduce or eliminate those risks.

Based on the risk assessment, the appropriate fire safety measures must be put in place, these include;

- Fire detection and warning systems (e.g., fire alarms)
- Safe escape routes and emergency exits
- Firefighting equipment (e.g., extinguishers)
- Emergency plans and evacuation procedures
- Training for staff and regular fire drills
- **Special Consideration:** The needs of vulnerable people (e.g., those with disabilities) must be considered in fire safety planning

These fire safety arrangements must be maintained, reviewed, and updated regularly. Records of risk assessments and actions taken must be kept.

The responsible person for SBC is Tim Clegg.

Progress to date:

Operational portfolio:

Of the 30 SBC operational sites managed by the Corporate Assets team, all 30 now have FRA's.

Recommendations from the reports were minimal with no dangerous issues or urgent actions highlighted.

All remedial recommendations have either been completed or are in hand.

Commercial portfolio:

Of the 60* leased properties/areas, 29 tenants have been contacted to request they submit details of all compliance related matters including fire risk assessments.

The remaining 31 will be contacted by the 23 September 2025.

Of the 29 tenants already contacted, 15 have provided FRA's.

Freedom Leisure have provided reports for all of the sites they manage on our behalf (Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford and Stone Leisure Centres, Rowley Park, Stafford Castle, the Ancient High House and Izaak Walton Cottage).

A live register is held by the Corporate Asset Team to log responses and highlight outstanding information.

(*65 properties in total, 5 of which are vacant, FRA's not required until premises are tenanted)

Findings from the Assessments:

Recommended actions from the surveys varied, but importantly, no deficiencies were identified within any of the surveys that would materially affect the safety of building users or compromise evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.

Examples of the findings from our two biggest and busiest buildings are shown below. All actions are either complete or, in hand and will be complete by the end of September.

Where the recommendation is to "consider" an action, this will be given due consideration at the appropriate time.

Civic Centre:

3 Action Plan

The following recommendations should be implemented to reduce the fire risk in the premises to an acceptable level.

This fire risk assessment should be reviewed by May 2026 or before

Fire risk assessments should be reviewed following a fire or near miss; when material alterations are made to the premises or processes undertaken; changes to the persons at risk; and annually.

No.	Action to be taken	Priority	Target completion date	Date action completed
1	Review the storage in the loading bay and rear corridor to ensure that the exit routes are not obstructed and can be used at all times.	High	July 2025	01/08/25
2	Ensure that tenants undertake fire risk assessments for their areas and undertakings.	Medium	August 2025	FRA's Requested Monitor
3	Review the use of the lobbies leading to the escape stair in "A Block" and ensure these areas are kept clear at all times.	Medium	August 2025	22/07/25
4	Consider introducing a hot work permit system to control any hot works.	Medium	October 2025	Consider & Review as required
5	Review the storage of waste bins and consider relocating them from outside the building.	Medium	August 2025	On-going
6	Remove the trip hazards on the route to the exit door from Development and Planning.	Medium	July 2025	29/08/25
7	Remove the plank and brick from the foot of the escape stair.	Medium	July 2025	22/07/25
8	Consider reviewing the fire compartmentation separating the central core and escape staircases.	Medium	September 2025	Survey Booked
9	Consider installing additional detection in areas	Medium	As part of	

Stafford Crematorium:

This fire risk assessment should be reviewed by June 2026 or before

Fire risk assessments should be reviewed following a fire or near miss; when material alterations are made to the premises or processes undertaken; changes to the persons at risk; and annually.

No.	Action to be taken	Priority	Target completion date	Date action completed
1	Rehang the inward opening single leaf exit door to open outwards.	High	September 2025	20/08/25
2	Replace the locks on the exit doors with easily openable fastenings.	High	September 2025	20/08/25
3	Ensure that extension leads and adapters are not used for multiple high-power appliances such as kettles and toasters. Ideally high-power items should be plugged into individual wall sockets.	Medium	Ongoing	To be monitored
4	Review the storage of fuel within the grounds maintenance store.	Medium	September 2025	15/06/25
5	Consider installing emergency lighting in the Chapel to illuminate the exits.	Medium	September 2025	20/08/25
6	Confirm that fire safety systems are tested and maintained as required and records kept.	Medium	Ongoing	Confirmed
7	Confirm that all staff undertake induction and refresher training and fire drills are undertaken.	Medium	Ongoing	DH

As a result of the surveys, only the Civic Centre requires a compartmentation survey. This is booked in for the 13 and 14 October.

Next steps

For the operational portfolio, reviews will be completed annually.

The Corporate Assets centrally held compliance register has been updated with the relevant information and links to the surveys.

All remedial works required will be complete by the end of October.

For commercial/tenanted premises/areas; all compliance information has been requested to be submitted by 10 October.

Should this information fail to be submitted we will write to the tenants again, however it is important to note that whilst tenants have an obligation to protect visitors and staff in premises they manage, they are not legally required to provide this information to the Landlord unless the lease specifically states, which ours do not.

Once the information is received it will be reviewed and any issues with compliance highlighted to the tenants.