

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

28th January 2016

Report of the Head of Internal Audit Services

INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT/QUARTERLY REPORT 2015/16 QUARTER 3

EXEMPT INFORMATION

None

PURPOSE

To report on the outcome of Internal Audit's review of the internal control, risk management and governance framework in the 3rd quarter of 2015/16 – to provide members with assurance of the ongoing effective operation of an internal audit function and enable any particularly significant issues to be brought to the Committee's attention.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers the attached quarterly report and raises any issue it deems appropriate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 (as amended) require each local authority to publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) with its Annual Statement of Accounts. The AGS is required to reflect the various arrangements within the Authority for providing assurance on the internal control, risk management and governance framework within the organisation, and their outcomes.

One of the sources of assurance featured in the AGS is the professional opinion of the Head of Internal Audit Services on the outcome of service reviews. Professional good practice recommends that this opinion be given periodically throughout the year to inform the Annual Governance Statement. This opinion is given on a quarterly basis to the Audit & Governance Committee.

The Head of Internal Audit Services' quarterly opinion statement for Oct – Dec 2015 (Qtr 3) is set out in the attached document, and the opinion is summarised below.

Based on the ongoing work carried out by and on behalf of Internal Audit and other sources of information and assurance, my overall opinion of the control environment for this quarter is that "reasonable assurance" can be given.

Where significant deficiencies in internal control have been formally identified by management, Internal Audit or by external audit or other agencies, management have given assurances that these have been or will be resolved in an appropriate manner. Such cases will continue to be monitored. Internal Audit's opinion is one of the sources of assurance for the Annual Governance Statement which is statutorily required to be presented with the annual Statement of Accounts.

Specific Issues

No specific issues have been highlighted through the work undertaken by Internal Audit during 2015/16.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS

Failure to report would lead to non-compliance with the requirements of the Annual Governance Statement and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

None

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Internal Audit Performance Report 2015/16 Quarter 3
- Appendix 2 Percentage of Management Actions Agreed 2015/16 Quarter 3
- Appendix 3 Implementation of Agreed Management Actions 2015/16

INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT/QUARTERLY REPORT – Q3 - 2015/16

1. INTRODUCTION

Internal Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards)

Internal Audit's role is to provide independent assurance to the Council that systems are in place and are operating effectively.

Every local authority is statutorily required to provide for an adequate and effective internal audit function. The Internal Audit service provides this function at this Authority.

This brief report aims to ensure that Committee members are kept aware of the arrangements operated by the Internal Audit service to monitor the control environment within the services and functions of the authority, and the outcome of that monitoring. This is to contribute to corporate governance and assurance arrangements and ensure compliance with statutory and professional duties, as Internal Audit is required to provide periodic reports to "those charged with governance".

2. PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESSION AGAINST AUDIT PLAN

The Internal Audit service aims as one of its main Performance Indicators (PI's) to complete work on at least 90% of applicable planned audits by the end of the financial year, producing draft reports on these where possible/necessary. **Appendix 1** shows the progress at the end of quarter 3 of the work completed against the plan and highlights the work completed in the third quarter. At the end of the third quarter, internal audit have started/completed 40 areas of work from the 2015/16 audit plan which equates to 72% of the revised annual plan. We have completed work in one additional area that was unplanned and have to cancel three audit reviews at management's request.

The service also reports quarterly on the percentage of draft reports issued within 15 working days of the completion of fieldwork. All (100%) of the draft reports issued in this quarter of the year were issued within this deadline.

3. AUDIT REVIEWS COMPLETED QUARTER 3 2015/16

Appendix 2 details the number of recommendations made. A total of 55 recommendations were made in the third quarter with 55 (100%) of the recommendations being accepted by management.

The service revisits areas it has audited around 6 months after agreeing a final report on the audit, to test and report to management on the extent to which agreed actions have been taken. Six implementation reviews were completed during the 3rd quarter of 2015/16. **Appendix 3** details the implementation reviews completed showing the revised assurance levels. The implementation reviews completed identified that 59% of the agreed management actions were implemented or partially implemented.

Internal Audit is fairly satisfied with the progress made by management to reduce the level of risk and its commitment to progressing the outstanding issues. As there are still a number of high priority actions still requiring to be completed, additional implementation reviews will be carried out to ensure the implementation of the actions is completed.

4. INDEPENDENCE OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY

Attribute Standards 1110 to 1130 in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require that Internal Audit have organisational and individual independence and specifically states that the head of Internal Audit Services must confirm this to the Audit & Governance Committee at least annually. As performance is reported quarterly, this confirmation will be provided quarterly.

The Head of Internal Audit Services confirms that Internal Audit is operating independently of management and is objective in the performance of internal audit work.

5 OVERALL CURRENT INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION

Based on the ongoing work carried out by and on behalf of Internal Audit and other sources of information and assurance, my overall opinion of the Governance, risk and control environment at this time is that “reasonable assurance” can be given. Where significant deficiencies in internal control have been formally identified by management, Internal Audit or by external audit or other agencies, management have given assurances that these have been or will be resolved in an appropriate manner. Such cases will continue to be monitored. Internal Audit’s opinion is one of the sources of assurance for the Annual Governance Statement which is statutorily required to be presented with the annual Statement of Accounts.

Specific issues:

There were no specific issues highlighted through the work of Internal Audit in the third quarter of the 2015/16 financial year

Angela Struthers,
Head of Internal Audit Services