

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

27th October 2016

Report of the Head of Internal Audit Services

INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT 2016/17

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 1st 6 months of 2016/17 – 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 report and raises any issue it deems appropriate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 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' opinion statement for Apr - Sept 2016 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 2016/17.

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

Angela Struthers, Head of Internal Audit Services

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Internal Audit Performance Report 2016/17

Appendix 2 Percentage of Management Actions Agreed 2016/17

Appendix 3 Implementation of Agreed Management Actions 2016/17

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – 6 Month Period – 1st April – 30th September 2016– (2016/17)

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 1st half of the year of the work completed against the plan and highlights the work completed. At the end of the first half of the year, Internal Audit have commenced/completed **27 audits**. The original plan identified **55 audits** to be completed, 2 additional audits not originally identified on the audit plan have been identified. This equates to 47% of the revised annual plan (specific reviews). 20 implementation reviews were identified in the original audit plan, the service has completed 20 in the first half of the financial year.

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 2016/17

Appendix 2 details the number of recommendations made. A total of 107 recommendations were made in the first half with 107 (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. Twenty implementation reviews were completed during the 1st half of 2016/17. **Appendix 3** details the implementation progress to date for the first half of the financial year with 74% (111/150) of the agreed management actions implemented/partially implemented at 1st implementation review and 72% (26/36) implemented/partially implemented at 2nd implementation review. Four recommendations not implemented at 2nd implementation review, and ten recommendations not implemented at 1st implementation review were high priority and management have agreed revised implementation dates for all outstanding recommendations. Internal Audit is fairly satisfied with the progress made by management to reduce the level of risk and its commitment to progress the outstanding issues.

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 state 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.

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 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 first half of the 2016/17 financial year that would need to be highlighted as a corporate risk.

Angela Struthers,
Head of Internal Audit Services