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| 6 March 2018 | | ITEM: 9 |
| Standards and Audit Committee | | |
| Internal Audit Progress Report 2017/18 | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: Non-key | |
| Report of: Gary Clifford – Chief Internal Auditor | | |
| Accountable Assistant Director: N/A | | |
| Accountable Director: Sean Clark – Director of Finance & IT | | |
| This report is public | | |

Executive Summary

The Internal Audit Plan 2017/18 was discussed by the Standards & Audit Committee at their meeting of 28th February 2017. This progress report covers work undertaken since the last report issued on 23rd November 2017.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Standards & Audit Committee:

Consider reports issued and the work being carried out by Internal Audit in relation to the 2017/18 audit plan.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require that a relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.
- 2.2 The Internal Audit Service carries out the work to satisfy this legislative requirement and part of this is reporting the outcome of its work to the Standards & Audit Committee.
- 2.3 The Standards & Audit Committee has a responsibility for reviewing the Council's corporate governance arrangements, including internal control and formally approving the Annual Governance Statement. The audit work carried out by the Internal Audit Service is a key source of assurance to the Standards & Audit Committee about the operation of the internal control environment.

2.4 The audits contained in the Internal Audit Plan 2017/18 are based on an assessment of risk for each system or operational area. The assessment of risk includes elements such as the level of corporate importance, materiality, service delivery/importance and sensitivity.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The reports issued by Internal Audit provide 4 levels of assurance opinion. The 4 opinions use a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) assurance level and reports are now categorised as:

- Green; Amber/Green (positive assurance opinions);
- Amber/Red (negative assurance opinion that provides some assurance but a number of weaknesses were identified); and
- Red (negative assurance opinion).

3.2 During the period being reported on, we have finalised 6 reports. These cover the following areas: Bonnygate Primary School; St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School; Horndon-on-the-Hill Primary School; Little Thurrock Primary School; Risk Management and the Geographic Information System.

3.3 Of the 6 reports issued, 4 received a Green assurance opinion. The report for Little Thurrock Primary School was Amber/Green and the Risk Management report received an opinion that the council was a Risk Managed organisation. Therefore, all of these reports received positive assurance opinions and further details of the headline findings are shown in Appendix 1.

3.4 The Chief Internal Auditor has undertaken 1 ad hoc piece of work at the request of senior management. This is still on-going.

3.5 The purpose of this progress report is not only to highlight reports issued as final but to provide members with an update on work which has reached the draft report stage and work currently in progress. The status of work currently being undertaken is shown at Appendix 1.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 To assist the Standards & Audit Committee in satisfying itself that progress against the Internal Audit Plan is sufficient as one of the means of assuring itself of the effective operation of internal controls.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 The audit risk assessment and the plan are periodically discussed with the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Directors and Heads of Service before being reported to Directors Board and the Standards & Audit Committee.

5.2 All terms of reference and draft reports are discussed and agreed with the relevant Corporate Directors, Directors, Heads of Service and/or management before being finalised.

5.3 The Internal Audit Service also consults with the council's External Auditors to ensure that respective audit plans provide full coverage whilst avoiding duplication.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The council's corporate priorities were used to inform the annual audit plan 2017-18. Recommendations made are designed to further the implementation of these corporate priorities.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Chief Accountant

Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, it is important that the authority maintains adequate internal controls to safeguard the authority's assets. If there is a cost to any audit recommendation, this is to be met from existing budgets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Matthew Boulter**
Democratic Services & Governance Manager

The contents of this report and appendixes form part of the council's responsibility to comply with the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to at least annually undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance. The council has delegated responsibility for ensuring this is taking place to the Standards & Audit Committee. There are no adverse legal implications relating to this progress report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

There are no direct diversity or equality implications arising from this report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

In terms of risk and opportunity management, the Internal Audit Plan and its outcomes are a key part of the council's risk management and assurance framework. The Internal Audit Plan is based on risk assessments that include a review of the council's risk and opportunity register.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report:

- Strategy for Internal Audit 2017/18 to 2019/20 and Internal Audit Plan 2017/18
- Internal Audit Reports issued in 2017/18.

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Internal Audit Progress Report.

Report Author:

Gary Clifford

Chief Internal Auditor

Thurrock Council Internal Audit Service, Corporate Finance