# Thurrock Council

## Standards & Audit Committee

## Internal Audit Progress Report 2018/19

Date of Committee: 13th December 2018

# Introduction

The internal audit plan for 2018/19 was presented to the Standards & Audit Committee on 6th March 2018. This report provides an update on progress against that plan.

*Table showing reports issued as Final*

| Assignment | Status | Opinion | Actions Agreed (by priority) | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | High | Medium | Low |
| **Audits to address specific risks** | | | | | |
| **Community Safety** | Final | Amber/ Green | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| **Disabled Facilities Grants** | Final | Green | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| **Direct Payments (Adults)** | Final | Amber/ Green | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| **Holy Cross Catholic Primary School** | Final | Green | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| **Right to Buy** | Final | Green | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| **Housing Rents** | Final | Amber/ Green | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| **Recruitment & Selection** | Final | Amber/ Green | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| **Transforming Homes** | Final | Green | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (Children)** | Final | Amber/ Green | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| **Cyber Security*** | Final | Amber/ Green | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| **Sickness Management** | Draft | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| **Key Performance Indicators (Adults)** | Draft | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| **Car Parking Income** | Draft | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| **Street Cleaning** | WIP | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| **Children's Centres** | WIP | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

* This work and the assurance opinion were provided under the Croydon Framework Agreement by specialist IT Auditors. An overall assurance opinion and narrative has been provided under the "Key Findings from Internal Audit Work" section of this report.

## Work and other issues for which no reports are generated

Further significant work has, and is still being carried out on the payment by results funding provided as part of the troubled families programme. We continue to undertake sample testing of claims before submission to MHCLG.
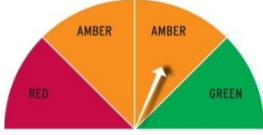
The service continues to work with the software provider of our automated working papers to resolve some issues around the assignment brief and report. This has been time consuming but is close to being completed which will then enable us to fully utilise the software.
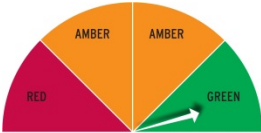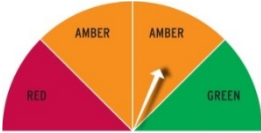
**<u>Changes to the Annual Plan</u>**

There have been 3 additions to the plan since the last meeting. All of these were requested by the relevant Directors. These reviews cover Fleet Management, Stores and Fostering. The first 2 come under the Director of Environment & Transportation and the 3rd under the Corporate Director of Children's Services.

It is anticipated there will continue to be a significant impact on resources due to the additional work being under taken on the troubled family's programme which may result in other audits being deferred or taken out of the plan.

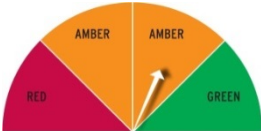# Key Findings from Internal Audit Work

| Assignment: Recruitment & Selection | Opinion: Amber/Green |  |
|---|---|---|

**Headline Findings**: Our review of the **Recruitment & Selection** identified 3 medium and 2 low recommendations around the adequacy of the control framework. Effective recruitment and selection ensures that the organisation has the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to fulfil its responsibilities and achieve its objectives. The purpose of selection is to match people to work and this is the most important element in any organisation's management of people simply because it is not possible to optimise the effectiveness of human resources if there is a less than adequate match. A number of changes in the induction process were introduced as a result of the staff survey and have resulted in significant improvements from the previous audit review in this area. The 1 high, 5 medium and 2 low recommendations from the previous audit had been implemented.

| Action and Response | Responsible Officer | Date |
|---|---|---|
| **Action** – Once interview panel members have been identified, the recruitment team should check the training log to ensure at least one panel member had received recruitment training.<br><br>**Response** - Recruitment Team Leader to liaise with P&OD team to ensure master spreadsheet is kept up to date and names of panel members are checked against this as part of each recruitment campaign. | Recruitment Team Leader and Recruitment Team | November 2018 and ongoing |
| **Action** – Managers must ensure that new starters are booked onto, and attend, one of the monthly corporate induction training sessions during their probation period as this is a mandatory requirement in the new member of staff passing their probation (as is completion of equality and diversity training). Failure to do so could result in the staff member being unable to be permanently employed.<br><br>**Response** - Recruitment team have ensured new starters are booked on to attend corporate induction as part of pre-employment checks.<br><br>HR to implement robust process to check that new starters are attending the relevant training sessions that they are booked on to as part of probation sign offs. | Strategic Lead HR & OD and HR Business Partners | November 2018 and ongoing |
| **Action** – The Recruitment Team should ensure that all relevant documentation is provided to them from service areas within 3 working days of the interviews and this is checked for completeness so they can get assurance that the correct processes were followed.<br><br>**Response** - Recruitment team do chase managers, however suggest new process implemented where onboarding does not commence unless interview notes provided by the manager and interview panel members. | Recruitment Team Leader and Recruitment Team | November 2018 and ongoing |

| Assignment: Transforming Homes | Opinion: Amber/Green |  |
|---|---|---|

**Headline Findings**: Our review of the **Transforming Homes Programme** identified 2 low recommendations around the adequacy of the control framework. The transformation of council homes is expected to bring significant improvements to the long term viability of the council's housing stock and to the living conditions for the residents and ensures the council fulfils its duty to provide warm homes with modern facilities. Continuation of the programme will enable the council to complete all internal refurbishment and then commence the external works, thereby raising all residential council assets to the new Thurrock standard. There has been no previous audit in this area so there were no recommendations to follow up.

| Assignment: Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (Children) | Opinion: Amber/Green |  |
|---|---|---|

**Headline Findings**: Our review of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (Children) (UASC)** identified 1 high, 2 medium and 1 low recommendations around the adequacy of the control framework. The Home Office defines a UASC as a person who, at the time of making the asylum application is "Applying for asylum in their own right and is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law has responsibility to do so. A child or young person may arrive in the UK and come to the attention of agencies through a port or via a lorry drop, often at a roadside service station. It is at this stage that the process commences for the child or young person in terms of claiming asylum and ensuring their safety and welfare through statutory child care processes.

| Action and Response | Responsible Officer | Date |
|---|---|---|
| **Action** - Although it is appreciated that the UASC team only took over from the Through Care Team 1 & 2 in September 2016, it is recommended that safety plans are developed promptly to ensure the council safeguards the child or young person immediately. <br><br> **Response** - The following is incorporated into the current safety plan: <br><br> A robust initial assessment (risk assessment, risk of trafficking and mental health) is made to ascertain needs and to consider any immediate safeguarding concerns. <br><br> A risk assessment is incorporated into the transfer paperwork and placement request forms informing all prospective placements of the safeguarding requirements. <br><br> A NRM referral is considered at point of entry to the UK and reviewed as new information becomes known. | Service Manager (Children Looked After) | Complete - to be reviewed by Dec 18 |
| **Action -** Although it is appreciated that most of the UASC are aged between 16 and 17, it is recommended that for future arrivals, pathway plans are prepared without undue delay. This will help to improve the transition into adulthood. <br><br> **Response -** All UASC Team Social Workers have been instructed to begin the Pathway Plan on all eligible UASC without undue delay. <br><br> Supervision, formal audits and self-audit tools to be utilised to ensure compliance. | Service Manager (Children Looked After) | Complete – Cases to be audited Dec 18 |
| **Action -** Management should make arrangements to have an age assessment service in place. Options include in-house staff trained to undertake the work, use the services of an independent social worker with | Service Manager (Children Looked After) | Immediate capability and provision to undertake Age Assessments. |

relevant experience, or, look at buying in the service from another local authority e.g. Essex County Council, who have their own age assessment team.

**Response -** Currently 5 out of 6 social workers in the CLA3 / UASC Team are trained to undertake Age Assessments. The one remaining Social Worker is due to undertake the training in February 2019.

There are a number of Social Workers in the other Children Looked After Teams trained to undertake age assessments and further training sessions have been offered to those who require it.

The above provision, as it currently stands, should negate the need to instruct an Independent Social Worker or to buy the service in.

All CLA3 Social Workers where UASC are held will be trained as of February 2019.

| Assignment: Cyber Security | Opinion: Amber/Green |  |
|---|---|---|

**Headline Findings**: Our review of **Cyber Security** identified 2 medium and 1 low recommendations around the adequacy of the control framework. As part of the "Connected Thurrock 2017-2020" plan, Thurrock Council has set out to connect its community with technology so that Thurrock is a better place to live, learn, work and do business. However, this digital vision implies a greater exposure to cyber threats. In parallel, the UK Government has promoted the Cyber Essentials scheme as a security baseline in order to prevent 80% of the cyber-attacks.

In such context of increasing cyber threats and more pervasive systems, the council requested a review of its cyber security against the Cyber Essentials criteria. Internal Audit has been working with IT, Corporate Fraud and Information Governance on an on-going basis to review the council's resilience to such attacks.

As a result of this work, in our opinion we are able to provide assurance to the Standards & Audit Committee that the council does have systems and controls in place to help them manage this risk.