

12 March 2020	ITEM: 9
Standards and Audit Committee	
Internal Audit Progress Report 2019/20	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Gary Clifford – Chief Internal Auditor	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark – Corporate Director of Finance, Governance & Property	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

The Internal Audit Plan 2019/20 was discussed by the Standards & Audit Committee at their meeting of 14 March 2019. This progress report covers work undertaken since the last progress report presented to the Committee on 19th December 2019.

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 2019/20 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 2019/20 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 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.

3.3 During the period being reported on, we have finalised 4 reports. 3 of these were assurance reports and all received a Green (positive) assurance opinion. These were Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable and Member's Allowances.

3.4 The remaining report was an advisory review of Extra Care. This was requested following concerns raised around the processes in place to manage the cash in the service. The service generates cash through a number of sources including meals through the café and events it arranges for residents. A number of weaknesses were identified and reported back to senior management and are included in Appendix 1. This review resulted in the service looking at an alternative process which involved becoming cashless. It was very pleasing to note that management reacted in a very positive and swift way to address these issues, thereby reducing the risks to both staff and residents.

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 Assistant Directors 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, Assistant Directors 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 2019-20. Recommendations made are designed to further the implementation of these corporate priorities.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **J Wilson**
Assistant Director - Finance

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. The costs associated with the implementation of audit recommendations will be considered and, where possible, met from existing budgets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **T Hallam**
Acting Head of Law, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

The contents of this report and appendixes form part of the council's responsibility to comply with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including to at least annually undertake an effective internal audit to, amongst other things, 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 legal implications directly arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **R Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development & Equalities

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 frameworks. 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 2019/20
- Internal Audit Reports issued in 2019/20.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Internal Audit Progress Report.

Report Author:

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Thurrock Council Internal Audit Service, Finance, Governance & Property