

Report to Audit Committee

21st September 2021

By the Horsham Chief Internal Auditor



INFORMATION REPORT

Not Exempt

Internal Audit Progress Report – Quarter 1 (01/04/21 - 30/06/21)

Executive Summary

To provide Members with an update on all internal audit and counter-fraud activity completed during the quarter, including a summary of all key findings. The report also includes details of progress on delivery of the annual audit plan along with an update on the performance of the internal audit service during the period.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- Note the report and consider any further action required in response to the issues raised; and
- Identify any new or emerging risks for consideration for inclusion in the internal audit plan.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) To comply with the requirements set out in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2013 (amended April 2017).
- ii) The Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal control.

Background Papers

Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2021-22

Wards affected: All.

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Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

Background

- 1.1 This progress report covers work completed between 1 April 2021 and 30 June 2021.

Supporting Information

- 1.2 The current annual plan for internal audit is contained within the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2021-22 which was approved by the Audit Committee on 14 April 2021.

2 Relevant Policy / Professional Standards

- 2.1 Internal Audit follows the mandatory standards set out in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors.
- 2.2 The Council's Constitution supports the statutory requirements outlined above. Financial Procedure Rule 4e 27 states that: "The Chief Finance Officer ensures the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to maintain an adequate and effective internal audit. The terms of reference for Internal Audit are detailed in the Council's Internal Audit Charter which is approved and reviewed annually by the Audit Committee".

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Key audit findings from final reports are summarised in Appendix A.
- 3.2 Overall, of the three formal audits finalised during the quarter (all of which relate to the 2020/21 audit plan), all three received an opinion of 'partial assurance'. Although it is important to acknowledge that the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on virtually all council services, it remains a concern that all of our reviews finalised in the quarter were unable to achieve an opinion above partial assurance, one of which was a follow up to a previous audit. The organisation has recognised the importance of addressing issues within the Annual Governance Statement and it is hoped that our remaining audit work across 2021/22 will demonstrate improvements in control.
- 3.3 Formal follow up reviews continue to be carried out for all audits where 'minimal assurance' opinions have been given and for higher risk areas receiving 'partial assurance'. Progress on action tracking is provided in Section 3 of Appendix A, and details of outstanding high and medium actions are provided in Section 3.4.
- 3.4 Flexibility is built into the audit plan to allow resources to be directed to any new and emerging risks. We continue to liaise with departments to identify these but would also welcome input from Members. Details of those reviews added and removed from the plan this year are set out in section 4 of Appendix A.
- 3.5 Progress against our performance targets (focussing on a range of areas relating to our service) can be found in section 5 of Appendix A.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Committee will be kept informed about progress in terms of the delivery of the audit plan for 2021/22.

5 Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 Heads of Service / Service Managers are consulted during each audit. At the end of each review, audit findings are discussed with the relevant Head(s) of Service at a final meeting, and actions are agreed. An action plan is incorporated into the final report including details of responsible officers and agreed implementation dates. There are occasions when a director may also be consulted, particularly for audits which span a number of departments.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 This report summarises information about the work undertaken by Internal Audit, and therefore there are no direct financial or HR consequences.

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 There are no legal consequences. Where compliance issues are identified during audit fieldwork, the Head of Legal & Democratic Services (or relevant legal specialist) will be consulted.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 All Internal Audit work is undertaken using a risk based approach.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 Internal Audit is a reporting function and there are no consequences in respect of Crime & Disorder; Human Rights; Equality & Diversity; or Sustainability. However these areas are considered where appropriate during audit fieldwork.