

Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
22 September 2021

Title: Internal Audit Quarter 1 2021/22 Progress Report

Lead Officer: Richard Barr

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Noone

Public report / Confidential report: Public report

Wards of the District directly affected: Not applicable

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: No

Key Decision: No

Included within the Forward Plan: Yes

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: Not applicable

Consultation & Community Engagement: Consultation with line management and SMT. None with community.

Checked for Accessibility: Yes

Final Decision: Yes.

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	26 Aug 2021	Chris Elliott/Andrew Jones
Head of Service	26 Aug 2021	Mike Snow
CMT	26 Aug 2021	Chris Elliott/Andrew Jones/Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	26 Aug 2021	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	26 Aug 2021	Andrew Jones
Finance	26 Aug 2021	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	8 Sept 2021	Councillor Hales

1 **Summary**

- 1.1 Report advises on progress in achieving the Internal Audit Plan 2020/21, summarises the audit work completed in the first quarter and provides assurance that action has been taken by managers in respect of the issues raised by Internal Audit.

2 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the report, including its appendices, be noted and, where appropriate, approved. Specifically:
- 2.1.1 That Appendix 1, containing guidance on the role and responsibilities of audit committees, be noted. (Paragraph 3.2 of this report)
- 2.1.2 That Appendix 2, detailing the performance of Internal Audit in completing the Audit Plan, be considered. (Para. 8.1 of this report)
- 2.1.3 That Appendix 3, setting out the action plan accompanying the Internal Audit report issued in the quarter, be reviewed. (Para. 10.3)
- 2.1.4 That Appendix 4, recording the state of implementation of recommendations issued in previous quarters, be reviewed. (Para. 11.4)

3 **Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 3.1 Members have responsibility for corporate governance, of which internal audit forms a key part.
- 3.2 Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee is operating, in effect, as an audit committee in the context of receiving and acting upon this report. Guidance on the role and responsibilities of audit committees is available from a number of sources. That which relates to audit committees' relationship with internal audit and in particular the type and content of reports they should receive from internal audit is summarised in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Essentially, the purpose of an audit committee is:
- To provide independent assurance of the associated control environment.
 - To provide independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment.
- 3.4 To help fulfil these responsibilities audit committees should review summary internal audit reports and the main issues arising and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary.
- 3.5 The following sections provide information to satisfy these requirements.

4 **Policy Framework**

4.1 **Fit for the Future (FFF)**

4.1.1 The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.

4.1.2 The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on the Council's website](#). The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

4.2 **FFF Strands**

4.2.1 **External impacts of proposal(s)**

People - Health, Homes, Communities

Services - Green, Clean, Safe

Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment

Although there are no direct policy implications, internal audit is an essential part of corporate governance and will be a major factor in shaping the Policy Framework and Council policies.

4.2.2 **Internal impacts of the proposal(s)**

People - Effective Staff

Services - Maintain or Improve Services

Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term

Although there are no direct policy implications, internal audit is an essential part of corporate governance and will be a major factor in shaping the Policy Framework and Council policies.

4.3 **Supporting Strategies**

4.3.1 Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies but description of these is not relevant for the purposes of this report.

4.4 **Changes to Existing Policies**

4.4.1 This section is not applicable.

4.5 **Impact Assessments**

4.5.1 This section is not applicable.

5 Budgetary Framework

5.1 Although there are no direct budgetary implications arising from this report, Internal Audit provides a view on all aspects of governance including that of the Budgetary Framework. An effective control framework ensures that the Authority manages its resources and achieves its objectives economically, efficiently and effectively.

6 Risks

6.1 Internal Audit provides a view on all aspects of governance, including corporate and service arrangements for managing risks.

6.2 It is impractical to provide a commentary on risks as the report is concerned with the outcome of reviews by Internal Audit on other services. Having said that, there are clear risks to the Council in not dealing with the issues raised within the Internal Audit reports (these risks were highlighted within the reports). There is also an overarching risk associated with the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee not fulfilling its role properly e.g. not scrutinising this report robustly.

7 Alternative Options Considered

7.1 This section is not applicable.

8 Progress against Plan

8.1 At the start of each year Members approve the Audit Plan setting out the audit assignments to be undertaken. A detailed analysis of progress in completing the Audit Plan for 2021/22 is set out as Appendix 2.

9 Assurance

9.1 Management is responsible for the system of internal control and should set in place policies and procedures to help ensure that the system is functioning correctly. On behalf of the Authority, Internal Audit review, appraise and report on the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of financial and other management controls.

9.2 Each audit report gives an overall opinion on the level of assurance provided by the controls within the area audited. The assurance bands are shown below:

Assurance Levels

Level of Assurance	Definition
Substantial Assurance	There is a sound system of control in place and compliance with the key controls.
Moderate Assurance	Whilst the system of control is broadly satisfactory, some controls are weak or non-existent and there is non-compliance with several controls.

Limited Assurance	The system of control is generally weak and there is non-compliance with the controls that do exist.
-------------------	--

These definitions have been developed following extensive investigation of other organisations' practices (including commercial operations).

10 Internal Audit Reviews Completed in the Quarter and Management Responses to Recommendations

- 10.1 Two audits were completed in the first quarter of 2021/22. Both audits were awarded a substantial assurance opinion.
- 10.2 The Internal Audit reports relating to the audits completed in the quarter are available for viewing on the online agenda for the meeting.
- 10.3 The action plans accompanying these reports are set out for separate scrutiny as Appendix 3. This details the recommendations arising together with the management responses, including target implementation dates. As can be seen in the Appendix, responses have been received from managers to all recommendations that were made.

11 Implementation of Recommendations Issued Previously

- 11.1 In a change to previous reports, a new method of following up on recommendations has recently been implemented. Rather than seeking to determine the implementation status of recommendations after a set period (either three or nine months, depending on the risk rating assigned to the recommendation), the recommendations are now followed up once the implementation date has passed. Officers are also now able to provide an update as soon as they have completed the agreed action, as opposed to waiting to be chased for a response.
- 11.2 As this is the first time that this process has been used, there are a relatively large number of recommendations included within this report. This is because there were a number that were due to be followed up under the old process where the implementation date has already passed in addition to those that were due to be completed within this quarter. In future, the reports will cover only those that were due to implemented in the relevant quarter.
- 11.3 Where officers have not completed the recommendation in line with the original target date, they are now being asked for a new date by which the agreed action will be completed. If this is not met, this will be flagged separately in future reports to Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee (with, as per usual protocol, the option of Members asking the officers to attend to explain the lack of progress).
- 11.4 The state of implementation for all relevant recommendations is set out in Appendix 4, including **two recommendations where no response has been forthcoming.**

Agenda Item 4

11.5 With regards to the outstanding responses, these relate to actions that were shown as completed at the time of the final report which, historically, wouldn't have been followed up. However, before agreeing to show the action as completed in the final reports, evidence is now sought of what has been done. Both these actions belong to the Development Services Manager.

11.6 No implementation dates have been amended.

12 **Review**

12.1 Members are reminded that they can see any files produced by Internal Audit that may help to confirm the level of internal control of a service, function or activity that has been audited or that help to verify the performance of Internal Audit.