

Report to	Corporate Governance & Audit Committee
Date of meeting	27 January 2021
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Julian Thompson Hill / Lisa Lovegrove – Chief Internal Auditor
Report author	Lisa Lovegrove – Chief Internal Auditor
Title	Internal Audit Update

1. What is the report about?

This report provides an update for Corporate Governance & Audit Committee on Internal Audit's latest progress in terms of its service delivery, assurance provision, reviews completed, performance and effectiveness in driving improvement. It also includes an update on progress with the CIPFA Good Practice for Audit Committees.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide information on the work carried out by Internal Audit since the last Committee meeting. It allows the Committee to monitor Internal Audit's performance and progress as well as providing summaries of Internal Audit reports so that the Committee can receive assurance on other council services and corporate areas. This enables the committee to discharge its responsibilities as per its Term of Reference. Delivery of the audit plan will assist the committee with obtaining assurance that the Annual Governance Statement appropriately reflects the conditions of the Council.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee considers the report content, assesses Internal Audit's progress and performance.

That the Committee decides whether it needs further assurance on any of the audited areas to follow up progress with implementing the improvement action plans.

4. Report details

Appendix 1 provides an update on internal audit work carried out since the last update report to the committee in November 2020. Since the last Corporate Governance & Audit Committee update report six audits have been completed, two of which were given a low assurance rating and the audit reports are included as Appendix 2 & 3.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the internal audit team continues to provide advice and support in relation to changes to control arrangements that the Council is having to implement to respond to the pandemic. We have prioritised the audits planned for 2020/21 as reported to the committee in November 2020 and, while engagement from services is generally good, Covid-19 continues to impact on the pace and progression of some of our audits.

Appendix 1 shows the impact had on progress against the Audit Plan for 2020/21 in part due to Covid-19, but also due to temporary reduction in audit resource as reported in November 2020. We have successfully appointed a Senior Auditor for a 12 month temporary contract to backfill for the Senior Auditor that was seconded to the Test, Trace & Protect Team in June 2020. Confirmation was also received that resource available to the Chief Internal Auditor will not be reduced, therefore the recruitment process to fill the vacant Auditor post will be initiated shortly.

The Audit Plan remains under regular review, as well as the progress in delivering assurance work, to gauge if the Chief Internal Auditor can form an Annual Opinion on governance, risk management and internal control arrangements without any scope limitations. CIPFA has recently released guidance for providing an Annual Opinion with Scope Limitations which will be used should it be required.

Appendix 2, Internal Audit Report on the Provision of Homeless Accommodation was given a low assurance report and representatives for the service will be in attendance to provide necessary assurances should it be required.

Appendix 3, Internal Audit report on Queen's Buildings project was also given a low assurance and representatives will be in attendance to provide the necessary assurances should it be required.

It is recommended in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the Appendix 3 report because it is likely that exempt information as defined in paragraphs 16 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

There is no decision required with this report. There is no direct contribution to Corporate Priorities, but some projects in the audit plan will review Corporate Priority areas and will provide assurance on their delivery.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Not applicable – there is no decision or costs attached to the report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

Not applicable – this report does not require a decision or proposal for change.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Not required.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no financial implications attached to this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There is a risk that the Chief Internal Auditor is unable to draw on sufficient assurance to issue a complete annual opinion in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Remaining audits are prioritised to provide coverage of governance, risk management and internal controls and scopes for these audits will focus on key risks. CIPFA has recently issued guidance on providing an annual opinion to account for any limitations.

11. Power to make the decision

Not applicable – there is no decision required with this report.