

AUDIT AND ANTI-FRAUD PROGRESS REPORT 31 MARCH 2020**AUDIT COMMITTEE
MEETING DATE**

22 April 2020

CLASSIFICATION:

Open

If exempt, the reason will be listed in
the main body of this report.**WARD(S) AFFECTED**

All Wards

GROUP DIRECTOR

Ian Williams, Group Director of Finance & Corporate Resources

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Audit Committee to consider the performance of the Audit & Anti-Fraud Service, the areas of work undertaken, and information on current developments in Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud as well as statistical information about the work of the investigation teams.

1.2 This is part of the Committee's role in overseeing corporate governance and the report is presented for information and comment.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1. The Audit Committee is recommended to note and consider Audit & Anti Fraud's progress and performance to 31 March 2020 (Appendices 1 to 4).

3. REASONS FOR DECISION

3.1. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) came into force in April 2013 and apply to all internal audit service providers. These Standards were updated in April 2016 and again in April 2017.

3.2. The PSIAS requires the Chief Audit Executive (or equivalent) to report functionally to a board and to communicate the internal audit service's performance relative to its plan and other matters. For the purposes of the PSIAS the Audit Committee has been designated the 'board'.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Audit Committee approved the Internal Audit Plan 2019/20 on 10 April 2019 and this report notes the progress against that plan and progress against high and medium priority recommendations. The Progress Report of the Internal Audit Service is provided in Appendix 1 and includes a summary of: -

- Performance against key performance indicator targets
- Internal Audit work carried out up to the end of March 2020
- Implementation of high and medium audit recommendations
- School audits

Details of progress with planned audits are provided in Appendix 2.
Definitions of the assurance levels used are provided in Appendix 3.

4.2 A statistical summary of the work undertaken by the Audit Investigation Service for the period January to March 2020 is provided in Appendix 4. In summary, the key financial benefits to arise from selected key areas of enquiry are as follows:

Investigation area	Estimated saving arising from enquiries
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	£
Tenancy Fraud	737,000 (minimum)
No Recourse to Public Funds	322,000
Blue Badge/Parking	11,075
Total	1,070,075

4.3 There has been a necessary recent shift in corporate priorities as the Council provides maximum support to residents and businesses in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. This is drawing resources from secondary services, including Audit and Anti-Fraud (AAF), to support key front line teams. There has been an impact on the internal audit team's performance as a result of service managers needing to focus on the Council's response to the pandemic. There has been a minimal impact on the performance reported in this quarter for the anti fraud teams. The Division has been proactive in moving officers to support the Borough Emergency Command Centre and Customer Services quickly, this took place from the end of March onwards. It is inevitable that much of the work of the Division will be suspended in the short to medium term which will strongly impact performance in the next quarter at least.

4.4 Policy Context

The work of the Internal Audit Service complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal Audit reviews consider all applicable policies of the Council.

4.5 Equality Impact Assessment

This report does not require an equality impact assessment but where applicable equality issues and adherence to corporate policies would be considered in audit reviews

4.6 Sustainability

Not applicable.

4.7 Consultations

Consultation on the internal audit plan took place with senior management and the Audit Committee.

4.8 Risk Assessment

The work of Internal Audit is based upon a risk assessment which covers all areas of the Council's activity and is continually changing to reflect new initiatives, emerging risk areas and new legislation. There is also continuous reassessment of risk as audits are undertaken, plus regular consultation with directors, chief officers and senior managers to ensure that account is taken of any concerns they raised during the year.

5. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES

5.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report as the costs of providing the audit service are included within the Council's base budgets.

5.2 However, an effective audit service is important in order to ensure that key internal controls are assessed, thereby aiding the prevention and detection of fraud and other occurrences that could otherwise result in budget pressures.

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL

6.1. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 place obligations on the Council to ensure that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control which includes arrangements for management of risk. An adequate system of internal audit is inherent. This report demonstrates how the Council is fulfilling its obligations in this regard.

6.2 The Audit Committee is asked to note the report on Audit and Anti-Fraud's performance and opinion. There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Internal Audit Progress Report to March 2020

Appendix 2 - Progress with planned audits 2019/20

Appendix 3 - Definitions of audit assurance levels

Appendix 4 - Audit Investigation Service statistics to March 2020

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Publication of background papers used in the preparation of reports is required.

Description of document

None

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