

Report

Audit Committee



Part 1

Date: 24th September 2015

Item No: 10

Subject Internal Audit – Progress against audit plan 2015/16 Quarter 1

Purpose To inform Members of the Council's Audit Committee of the Internal Audit Section's progress against the 2015/16 agreed audit plan for the first three months of the year and for information on audit opinions given to date and progress against key performance targets

Author Chief Internal Auditor

Ward General

Summary The attached report identifies that the Internal Audit Section is making good progress against the 2015/16 audit plan broadly in line with expectations and internal performance indicators.

Proposal 1) The report be noted by the Council's Audit Committee

Action by The Audit Committee

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Chief Financial Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of People and Business Change
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Please list here those officers and members you have consulted on this report.

Signed

Background

1. This report aims to inform Members of the Audit Committee of progress of work undertaken by the Internal Audit Section of the Council against the agreed audit plan. Progress against the audit plan for the first three months of the year will be reported.
2. The report gives Members assurance (or otherwise) on the adequacy of the internal control environment operated within the Council by providing the audit opinions on work undertaken at the end of Q1.

Internal Audit Staffing

3. The team currently operates with an establishment of 10 audit staff. At the start of the year there were 8 audit staff with two vacancies in the team. A Senior Auditor also left during the quarter. A new Auditor started with the team.
4. The relationship with Monmouthshire County Council (for sharing of the Chief Internal Auditor) continues.

Audit Plan

5. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) (IIA) came into force from April 2013 which the team will need to ensure it is compliant with. These standards replace the former Code of Practice for Internal Audit within Local Government (CIPFA).

Performance

6. The Audit Section's performance is measured against planned work, which incorporates externalities like special investigations, financial advice and financial regulations training. Where actual time taken for the review exceeds planned time there will be an impact on the audit plan. Ad-hoc reviews requested by management cannot be planned for but will have an immediate impact on the achievement of the audit plan. The section has already been involved with 5 special investigations which could have an impact on this year's achievement of the audit plan; so far there have been no unplanned reviews,
7. The section's performance is measured against performance indicators set and agreed by the Welsh Chief Auditors' Group. Performance is benchmarked against this group on an annual basis and reported internally on a quarterly basis; the targets for each of the indicators are set internally by the Chief Internal Auditor.
8. The performance for Qtr 1 2015/16 has been compared to the same period of the previous year (shown in brackets). The figures (**Appendix A**) are cumulative and show that:
 - a. 16% (19%) of the audit plan has been achieved so far which is just below last year's performance but above the profiled target of 10%;
 - b. The promptness of issue of draft report (comparing timescale between finalising all fieldwork and issuing the draft report to management) averages at 2 days (8 days) which is within the target time of 10 days;
 - c. The promptness of report finalisation (comparing timescale from meeting with client to discuss issues raised in the draft report to issue of finalised report to management) averages 1 day (2 days) which is within the target of 5 days.

9. Coverage of the plan at this stage of the year is above expectations; the target being 10%. Although performance may dip throughout the year, historically things have picked up in the final quarter. All key financial systems will be reviewed by the year end.
10. 39 (34) days have been spent finalising 15 (20) 2014/15 audit reviews; 1 of which has been finalised. 53 days have already been spent on 6 special investigations.
11. A vacancy / secondment provision was taken into account in the planning stage which related to the Chief Internal Auditor's work with Monmouthshire and the senior auditor vacancy.
12. Inevitably there will be some overruns on reviews undertaken within the team which may result in not as many reviews being undertaken as were planned for the year, but there has been a significant improvement in this over previous years.
13. Audit Management have been involved with special investigations during the year. This has impacted on the timeliness of reviewing audit work and getting draft reports sent out post completion of the work.

Quality Control

14. On completion of all audit reviews, an evaluation questionnaire is sent out to the service manager with the final report. This gives the manager who has been audited an opportunity to comment on the audit review itself, confirming (or not) that it was of benefit to their service and that the main risks had been covered; the staff, their approach, constructiveness and helpfulness; the report, covering the benefits of discussing the draft report, whether the balance was right via the inclusion of strengths and weaknesses, whether management comments were correctly reflected and if the report format was easy to follow. These questionnaires are returned in confidence to the Chief Internal Auditor who will assess the comments and address any criticisms. Generally, there has been positive feedback from service managers via these questionnaires; this will continue to be collated throughout the year and fed into the annual audit report for 2015/16.

Financial Training

15. In the Audit Section's continual efforts to ensure that Council's assets are safeguarded and to provide assurance to management that their internal controls are robust, further training specifically on financial regulations and contract standing orders is offered to all service areas. An overview of financial management is also part of the Corporate Induction Programme and the course is also available on a self nomination basis, quarterly, as part of the Corporate Training Programme. Feedback from staff who have attended courses has been positive. During this year the financial training is continuing to be targeted to areas of previous poor performance, in line with the agreed protocol for dissemination of good practice.
16. The training programmes continue although no sessions were delivered up to 30 June 2015; these will continue to be provided as the year progresses.

Audit Opinions 2015/16

17. Audit opinions issued so far in 2015/16 are shown at **Appendix B**. Definition of audit opinions currently given is shown at **Appendix C**.
18. Only 2 jobs completed to at least draft report stage by 30 June 2015 warranted an audit opinion: 2 x *Reasonable* with no *Unsatisfactories* or *Unsound*s. Of the 5 community centre accounts undertaken, 2 were *Qualified*. Other reports have been completed which did not warrant an audit

opinion or related to audit certification work. Other work completed related to the Annual Governance Statement, the Council's performance indicators, grant claims, provision of financial advice and external clients.

19. The audit opinion relates to the adequacy of internal controls within the system or establishment being reviewed. The opinion is derived from the balance of strengths and weaknesses identified from evidence obtained, and testing undertaken, during the audit. Where the auditor believes that any issues identified are the result of a deliberate action and may be in breach of the Disciplinary Code or Employee Code of Conduct, further investigations will be carried out and action taken as appropriate.

Service Management Responsibilities

20. Heads of Service and service managers are responsible for addressing any weaknesses identified in internal systems and demonstrate this by incorporating their agreed actions into the audit reports. When management sign off the reports they are accepting responsibility for addressing the issues identified within the agreed timescales.
21. Although Heads of Service are responsible for implementing and maintaining adequate internal controls within service areas, operational managers are responsible for working within those controls and for ensuring compliance with Council policies and procedures. All reports, once finalised, are sent to the respective Heads of Service for information and appropriate action where necessary.

Follow up audit reviews

22. Where unsatisfactory and unsound opinions are issued, they are followed up within a twelve month timescale to ensure that the agreed actions have been taken by management and that the internal control systems are improved. These are reported separately to this Audit Committee on a six-monthly basis.

Financial Summary

23. There are no financial issues related to this report.

	Year 1 (Current) £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	Ongoing £	Notes including budgets heads affected
Costs (Income)					
Net Costs (Savings)					
Net Impact on Budget					

Risks

24. N/A

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

25. Giving management assurance on systems in operation gives them confidence that there is sound financial management in place, that more effective services can be provided and the risk of theft, fraud and corruption is minimised. Better service provision, looking after the public pound makes our City a better place to live for all our citizens

- To make our city a better place to live for all our citizens
- To be good at what we do
- To work hard to provide what our citizens tell us they need

Options Available

26. (i) That the Progress Report of the Internal Audit team for Quarter 1 be noted and accepted by the Audit Committee.
(ii) That the Progress Report of the Internal Audit team for Quarter 1 not be noted and accepted by the Audit Committee

Preferred Option and Why

27. Option (i). The quarterly reports provide a mechanism for monitoring the performance and progress of the Internal Audit team and the adequacy of the Council's internal control environment to ensure the public pound is spent wisely and appropriately and that fraud, theft and corruption is minimised.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

28. I can confirm that I have been consulted and have no additional comments.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

29. There are no legal implications. The Report has been prepared in accordance with the Council's internal audit procedures and the Performance Management framework. The progress made to date in delivering the objectives set out in the approved Audit Plan highlights the effectiveness of the work undertaken by this service area in ensuring that adequate and effective internal financial controls are in place.

Staffing Implications: Comments of Head of People and Business Change

30. There are no direct Human Resources issues arising from this report. In terms of Corporate Policy & Performance, the report presents a review of audit activity during the period concerned and is set out in the context of performance framework. The ongoing development of the interface between internal audit functions and the performance management systems within the Council is welcomed.

Comments of Cabinet Member

31. N/A

Local issues

32. N/A

Consultation

33. N/A

Background Papers

34. N/A

Dated:

Appendix A

Newport City Council Internal Audit Service Performance Indicators

2014/15	2014/15 Target	1 st Qtr 14/15	2 nd Qtr 14/15	3 rd Qtr 14/15	4 th Qtr 14/15	Comments
Proportion of planned audits complete	75%	19%	31%	51%		[Profiled Target 50%]
Proportion of planned audits complete within estimated days	65%	N/A	50%	33%		Cumulative figures
Directly chargeable time against total time available	61%	52%	51%	54%		Quarterly performance
Directly chargeable time against planned	84%	80%	85%	87%		Quarterly performance
Proportion of Special Reviews responded to within 5 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%		Cumulative figures
Number of sessions provided to train staff in all Service Areas on best financial practice	11	2	5	5		Cumulative figures
Staff turnover rate (1 member of staff)	9%	0	0	0		Quarterly performance
Promptness of draft report issue (end of fieldwork to draft report issue date)	10 days	8 days	7 days	13 days		Cumulative figures
Promptness of report finalisation (date of client meeting to final report issue date)	5 days	2 days	2 days	2 days		Cumulative figures

2015/16	2015/16 Target	1 st Qtr 15/16	2 nd Qtr 15/16	3 rd Qtr 15/16	4 th Qtr 15/16	Comments
Proportion of planned audits complete	75%	16%				[Profiled Target 10%]
Proportion of planned audits complete within estimated days	65%	N/A				Cumulative figures
Directly chargeable time against total time available	61%	53%				Quarterly performance
Directly chargeable time against planned	84%	81%				Quarterly performance
Proportion of Special Reviews responded to within 5 working days	100%	100%				Cumulative figures
Number of sessions provided to train staff in all Service Areas on best financial practice	11	11				Cumulative figures
Staff turnover rate (number of staff)	1	1				Quarterly performance
Promptness of draft report issue (end of fieldwork to draft report issue date)	10 days	2 days				Cumulative figures
Promptness of report finalisation (date of client meeting to final report issue date)	5 days	1 day				Cumulative figures

Appendix B
Opinions as at 30 June 2015, Qtr 1

Very Good	
Good	
Reasonable	2
Unsatisfactory	
Unsound	
Total	2

Internal Audit Services - Management Information for 2015/16

Job number	Group	Service Area	Section or Team	Job Title	Risk Rating / Priority	Opinion given
P1516-P5	CE	Finance	Income Collection	Debtors	High	Reasonable
P1516-P13	CE	People & Bus Change	Business Svc Development	Performance Indicators	Medium	Reasonable

Non Opinion work 2015/16

Job number	Group	Service Area	Section or Team	Job Title	Risk Rating / Priority	Opinion given
P1516-P23	People	Adult & Comm Serv	Quality Assurance	Supporting People Grant Certification	Medium	Unqualified
P1516-P60	CE	Law & Reg	Trading Standards	Scambusters Grant Claim 2014/15	Medium	Unqualified
P1516-P78	Place	Streetscene & City Svcs	Transport Management	Bus Services Support Grant 2014/15	Medium	Unqualified

Job number	Group	Service Area	Section or Team	Job Title	Risk Rating / Priority	Opinion given
P1516-P9	CE	Finance	General	Annual Governance Statement	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P10	CE	Finance	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P15	CE	People & Bus Change	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P21	People	Children & Young People Serv	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P28	People	Adult & Comm Serv	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P33	Place	CS & DI	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P55	People	Imp & Inc	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P61	CE	Law & Reg	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P66	Place	RI&H	Community Centres	CC Accounts	Low	Not applicable
P1516-P71	Place	RI&H	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable
P1516-P83	Place	Streetscene & City Svcs	General	Financial Advice	Not applicable	Not applicable

Appendix C

INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES – OPINIONS

VERY GOOD	Very well controlled with minimal risk and minor recommendations
GOOD	Well controlled with some risks identified which require addressing
REASONABLE	Adequately controlled although risks identified which may compromise the overall control environment; improvements required
UNSATISFACTORY	Not well controlled; unacceptable levels of risk; changes required urgently
UNSOUND	Poorly controlled; major risks exists; fundamental improvements required with immediate effect

- The Internal Audit team are in the process of revising the audit opinions in line with the level of assurance obtained from undertaking the audit work, that appropriate controls, governance arrangements and risk management are in place.
- The Internal Audit team are also piloting a new report format during 2015/16 where the Audit Opinion will be colour coded based on a traffic light system and the report will contain key issues which need to be addressed.
- This will be presented to the Audit Committee during the year.