

TITLE 2021-22 Internal Audit and Investigation Progress Report (to 28 February 2022)

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Audit Committee on 30 March 2022

WARD None Specific

LEAD OFFICER Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Public assurance about the Council's risk, control and governance environment.

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit Committee (AC) is asked to note the progress of audit and investigation activity against the 2021/22 Work Programme to 28 February 2022 (attached as Appendix A).

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report is presented for Members to note the progress in achieving the 2021/22 Internal Audit and Investigation Work Programme as at 28 February 2022. This recommendation is being made to ensure that the Council has adequate Internal Audit and Investigation coverage for 2021/22 and that it meets its legislative requirements. In addition, to meet the requirements of the AC's Terms of Reference and enable the Chief Audit Executive (role fulfilled by Head of Internal Audit and Investigation) to give an overall opinion on the Council's internal control and risk framework at the end of the financial year. This report contributes to the production of the overall annual 2021/22 Internal Audit and Investigation Report.

Background

The overall 2021/22 Internal Audit Strategy, outlining the role, scope and purpose of Internal Audit, the 2021/22 Audit Planning process, resourcing, reporting arrangements and Internal Audit's requirements to conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) 2017, was presented to AC on 22 February 2021. This included agreement to move to a quarterly planning cycle rather than an annual one due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's services and the associated internal audit work programme. In addition, to enable the service to continue to remain flexible and agile in planning its work and to be responsive to changes during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and the recovery process.

The AC initially approved the Quarter 1 and 2 Work Programmes on 22 February 2021 and 28 July 2021 respectively. As working arrangements began to normalise, AC approved on 15 September 2021, the internal audit work programme for the full year, incorporating audits previously agreed for Quarters 1 and 2.

This report presents, for Members to note, the progress in achieving the 2021/22 Work Programme to 28 February 2022. The previous report of progress to 31 October 2021 was presented to AC on 30 November 2021.

These recommendations are being made to ensure the Council has adequate Internal Audit and Investigation coverage for 2021/22 and that the Council meets its legislative requirements. In addition, to meet the requirements of the AC's Terms of Reference and to enable the Chief Audit Executive (Head of Internal Audit and Investigation) to give an overall opinion on the Council's internal control and risk framework at the end of the financial year.

Appendix A updates Members on the status of work against the approved 2021/22 Audit and Investigation Plan as at 28 February 2022 and where audits have been completed, the overall audit opinion given.

For work completed during the year to date, there have been no audits where the audit assurance was less than level 2, i.e., internal controls "substantially complete and effective." For the work completed, there are no matters of significance to bring to the Committee's attention.

New Internal Audit and Investigation Service

The team has been progressing through a period of transition due to the dissolution of the Shared Audit and Investigation Service, which is to take place on 31 March 2022 and the new Internal Audit and Investigation Service will be established from 1 April 2022.

A new Internal Audit Charter has also been prepared that sets out the purpose, authority and responsibility on internal audit and this is presented as a separate report to this AC meeting for approval.

Analysis of Issues

The AC should ensure that it receives the coverage, performance and results of Internal Audit and Investigation activity and any other appropriate additional assurances.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None.

Cross-Council Implications

Not applicable.

Public Sector Equality Duty
The Equality Act 2010 places a statutory duty on the Council to ensure that when considering any new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure the impacts on particular groups, including those within the workforce and customer/public groups, have been considered. This report is a non-decision making report providing an update on the work of audit and investigations.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
This report has a positive impact on the climate emergency agenda, as it provides public assurance about the Council's risk, control and governance environment and includes specific reviews of key corporate risks that have been undertaken in respect of Net-Zero Carbon (Climate Emergency).

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
Not applicable

List of Background Papers
N/a

Contact Catherine Hickman	Service Governance
Telephone No Tel: 07885 983378	Email catherine.hickman@wokingham.gov.uk

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