

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: AUDIT COMMITTEE - 28TH JANUARY, 2020

REPORT OF:

PRESENT: P. WILLIAMS (CHAIR)

Councillors S. Healy (Vice-Chair)
G. Collier
G. L. Davies
J. Hill
K. Rowson
B. Summers
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins

WITH: Audit and Risk Manager
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Corporate Health & Safety Advisor
Team Leader Performance
Data Protection & Governance Officer
Solicitor x 2
Apprentice

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received for Councillors M. Cross, L.	

	Elias, D. Hancock, J. Holt, L. Parsons, S. Thomas and L. Winnett.	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 19th November, 2019 were submitted for accuracy points.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT - OCTOBER 2019 TO DECEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Professional Lead – Internal Audit presented the progress report against the Internal Audit Plan for the period 1st October to 31st December 2019.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the ongoing timeline for some reviews, the Professional Lead said that there was a continuous process and Members were informed of tasks from start to finish. In relation to Bedwellty House and Park the Professional Lead confirmed that the account was up to date and due for signing.</p> <p>In relation to Performance Indicators a Member commented on the low number of return to work interviews carried out by managers. The Professional Lead advised Members that the agreed action with CLT was that workforce sickness absence performance reports be presented to individual scrutiny committees and this was currently being undertaken.</p> <p>A Member referred to the percentage of Agreed Actions completed after 6 months and said that 70% was low and Managers needed to improve on this percentage. The Professional Lead explained that there was only 6 staff in the section and a bereavement had contributed to the sickness absence figures. She added that the figure would be stable by the end of the year.</p>	

A Member enquired regarding the backup and retention follow up review in relation to Digital and IT. The Professional Lead said that 6 weaknesses had been identified, 2 had been fully implemented, 1 had been partly implemented and 3 had not been implemented. There had been some staff changes in the department which had led to a delay in implementing changes, however, the retention of documents had moved on slightly. The outstanding weaknesses had been risk assessed and the audit process continued.

In response to a Member's question regarding legal implications for backup and retention follow up audits, the Data Protection & Governance Officer explained that it would not be viewed as a breach of security, but would be a breach of compliance.

A Member enquired regarding Insurance, the Audit and Risk Manager said that an Action Plan had not yet been prepared but would be ready by the next Committee meeting. With regard to the audit review of Housing Benefits a progress report would also be presented to the next Committee meeting.

In relation to the systems audit of Corporate Health & Safety a Member commented on the number of accidents not recorded. The Audit and Risk Manager explained the audit findings had been carried out in conjunction with Health and Safety Advisors. The Health and Safety Advisor said that discussions had taken place regarding Accident Reporting and the agreed actions had now been implemented. He also confirmed that an error in the official Risk Assessment Guidelines available to all staff had contained an error and this had now been rectified.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the progress on activities for the period October to December 2019 be noted.

No. 6

WALES AUDIT OFFICE - CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE FOR THE AUDIT OF BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ASSESSMENT OF 2018-19 PERFORMANCE

Consideration was given to report of the Head of Governance and Performance.

The Team Leader Performance presented the Wales Audit Office Certificate of Compliance following the audit of the Council's assessment of 2018-19 performance.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the compliance certificate dated November 2019 be noted.

No. 7

BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTRE

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.

Upon receipt of advice from the Solicitor, it was confirmed that the two Members who had been contacted by a member of the public in relation to the decommissioning of the Business Resource Centre could remain in the meeting and take part in any discussion that ensued as Members confirmed they had not offered comment on issues brought to their attention by this member of the public and Members confirmed that they had directed this person to an appropriate Council Officer to discuss issues.

At this juncture, the Audit and Risk Manager presented the report and the findings contained therein.

A lengthy discussion ensued when numerous Members expressed their concern regarding the detailed findings and requested that the Managing Director and relevant officers from the Regeneration, Community Services and Social Services Directorates and Health & Safety Advisors be invited to attend a Special Audit Committee to provide responses to Members' questions in respect of this report.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be **DEFERRED** pending a Special Meeting of the Audit Committee being convened to discuss this matter.