

Committee: **Governance & Audit Committee**
Date of meeting: **02nd November 2021**

Report Subject: **Internal Audit Progress Report**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Nigel Daniels**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea Owen Professional Lead - Internal Audit**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Governance & Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| Virtual | 21/10/21 | | 02/11/2021 | | | | | |

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Governance & Audit Committee on the progress against the Internal Audit Plan for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report highlights the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Service and complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
- 2.2 The Internal Audit Plan for the year has been based upon Risk Assessments whereby each potential audit area is scored using a risk matrix against a set of criteria relating to the audit risks, the Authority's objectives and the views of the Head of Service. The scoring matrix has been revised to reflect the current objectives/priorities of the Authority and also to allow more flexibility.
- 2.3 The audit work allocated to staff for the period April to September 2021 is based on the risk assessment prioritisation of high, medium and low and taking into account an individual auditor's experience and skill set.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Governance & Audit Committee considers the report and findings within the attached Appendices, notes the progress on activities for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021, providing appropriate challenge where relevant.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 In line with the Corporate Plan Priority of an ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities, presentation of the Internal Audit progress report demonstrates the breadth and depth of the audit coverage of the Council's systems and internal controls. In doing this it also enables the Chief Officer – Resources to satisfy her statutory duties under Section 151 of the Local Government Act (1972) in providing an effective Internal Audit Service.

4.2 The Governance & Audit Committee, in their role as those responsible for governance, and in compliance with the PSIAS, have a responsibility to oversee the performance of the Internal Audit function including receiving a summary of the work upon which the Audit and Risk Manager will base her annual audit opinion.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

The report demonstrates the breadth and depth of audit coverage to provide assurance that key areas of concern and areas deemed to have the highest risk priority are being examined during the financial year. Failure to cover sufficient audit areas exposes the Authority to the risk that weaknesses within specific systems in the Authority's internal control environment are not being identified, resulting in increased financial or reputational damage. This is mitigated by regular review of progress and reprioritisation as appropriate.

5.3 Legal

Provision of an adequate internal audit service, demonstrated in part through the production of a suitable audit plan, contributes to the Section 151 officer being able to fulfil her statutory duties under the Local Government Act (1972).

5.4 Human Resources

The section currently has a complement of six full time posts. This includes an Apprentice post via the Aspire Scheme administered by the Authority enabling a young person to attain the AAT qualification.

The section's sickness for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021 is an average of 0 days per person against a Corporate target of 8 days per person.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 Performance Information and Data

Activities during the period 1st April to 30th September 2021 including the audits concluded from the financial year 2020/21 are set out in Appendix A attached. The format shows a summary of findings from audit reports produced in the period, including a formal audit opinion where appropriate. Where individual audits are graded as Limited Assurance or No Assurance, an Internal Audit Summary Report is presented at Appendix B. For the purpose of this report there is one Internal Audit Summary report.

6.1.1 Performance data for the Section for the period to 30th September 2021 is presented at Appendix C. The grading's issued during the period and percentage coverage for each department is shown in the bar charts at Appendix D and E.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

An effective Internal Audit Service and Governance & Audit Committee will assist with the stewardship of public money providing assurance to the communities of Blaenau Gwent on the robustness of the Authority's internal controls.

6.3 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

Prior engagement has been undertaken with Heads of Services when determining the risk assessments for the audit plan.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

The work of Internal Audit is intended to provide advice and guidance on system improvements resulting in an improved control environment for the future of the Authority.

6.5 Preventative focus

Internal Audit provides a cost effective and professional Audit review of the Authority's internal control environment with the aim of minimising the risk of loss from error, fraud, or irregularities.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

There are no collaboration / partnership working arrangements arising from this report.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

The audit plan is developed with a view to providing assurance on the whole of the Authority's control environment. Audit assignments are conducted for a range of activities across all directorates in order for the Audit and Risk Manager to provide an annual audit opinion that an adequate internal audit service has been provided.

6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions.

No impact for this report.

6.9a Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment

No impact assessment is required for this report.

6.9b EQIA

No impact assessment is required for this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Internal Audit Summary reports are presented to the Governance & Audit Committee as part of the progress report. Where audit assignments have been graded as Limited Assurance or No Assurance, the Internal Audit Summary reports will be provided as appendices for Members' consideration.

7.2 Performance data for the Section is periodically presented to members as part of the ongoing progress reports.

7.3 The levels of audit coverage and the grading's of individual audits will inform the annual opinion of the Audit and Risk Manager and supports the Governance & Audit Committee in fulfilling its assurance role to the citizens of Blaenau Gwent.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix A - Audit activities for the period April 2021 to September 2021.
- Appendix B - Internal Audit Summary Report.
- Appendix C - Performance Indicators 2021/22.
- Appendix D - Grading's issued for the period April to September 2021.
- Appendix E - Percentage coverage for each department.