

Committee: **Governance & Audit Committee**
 Date of meeting: **17th January 2024**
 Report Subject: **SRS IT Audit Plan**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Steve Thomas – Leader / Cabinet Member for Corporate and Performance**
 Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	21/12/2023	06.01.24	17/01/2024					

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present to the Governance & Audit Committee the Summary of Audit Activity 2023/24 for the Shared Resource Service (SRS), along with progress to date.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Blaenau Gwent CBC are a partner in the Shared Resource Service (SRS) for the provision of IT services. The partnership arrangement is laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which sets out the terms of the partnership, and is signed by each of the partner organisations.
- 2.2 The MOU is currently being revised with further discussion by the Strategic Board scheduled for the 19th December 2023. Once agreement is reached, the MOU will be signed by all parties.
- 2.3 The services provided by the SRS specifically to Blaenau Gwent CBC are covered by a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The SLA has been signed off by the Strategic Board which is attended by the Chief Executive Officer on behalf of the Authority. Management and monitoring of the SLA sits with the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer.
- 2.4 Torfaen CBC are the lead Authority for the SRS arrangement for the purpose of financial administration. The Internal Audit Service at Torfaen fulfil the audit role, producing an audit plan and undertaking audits of the systems in operation. The Audit and Risk Manager for Blaenau Gwent places reliance on this work when drafting her annual audit opinion.
- 2.5 The SRS Finance and Governance Board receive the IT audit plan, the progress made against the plan and the findings of each of the audits undertaken on a periodic basis throughout the year. Blaenau Gwent is represented on the Finance and Governance board by the Chief Officer Resources.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Governance & Audit Committee note the Shared Resource Service Summary of Audit Activity 23/24 provided by Torfaen CBC, containing the SRS IT plan and progress made against it (Appendix A).

4. **Evidence of how this topic support 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 quality services at the right time and in the right place, presentation of progress made against the SRS IT Audit Plan supports the Chief Officer – Resources in satisfying her statutory duties under Section 151 of the Local Government Act (1972).

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

- 5.1 Impact on Budget (short- and long-term impact)
Provision of IT audit services by Torfaen CBC in respect of the SRS is included in the fees payable for the SRS partnership arrangements.
- 5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions
Failure to address any non-compliance issues identified in the IT audits is a missed opportunity to improve the service.
- 5.3 Legal
The legal arrangements between the SRS and Blaenau Gwent CBC are covered in the MOU and SLA.
- 5.4 Human Resources
There are no direct Human Resource implications arising from this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

- 6.1 Performance Information and Data
The Summary of Audit Activity for 23/24 for the SRS is provided to the Finance and Governance board by Torfaen CBC. The summary is attached at Appendix A.
- 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)
Blaenau Gwent CBC are represented on the Strategic Board, Finance and Governance Board and the Business & Collaboration Board by the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Officer Resources and the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer respectively.

- 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 internal control environment with the aim of minimising the risk of loss from error, fraud, or irregularities.
- 6.6 Collaboration / partnership working
The SRS IT service is a partnership arrangement between Newport CC, Torfaen CBC, Blaenau Gwent CBC, Monmouthshire CBC and Gwent Police.
- 6.7 Integration (across service areas)
No impact for this report.
- 6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions.
No impact for this report.
- 6.9 Integrated Impact Assessment
No impact assessment is required for this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Torfaen CBC Summary of Audit Activity for the SRS will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee periodically to evidence the progress made.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix A – Shared Resource Service Summary of Audit Activity
23/24