

Cheltenham Borough Council
Audit Committee – 15th January 2014
Internal Audit Monitoring Report

Accountable member	Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Jon Walklett
Accountable officer	Head of Audit Cotswolds – Robert Milford
Ward(s) affected	All
Key Decision	No
Executive summary	<p>The council must ensure that it has sound systems of internal control that facilitate the effective management of all the council's functions. The work delivered by Audit Cotswolds, the council's internal audit service, is one of the control assurance sources available to the Audit Committee, the Senior Leadership Team and supports the work of the external auditor.</p> <p>The Annual Internal Audit Opinion presented to Audit Committee provides an overall assurance opinion at the end of the financial year. This Internal Audit Monitoring Report however is designed to give the Audit Committee the opportunity to comment on the work completed by the partnership and provide 'through the year' comment and assurances on the control environment.</p>
Recommendations	The Audit Committee considers the report and makes comment on its content as necessary

Financial implications	<p><i>There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.</i></p> <p>Contact officer: Mark Sheldon, Chief Finance Officer mark.sheldon@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264123</p>
Legal implications	<p><i>There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.</i></p> <p>Contact officer: Peter Lewis, peter.lewis@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272012</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p><i>No additional HR implications arising from this report.</i></p> <p>Contact officer: Julie McCarthy, HR Operations Manager julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 26 4355</p>
Key risks	<p>That weaknesses in the control framework, identified by the audit activity, continue to threaten organisational objectives, if recommendations are not implemented.</p>

Corporate and community plan Implications	<p><i>“Internal Auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.”</i> (Chartered Institute of Internal Auditing UK & Ireland).</p> <p>Therefore the internal audit activity impacts on corporate and community plans.</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	<p>One of the specialist skills now provided by the service is that of environmental auditing. This would therefore aid the Council in its environmental and climate change objectives.</p>

1. Background

- 1.1 The Annual Audit Plan was aligned with the corporate and service risks facing the Council as identified in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team and supported by such systems as the risk registers. At the time of preparing the 2013/14 plan, the Councils Corporate Strategy 2010-2015 was being reviewed and, as internal audit is there to help the organisation to achieve objectives, part of the plan has been aligned to elements of this strategy. However, to inform the audit plan we have also reviewed other key documents, such as the recently prepared Medium Term Financial Strategy, change programme agendas and updates to the business plan, many of which contain risk assessments.
- 1.2 There is also a requirement to support the work of the External Auditor (Grant Thornton). This is in the form of financial and governance audits to support such activities as value for money.
- 1.3 The audit plan also considered risks that may evolve during the year. The consultation process has sought to identify these areas considering where internal audit could support and add value to the risk control process. This report identifies work we have completed in relation to the planned audit work.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1 The environment in which Cheltenham BC and other Local Authorities now operates has presented significant drivers for change. The continual effort to meet the organisational objectives within a constrained budget has resulted in core systems coming under review for change e.g. the GO Shared Services impacting on core financial systems and shared services generally impacting on core governance arrangements, etc.
- 2.2 Therefore Internal Audit needs to be responding to the changing environment and the areas where the organisation now requires assurances. This prompts the requirement to keep to a more flexible and risk based plan.
- 2.3 It should also be recognised that the service is a partnership so coordinating resources across multiple organisations is critical to the success of the partnership.
- 2.4 This report highlights the work completed by internal audit and provides comment on the assurances provided by this work.

3. Internal Audit Output

- 3.1 The internal audit service is in the process of reviewing its operational procedures and processes to align with the new Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). Furthermore, the service is reviewing its structure to ensure it is appropriately resourced and skilled for future work expectations.

3.2 Internal Audit has concluded the following audits:

Audit	Report status	Assurance
Commissioning - Leisure & Culture	Consultancy	N/A
ICT ~ PSN Compliance Review	Final	N/A
Commissioning – Ubico Contract Monitoring	Final	Satisfactory
Cash Receipting	Final	Satisfactory
Car Parking	Final	Limited
Health & Safety	Interim	
Bridging the Gap	Draft	
Art Gallery & Museum Project Review	Ongoing	
Council Tax	Ongoing	
NNDR	Ongoing	
Benefits	Ongoing	
Corporate Strategy	Ongoing	
Transparency Agenda	Ongoing	

3.3 Audit Cotswolds has also undertaken the following:

- Audit provision for GO Shared Service
- Audit provision for Ubico Ltd
- Audit Provision for Cheltenham Borough Homes

- 3.5 The level of involvement the internal audit service has within the Cheltenham Borough Council change programmes is substantial but it is considered necessary when there is such a high level of risk with such significant changes being introduced. This is in line with the audit plan for 2013/14.
- 3.6 Further consultancy work was undertaken in relation to Counter Fraud. Internal Audit has a significant role in counter fraud work and as such the Head of Audit Cotswolds has been working with the Benefit Fraud Team at Cheltenham BC and other partner Councils to develop a more coordinated and proactive approach to counter fraud.
- 3.7 Follow-up on the ICT Virus report has been superseded by the PSN review work and some ongoing ICT Audit consultancy. This impacted substantially on the 2013-14 plan and as such the 2014-15 plan will include some deferred work from this year's plan. A copy of the Summary PSN Report has been attached at the end of Appendix 1.

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Appendices	Appendix 1 – Monitoring Report
Background information	None