

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Corporate Governance Committee

Date: 11 March 2020

Subject: Progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2019-20

Report by: The Treasurer

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For: Information Only

Purpose

1. To provide the Corporate Governance Committee (the Committee) with an update of progress against the Internal Audit Plan for 2019-20.

Recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to note the report and to refer any observations to the Combined Fire Authority, Chief Fire Officer (CFO) or Treasurer as they see fit.

Executive Summary

3. One of the functions of the Corporate Governance Committee is to monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal audit function and, specifically, to monitor progress against the internal audit plan through the receipt of periodic progress reports. Background information on the statutory and constitutional requirements for internal audit, working arrangements and information on assurance gradings is contained in Appendix 2.
4. The Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20 was approved by the Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2019. Progress against planned work is summarised below and is then reported in more detail in Appendix 1.
5. The approved plan identified 11 potential auditable areas, which included follow-up on the implementation of high importance recommendations, and an allowance for 'client' management activity (report to committees, planning, advisory etc.). The number of days purchased is 85 days.
6. There were 11 potential auditable areas that were approved, and 1 more audit subsequently added. Of these:
 - i. 4 audits have been completed to final stage;
 - ii. 1 audit has been completed to draft report stage;
 - iii. 5 are work in progress (see paragraph 7 below);

- iv. 2 have been cancelled and time vired elsewhere (both relating to HMICFRS coverage – see also paragraph 12)

In addition, there has also been ad hoc advisory work undertaken (see appendices for full details of what this work covered).

7. It is important to note that 4 of the 5 audits that are classified as work in progress are at the appropriate stage in their timetable for delivery i.e. two audits cannot be completed yet as they rely on testing which will cover the first three quarters of the financial year; one is likely to straddle two financial years due to the complexity and depth of coverage and one has been deferred to the end of quarter 4 per the request of the client.

Background

8. The Committee is provided with a summary report of internal audit work undertaken in the period prior to the meeting. Where applicable, an individual 'opinion' on each audit assignment is reported i.e. to what extent risk is being managed. The four levels of assurance are: full; substantial; partial and little. Further details explaining the levels of assurance are included at Appendix 2.
9. An assurance type audit report containing at least one high importance recommendation (see Appendix 2) would normally be classified as 'partial' assurance. Consulting type audits might also result in high importance recommendations.
10. The current position as at 31 January 2020 (and any outcomes) has been mapped onto the plan agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2019. This forms Appendix 1 and is summarised as:

<u>Status of work</u>	<u>Additional Commentary</u>
4 to final report issued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act Compliance (20/1) • Key Financials Payroll (20/6 A) • Key Financials Payroll (20/6 B) • Key Financials Pensions (20/7)
1 to draft report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Fraud Initiative (20/9)
5 areas of work in progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Management (20/2) • Contract Procedure Rules (20/4)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key financial systems – Reconciliations and Balances (20/5) • ICT controls (20/8) • Emerging Issues – Contract Compliance (20/11A)
Ad-hoc advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptable Usage Policy • System governance policy & procedure.
2 cancelled audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMICFRS Audit (20/3) • HMICFRS Audit – Readiness Audit (20/10)

11. The approved plan was a statement of intent and whilst every effort will be made to deliver it, the Treasurer recognises that it needs to be flexible and be prepared to revise activities in response to changing circumstances or emerging risks. Therefore, during the year, Leicestershire County Council Internal Audit Service (LCCIAS) will report to the Committee any audits that will not be undertaken as part of the 85-day coverage and the rationale for such decisions including where other lines of defence are deemed sufficient. We will also report any additional jobs that have been requested.
12. Subsequent to the 20 November 2019 meeting of this Committee, a decision was made to cancel the two HMICFRS audits (20/3 and 20/10) due to the degree of oversight and scrutiny of this required area of compliance by Chief Officers, through the committee reporting process and by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services themselves.
13. There have been two requests for additional audits and these relate to additional payroll testing (20/6 B) and a piece of work in relation to Contract Compliance (20/11 A) – although some of the time to complete this latter piece of work will be taken from an approved plan entry called 'Emerging Issues' and for this reason it is not counted as an additional job per se.

High Importance Recommendations

14. Despite re-testing in quarter one, the partial assurance rating in respect of the Payroll System could not be lifted, therefore additional follow-up work was agreed for quarter 4 and this work was commenced and completed early (20/6B) but did not result in a partial assurance rating being lifted. The partial assurance relates to the degree of processing errors predominantly by the Payroll Provider. The contract has now been awarded to a new payroll provider

with an anticipated live implementation by the Summer 2020 and coverage will be undertaken within the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan.

15. As agreed previously by this Committee, coverage of the other two legacy 2018/19 partial assurance ratings (in respect of Key ICT Controls and Procurement) are being addressed within the following two jobs detailed in the 2019/20 plan:

Job Name	Ref	Area of focus
ICT Controls 19/20	Job 20/8	Change Control through a new service desk application
Contract Procedure Rules	Job 20/4	Revised policy and procedures for procurement have been fully embedded within the service

Report Implications/Impact

16. Legal (including crime and disorder)

Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires that the CFA ‘...shall make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs’ and to ensure that ‘...one of its officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs’. Within the CFA this officer is the Treasurer, and this is reflected in the CFA’s Constitution.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require under Part 2 ‘Internal Control’ at Regulation 5(1) that, ‘A relevant authority (including fire authorities) must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance’.

17. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, as a result of the work carried out, assurance regarding the operation of key financial systems is gained and there would be an expectation that implementing internal audit recommendations could improve effectiveness, efficiency and economy. - Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, Leicester City Council, 0116 454 4081

18. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

Internal audit provides reassurance that effective governance, risk management and internal control procedures are in place. Internal audit reports are used to inform the Treasurer and the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer of the

detailed findings of the audit and highlight actions that are required to safeguard the CFA's interests.

19. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

None.

20. Environmental

None.

21. Impact upon Our Plan Objectives

The provision of a robust internal audit function assists both effective and efficient management and good corporate governance. This should assist with meeting the challenges outlined in the CFA's Finance and Resources and Governance Strategies.

Background Papers

Internal Audit Plan 2019-20 (Corporate Governance Committee - 13 March 2019)

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/internal-audit-plan-2019-20-1.pdf>

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/appendix-1-internal-audit-plan-2019-20-1.pdf>

Internal Audit Charter (Corporate Governance Committee - 13 March 2019)

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/the-internal-audit-charter-for-the-cfa-february-2019-1.pdf>

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/appendix-1-the-internal-audit-charter-for-the-cfa-february-2019-1.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2019/20 as at 31 January 2020

Appendix 2 - Statutory and constitutional requirements and working arrangements

Officers to Contact

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