

A4. Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report 2019/20

The Committee considered a report by the Internal Audit Manager presenting the Annual Assurance Statement for 2019/20.

In regard to the Audit Plan, of the 23 assignments set out in the plan, 21 had been completed. The remaining two reviews, Savings Trackings and Business Continuity Management had not been undertaken following the lockdown and the impact of Covid-19 and would be included in the 2020/21 Plan.

On the basis of work undertaken, Internal Audit had provided a substantial assurance in relation to the Council's arrangement for risk management, governance and control for the year to 31 March 2020.

The report also set out the performance of the Internal Audit function against key performance indicators.

Following a question on the continuous review of creditors payments data to identify potential duplicate payments, the Internal Audit Manager confirmed that 96 payments had been identified and that these had been passed to the relevant officers for assessment. Following a request from the committee, Mr O'Connor undertook to provide further information on the scale of the costs involved and the amounts recovered as a result of the review.

The committee sought clarification of the self-assessment that Internal Audit was broadly compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), the Internal Audit Manager explained that the standards against which the team were measured were exacting and set out the 'ideal'. To achieve this would be resource intensive and disproportionate. Overall, he was satisfied with the level of assurance.

In regard to the review of System Administration - Access Privileges to Key Corporate Systems the Internal Audit Manager confirmed that in general sound systems of control and larger issues had not been identified.

Following a question in regard to the review of the Equality Act 2010 and specifically findings in regard to the Licensing Board, the internal Audit Manager confirmed that the Act applied to the Board as a separate legal entity and undertook to provide further information.

Decision

The Committee noted that:-

- (1) sufficient Internal Audit work had been undertaken to support a balanced assurance;**
- (2) Internal Audit had provided SUBSTANTIAL assurance on the Council's arrangements for risk management, governance, and control for the year to 31 March 2020;**

- (3) Internal Audit had met, or exceeded, each of its Key Performance Indicators; and**
- (4) the Internal Audit section operated in compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.**