



Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

Thu 21 Mar
2024
7.00 pm

Council Chamber
Redditch Town Hall

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Mat Sliwinski

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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Please note that this is a public meeting.

You are able to see the agenda papers for this meeting from the Committee Pages of the Council's website.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

Please note that Members, Officers and members of the public will only be able to gain access to this meeting via the entrance off the Town Hall car park.

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Meeting attendees and members of the public are encouraged not to attend a Committee if they have any of the following common symptoms of flu or Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

The usual process for public speaking at Committee meetings will continue to be followed subject to some adjustments which allow written statements to be read out on behalf of residents and the virtual participation of residents at meetings of Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded.



Audit, Governance & Standards

Thursday, 21st March, 2024

7.00 pm

Council Chamber Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	Ian Woodall (Chair)	Andrew Fry
	Jane Spilsbury	Chris Holz
	(Vice-Chair)	Anthony Lovell
	Salman Akbar	Emma Marshall
	Karen Ashley	
	Juma Begum	

1. Apologies and Named Substitutes

2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and/or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. Minutes (Pages 7 - 16)

The minutes of the meeting of Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on 25th January 2024 will be considered at this meeting.

4. Public Speaking

Members of the public have an opportunity to speak at meetings of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. In order to do so members of the public must register by 12 noon on Tuesday 19th March 2024. A maximum of 15 minutes will be allocated to public speaking.

5. Monitoring Officer's Report - Standards Regime (Pages 17 - 20)

6. Feckenham Parish Council Representative's Report - Standards Regime

To receive a report from the Feckenham Parish Council Representative on standards matters of relevance to the Committee. (Oral report)

7. Grant Thornton - External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update (Pages 21 - 28)

8. Internal Audit Progress Report (Pages 29 - 46)

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9. Risk Management Report (Pages 47 - 66)

10. Financial Compliance Report including update on Council's Statements of Accounts (Pages 67 - 88)

NOTE: The appendix for this item has only been made available to Members of the Committee and relevant Officers. Should Members wish to discuss the appendix to this report in any detail, a decision will be required to exclude the public and press from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be divulged, as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12 (a) of Section 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Subject to the “public interest” test:

Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

11. Risk Champion Update

12. Committee Work Programme (Pages 89 - 90)



Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

Thursday, 25th January,
2024

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Ian Woodall (Chair), Councillor Jane Spilsbury (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Karen Ashley, Juma Begum, Sharon Harvey (substitute), Chris Holz and Emma Marshall

Also Present:

Councillor Luke Court – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling

Officers:

Peter Carpenter. Bernard Ofori-Atta, Nicola Cummings and Adrian Howe (on Microsoft Teams)

Democratic Services Officer:

Mat Sliwinski

53. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Lovell and Fry. Councillor Harvey attended the meeting as a named substitute for Councillor Fry.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

55. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2023 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on 23rd November 2023 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

Chair

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

Thursday, 25th January, 2024

56. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

57. ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN

The Principal Solicitor introduced the report which set out details of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter which covered the period until 31st March 2023.

During this period 15 complaints had been received. One of these was upheld and there was a finding of service failure where the outcome had adversely affected the complainant. 8 complaints did not warrant investigation, 5 were referred back as being premature and 1 was given advice and signposted towards complaint handling.

During consideration of the item a member queried the delay between the report being received from the Ombudsman in July 2023 and it being presented to members. It was suggested that it should be circulated to the first committee meeting following receipt and the Principal Solicitor confirmed this would be done.

In response to a question, the Principal Solicitor reported that the complaint which had been upheld related to delays in responding to an initial complaint. The Council had reviewed its procedure for handling complaints as a result and changes were due to be implemented shortly.

A member queried for benchmarking purposes how the Council could compare its performance in dealing with complaints to other Councils of similar size, instead of using percentages. The Principal Solicitor reported on the numbers of complaints dealt with by the other District Councils in Worcestershire and would look at including appropriate benchmarking information for the report after receipt of the next Review Letter.

A member asked what action the Council was carrying out to prevent complaints being referred to the Ombudsman. The Principal Solicitor reported that following the recent review, subject to the relevant systems being updated, the Council would be monitoring the responses to complaints more closely in future. The aim of this

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was to deal effectively with complaints and prevent them being referred to the Ombudsman.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

58. MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT - STANDARDS REGIME

The Principal Solicitor introduced the Monitoring Officer's report about Member Conduct and Complaints since the last meeting of the Committee. The investigation of one complaint had concluded and no breach of the Code had been found. Two complaints had been resolved informally, one was currently being investigated and two had been received very recently so were in the early stages of review.

In relation to the social media training held recently, in response to a question it was noted that 15 members had attended this session. Members asked that in future reports the numbers attending training events should be recorded. The Chair asked that the Committee's thanks be extended to West Mercia Police for their participation at a senior level in the social media training.

RESOLVED that

the Monitoring Officer's report be noted.

59. FECKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT - STANDARDS REGIME

The representative from Feckenham Parish Council was not present at the meeting. The Chair would contact them to reiterate that they were welcome to attend future meetings.

60. BISHOP FLEMING - INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNCIL'S NEW EXTERNAL AUDITOR

The Interim Director of Finance reported that the Council's External Auditors, Bishop Fleming, who would be taking over the auditing of the Council's Accounts from the 2023-24 financial year, were not in a position to provide an introduction at this meeting. It was intended that they would be available to attend the March meeting of the next meeting.

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61. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Internal Audit Team Leader presented the internal audit progress report which covered the period until 31st December 2023.

The planned delivery up to end of December was at 34%, compared to 20% in the previous report at the end of September. There had been resourcing issues within the internal audit service which had impacted delivery.

The audit on the General Ledger accounted for 9% of the audit plan and temporary resource had been recruited to assist with this. Overall, the Internal Audit Team Leader considered that the plan would be achieved at the end of the financial year, although there might be a few areas which would be carried over into Q1 of 2024-25.

A member queried the method of reporting on performance within the audit plan as it appeared inconsistent, and it was difficult to understand where the highest risks lay. The Internal Audit Team Leader undertook to review this and clarify the report as necessary for the next meeting of the Committee.

In addition, the Internal Audit Team Leader referred the Committee to the follow up programme in the report and advised that the items with limited assurance were the priority as this indicated where the control environment needed to be improved. The auditors were likely to make high and medium priority recommendations in these areas. This approach was reflected in normal audit reports where a limited or no assurance outcome indicated a concern about the robustness of control.

RESOLVED that

the Internal Audit Progress report be noted.

62. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024-25 INCLUDING TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources introduced the report which set out the Capital, Treasury Management and Investment Strategies for approval for onward recommendation to Council. Each section of the report was covered in some detail to highlight the importance of the Strategies in underpinning robust financial management of the Council.

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It was explained that the Council held no long-term debt. However, it was projected that the Council would need to undertake borrowing within the next 12-18 months. The Council was unusual in that it had not borrowed funding for its capital programme and was debt free apart from commitments in the Housing Revenue Account. This situation was forecast to continue until 2025, which was when the Council's fleet was due to be replaced.

It was explained that councils were allowed to pre-fund future years' financing requirements, however, they could not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £60 million.

The Council did not use long term investments but would lend funds on a very short-term basis to maximise income. The recipients of such loans were always rated A and were often Central Government bodies.

In response to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the Council could choose to bid for funds from the West Midlands Combined Authority, as it was a non-constituent member. It could no longer bid for capital funding from central government as allocations were now based on data held by the Council.

In proposing the recommendations, the Chair referred to the need to remain vigilant. He asked that a precis of the document be provided for all Councillors to support their understanding of how Council could be prudent in financially challenging times. Councillor Marshall seconded the recommendations and it was

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- 1) The Capital Strategy (Appendix A) as an appropriate overarching strategy for the Council be approved.**
- 2) The Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 (Appendix B) and the associated MRP policy (Appendix C) be approved.**
- 3) The Investment Strategy (Appendix D) be approved.**

63. FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE REPORT INCLUDING UPDATE ON COUNCIL'S STATEMENTS OF ACCOUNTS

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

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The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources introduced the report and updated the Committee on actions taken since the previous meeting. The revenue and capital outturn reports had been confirmed and supplied to the Government.

Although the 2022-23 revenue and capital outturn reports had been completed using estimates, the returns for 2020-21 and 2021-22 could not be completed in this way and had to wait until the accounts had been finalised. The Council was also in discussion with HMRC about the clawback of VAT.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported continuing uncertainty about the proposed backstop date intended to clear the backlog of unaudited accounts in local government. The Committee was updated that local authorities had now been informed of Government proposal to introduce a backstop date of 30th September 2024 for completion of all outstanding local audits up to 2022-23 financial year. Local authorities would be a consulted on the plans to tackle local government audit delays, including on the proposed backstop date, in February 2024.

As reported at the previous meeting of the Committee, officers were using the new software system Tech One for budget forecasting. The approach of 'no Purchase Order, no pay' was supporting better financial rigour. The Deputy Chief Executive also reported a successful outcome from current interviews in recruiting to 5 finance posts.

The Head of Finance and Customer Services reported on discussions with the External Auditors. Although the Council had a set of draft accounts for 2020-21, the auditors would not proceed with the audit until a reconciliation had taken place on balances transferred between the previous and current financial systems. In order to expedite matters the Council had undertaken this validation and identified approximately £146k in the legacy eFin system which was not in the TechOne system. The accounts had been adjusted accordingly and the data sent to the auditors seeking their confirmation that this was acceptable.

It was noted that the accounts for 2020-21 had been reconciled and the variance was at a non-material level. The 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years would be dealt with subsequently once the situation for the 2020-21 accounts had been confirmed by the External Auditors.

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Further to the update, the Chair asked what the implications might be if the September deadline for signing off the 3 sets of accounts was not met. The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Council was aiming to have draft accounts for the last 3 years available in the summer, even if audit adjustments were included.

The Chair proposed that the Committee that in view of the potential lack of external audit resources, the Committee invite the Executive to consider the implications of having at least one set of unaudited accounts at the end of the financial year. This recommendation was seconded by Councillor Spilsbury.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1) In view of the lack of potential audit resources, the Executive be invited to consider the implications of having at least one set of unaudited accounts at the end of this financial year.**

64. FINANCIAL SAVINGS MONITORING REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that an Improvement Recommendation in the Interim Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 and 2022/23 was that savings delivery should be monitored independently of basic budget monitoring at a corporate level and should be carried out by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee on a quarterly basis. This was fulfilled as part of this report to the Committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive drew attention to Appendix A to the report which gave a RAG status against each savings proposal included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and currently there were 3 main areas of potential risk:

- Service reviews - the mitigation was that the establishment review at December 2023 identified £2.2m from vacancies, against which £1.5m was being spent to cover by agency staff. There was therefore capacity to reduce this risk and officers were working with HR and service managers to ensure the costs of the establishment were under control.
- Finance savings – due to the number of interim placements the proposed savings would not be realised in the short term. If the current recruitment exercise was successful, that should achieve savings in the medium term, but it remained flagged as a risk for the time being.

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- Whilst the engagement of Capacity Grid to pursue old business rates and council tax debt had been successful, of the potential surplus on the collection fund of £750k the Council would only benefit by £100k and the County Council would receive £450k.

The Deputy Chief Executive remarked that anticipated savings on the pension fund underpinned the 2023-24 budget and the following two years. A new valuation for 2026-27 might mean some adjustment would be required.

A member thanked officers for the work being undertaken to pursue and recover debts.

RESOLVED that

the Financial Savings Monitoring Report be noted.

65. RISK CHAMPION UPDATE

The Council's Risk Champion, Councillor Marshall, highlighted two of the main risks to the Council. These were the risk to the Council's reputation from the inability to audit the accounts before any set Government deadline and the risk of failure to deliver the Council's capital projects.

The Risk Champion reported that future pay awards were also a potential financial risk as the Council would be obliged to meet this at whatever level was agreed nationally. Similarly, the Council could not control interest rates, but would need to be abreast of these for budgeting purposes.

Action being taken to review and implement the workforce strategy was welcomed, as this mitigated a risk to recruitment of employees with the appropriate skills. The Risk Champion also welcomed the work that was being undertaken to address the risks to IT security.

RESOLVED that

the Risk Champion update be noted.

66. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

**Audit,
Governance &
Standards
Committee**

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The work programme was agreed subject to the addition of Introduction to the Council's new External Auditor being added to the agenda for the next meeting.

RESOLVED that

the contents of the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.15 pm

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Audit, Governance & Standards Committee 21st March 2024**MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Luke Court – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	An Effective and Sustainable Council
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:-

1) subject to Members' comments, the report be noted.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 This report sets out the position in relation to key standards regime matters which are of relevance to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee since the last update provided at the meeting of the Committee in January 2024.

2.2 It has been proposed that a report of this nature be presented to each meeting of the Committee to ensure that Members are kept updated with any relevant standards matters.

2.3 Any further updates arising after publication of this report, including any relevant standards issues raised by Parish Councils, will be reported on orally by Officers at the meeting.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee 21st March 2024**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 ('the Act') places a requirement on authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted (with voting rights) Members of an authority. The Act also requires the authority to have in place arrangements under which allegations that either a district or parish councillor has breached his or her Code of Conduct can be investigated, together with arrangements under which decisions on such allegations can be made.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 It is important to ensure that the Council manages standards regime matters in an appropriate manner. The issues detailed in this report help to ensure that there is an effective and sustainable Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no specific climate change implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct implications arising out of this report. Details of the Council's arrangements for managing standards complaints under the Localism Act 2011 are available on the Council's website and from the Monitoring Officer on request.

Operational Implications**Member Complaints**

- 6.2 An update with regard to Member complaints will be provided verbally at the meeting.

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee 21st March 2024Member Support Steering Group

- 6.3 The Member Support Steering Group (MSSG) is responsible for reviewing Member training, induction and ICT support. Meetings of the MSSG are to take place throughout the 2023/24 municipal year.
- 6.4 The last meeting of the group took place on 6th March 2024. At the meeting, the draft Member induction packs for Redditch Councillors due to be elected in May 2024 were considered. It was recommended that two additional items be added to the induction packs with respect to the Knowledge Bank directory and the list of services provided by the Council, divided into statutory and discretionary services.

Constitutional Review Working Party

- 6.5 The Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) is responsible for reviewing the Council's constitution and makes recommendations to full Council regarding any proposed changes to the content of the constitution.
- 6.6. The CRWP holds regular meetings throughout the year. The latest meeting took place on 7th March 2024. During the meeting, Members recommended changes in respect of licensing delegations.
- 6.7 Additionally, Members recommended some changes to the Council and Committee Procedure Rules and with respect to the length of the Constitution. The outcomes of this meeting are due to be reported to the Annual Council meeting in May 2024.

Member Training

- 6.8 No further training sessions have taken place since the last meeting.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:
- Risk of challenge to Council decisions; and
 - Risk of complaints about elected Members.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCILAudit, Governance & Standards Committee 21st March 2024**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No appendices.

Background Papers: Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Luke Court - Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling	13/03/2024
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	13/03/2024
Legal Services	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	13/03/2024

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
2024****21st March****Grant Thornton – External Audit Progress Report & Sector Update**

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Luke Court – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Bernard Ofori-Atta
Report Author: Grant Thornton	Job Title: Head of Finance and Customer Services Contact email: bernard.ofori-atta@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk	
Wards Affected		All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		An effective and sustainable Council
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to note updates in the report as included in Appendix 1.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to comply with financial regulations.

4. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

4.1 The issues detailed in this report help to ensure that the Council is effective and sustainable.

Climate Change Implications

4.2 There are no Climate Change implications arising out of this report.

**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
2024****21st March**

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising out of this report.

Operational Implications

- 5.2 The report attached at Appendix 1 provides Members with our external auditor's progress in delivering its responsibilities as the Council's external auditors. It sets out key audit deliverables and a sector update which includes a number of matters that are relevant to Local Government.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 As part of all audit work the auditors undertake a risk assessment to ensure that adequate controls are in place within the Council so reliance can be placed on internal systems.

7. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Grant Thornton – Redditch Borough Council Audit
Progress Report and Sector Update

Redditch Borough Council Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

March 2024



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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit planning process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Authority or all weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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Introduction

Your key Grant Thornton team members are:

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Key Audit Partner

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Manager

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This paper provides the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

Members of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee can find further useful material on our website, where we have a section dedicated to our work in the public sector. Here you can download copies of our publications <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/services/public-sector-services/>

If you would like further information on any items in this briefing, or would like to register with Grant Thornton to receive regular email updates on issues that are of interest to you, please contact either your Engagement Lead or Engagement Manager.

Progress at March 2024

Financial statements audit

On 13 February 2024 we received updated workings from management on the transfer of balances from the Council's old ledger to the new TechnologyOne ledger. These have been shared with colleagues in our digital audit team who are providing specialist support in this area. Colleagues are currently reviewing these workings and discussing them with management.

We have previously discussed the stated intention of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to set a "backstop" date by which all outstanding Local Government audits up to and including the 2022/23 financial year must be finalised. Following discussions between DLUHC, the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and National Audit Office (NAO), a DLUHC consultation was issued 8 February 2024 and closes 7 March 2024. The consultation sets out a proposal that the backstop date for all financial years up to and including 2022/23 will be 30 September 2024. The consultation can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/addressing-the-local-audit-backlog-in-england-consultation>. Alongside this consultation the NAO are consulting on changes to the Code of Audit Practice that auditors are required to follow, this consultation can be found here <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-of-audit-practice-consultation/>.

In January 2024 we wrote to your Section 151 Officer confirming that, in our view, it will not be possible to complete the 2020/21 to 2022/23 financial statements audits by the proposed date of 30 September 2024. As such, based upon the information currently available to us from the consultation documents, we expect that backstop disclaimer opinions will be issued for each of these three financial years.

Value for Money

We reported our interim Auditor's Annual Report covering the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee on 23 November 2023. The report will remain an interim report until an opinion is issued on the financial statements for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years. We do not expect any further work will be required in respect of Value for Money arrangements.

Proposed interim fee variations

Our previous reporting to the Audit, Governance & Standards Committee has reported the issues that we have had with respect to the 2020/21 financial statements audit. We have also issued our interim Auditor's Annual Reports for 2020/21 and a joint report for 2021/22 and 2022/23. Both reports identified significant weaknesses in arrangements, made key recommendations and also made written recommendations under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. We had previously alerted the Committee to the likelihood of some significant fee variations.

Given the time that has passed since commencing our audit, we are proposing interim fee variations. These must be discussed with the Section 151 Officer, presented to the Audit, Governance & Standards Committee as Those Charged With Governance and then shared with Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited, along with supporting evidence, who will consider the proposed variations and make a determination upon them.

Based upon our work completed to date to the end of December 2023, we proposed the following interim variations:

Area	Description	Proposed variation
2020/21 Value for Money	<p>Interim Auditor's Annual Report and written recommendation reported to the November 2022 Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.</p> <p>We made one written recommendation under Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and six key recommendations in respect of significant weaknesses in arrangements.</p> <p>The Audit Plan, presented to the Committee in April 2022, proposed an additional £10,000 in respect of Value for Money work under the new National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice.</p> <p>Based upon our time and other records we propose a further £9,028 for the work required to address the significant weaknesses identified.</p>	£19,028
2021/22 and 2022/23 Value for Money	<p>We reported an interim Auditor's Annual Report covering both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years to the Audit, Governance & Standards Committee in November 2023.</p> <p>We made one written recommendation under Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and one new key recommendation in respect of significant weaknesses in arrangements. We closed five of the previously reported key recommendations.</p> <p>We would propose £10,000 for each year in respect of the additional Value for Money work under the new NAO Code. As we produced a joint report for two years, this is discounted to £7,500 for each year.</p> <p>Based upon our time and other records we propose a further £9,687 for the work required to address the significant weaknesses identified.</p>	£24,687
2020/21 - data transfer work	<p>We have previously reported on the issues management have faced in proving that balances were correctly transferred to the new financial ledger in February 2021. Our 2020/21 Audit Plan included an estimate of £2,500 for this work. Given the significant issues faced, the proposed interim variation of £11,170 represents the time that we have spent on this area of our work to date.</p>	£11,170



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THE INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Luke Court
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Peter Carpenter, s151 Officer
Report Author: Chris Green	Job Title: Head of Internal Audit Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Contact email: chris.green@worcester.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Good Governance & Risk Management Underpins all the Strategic Purposes.
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit, Governance & Standards Committee recommend:-

1) the report is noted.

2. BACKGROUND

The involvement of Member's in progress monitoring is considered an important facet of good corporate governance, contributing to the internal control assurance given in the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

This section of the report provides commentary on Internal Audit's performance for the period 01st April 2023 to 29th February 2024.

Summary Dashboard 2023/24:

Total reviews planned for 2023/24	15 (minimum)
Reviews finalised to date for 2023/24:	5
Assurance of 'moderate' or below:	0
Reviews awaiting final sign off:	1
Reviews in progress:	14
Reviews to commence (Q4):	1
High' Priority recommendations reported 2023/24:	0
Satisfied 'High' priority recommendations to date:	N/a
Plan delivery to 29 th February 2024:	50%

Since the last progress report presented to the Committee, one 2022/23 report is at clearance/draft report stage and thirteen 2023/24 reviews are in progress.

Follow Up outcomes are reported in Appendices 4 and 5 and by exception.

All 'limited' or below assurance reviews go before Corporate Management Team for full consideration.

2022/23 AUDITS

The reviews that are at draft report or clearance stage are:

- ICT Cyber Security

As the above are classified as 'on going' the assurance and outcome of the reviews will be reported at Committee on completion.

2023/24 Audits to 29th February 2024

A rolling programme of testing has been carried out for Debtors, Creditors and Payroll. The results will be reported during the coming weeks.

Critical review audits are designed to add value to an evolving Service area. Depending on the transformation that a Service is experiencing at the time of a scheduled review, a decision is made regarding the audit approach. Where there is significant change taking place due to transformation, restructuring, significant legislative updates or a comparison required a critical review approach will be used. To assist the service area to move forwards challenge areas will be identified using audit review techniques. The percentage of critical reviews will be confirmed as part of the overall outturn figure for the audit programme. The outturn from the reviews will be reported in summary format as part of the regular reporting.

Internal Audit are continuing to consider new processes emerging from the 'new norm' working arrangements that have been necessary to continue to provide Redditch residents with services post pandemic. Plan flexibility is required to include and provide assurance on potential areas of change.

Follow up reviews are an integral part of the audit process. There is a rolling programme of review that is undertaken to ensure that there is progress with the implementation of the agreed action plans (Appendix 4). The outcomes of the follow up reviews are reported in full (Appendix 5) so the general direction of travel and the risk exposure can be considered by Committee. An escalation process involving CMT and SMT is in place to ensure more effective use of resource regarding follow up to reduce the number of revisits necessary to confirm the recommendations have been satisfied.

3.4 AUDIT DAYS

Appendix 1 provides a summary of delivery. At the 29th February 2024 a total of 165 days had been delivered against an overall target of 338 days for the year. Whilst the number of days delivered is behind profile, all except one assignment

is in progress and resources are being reviewed and prioritised to ensure that the audit plan is delivered and that the annual assurance opinion on the Council's internal control, risk management and governance arrangements is provided. Delivery of days has been behind this year as a result of staff turnover and vacancies in the service.

The new Head of Service is now in post and following a review of the structure recruitment has commenced for two senior auditor positions. An interim auditor role has been extended to support completion of the 2023/24 internal audit plan, and an additional interim auditor is being recruited. Resources are being reprioritised to ensure the internal audit plan is delivered. As is common in the sector, some time will be required in April and May to complete and finalise the current year's work.

3.5 OTHER KEY AUDIT WORK

Much internal audit work is carried out "behind the scenes" but is not always the subject of a formal report. Productive audit time is accurately recorded against the service or function as appropriate. Examples include:

- Governance for example assisting with the Annual Government Statement
- Risk management
- Transformation review providing support as a 'critical appraisal'
- Dissemination of information regarding potential fraud cases likely to affect the Council
- Drawing managers' attention to specific audit or risk issues
- Audit advice and commentary
- Internal audit recommendations: follow up review to analyse progress
- Day to day audit support and advice for example control implications, etc.
- Networking with audit colleagues in other Councils on professional points of practice
- National Fraud Initiative coordination of uploads.
- Investigations

National Fraud Initiative

- 3.6 National Fraud Initiative data sets were uploaded in December 2023 and January 2024. The results from the 2022/23 uploads are currently being investigated by the various Service areas who are working through them and taking appropriate action. WIASS continue to provide advice and assistance regarding the process.

Monitoring

- 3.7 To ensure the delivery of the 2023/24 plan and any revision required there continues to be close and continual monitoring of the plan delivery, forecasted requirements of resource – v – actual delivery, and where necessary, additional resource will be secured to assist with the overall Service demands. Changes

to the plan have been discussed with the s151 Officer and reported to Committee.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council is required under Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2018 to “maintain in accordance with proper practices an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control”.

6. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

6.1 Good governance along with risk management underpin all the Corporate strategic purposes. This report provides an independent assurance over certain aspects of the Council’s operations.

Climate Change Implications

6.2 The actions proposed do not have a direct impact on climate change implications.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

7.1 There are no implications arising out of this report.

Operational Implications

7.2 There are no new operational implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are to:

- Insufficiently complete the planned programme of audit work within the financial year leading to an inability to produce an annual opinion; and,

- a continuous provision of an internal audit service is not maintained.

9. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 ~ 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan summary of delivery

Appendix 2 ~ 2023/24 Plan progress

Appendix 3 ~ 2022/23 and 2023/24 Finalised audit reports including definitions

Appendix 4 ~ Follow Up Programme Overview

Appendix 5 ~ Follow Up Reports recently issued

APPENDIX 1**Delivery against Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24**
1st April 2023 to 29th February 2024

Audit Area	2023/24 Plan Days	Days used to 29th February 2023/24
Core Financial Systems (see note 1)	89	58
Corporate Audits	71	48
Other Systems Audits (see note 2)	114	46
SUB TOTAL	274	150
Audit Management Meetings/ Corporate Meetings / Reading		
Annual Plans, Reports and Audit Committee Support	54	15
Other chargeable (see note 3)	0	0
SUB TOTAL	54	15
TOTAL	328	165

Audit days used are rounded to the nearest whole.

Note 1: Core Financial Systems are audited predominantly in quarters 3 and 4 in order to maximise the assurance provided for Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts but not interfere with year-end. A rolling programme continues regarding Debtors, Creditors and Payroll to maximise coverage and sample size. The overall results will be reported in the coming weeks.

Note 2: Several budgets in this section are 'on demand' (e.g. consultancy, investigations) so the requirements can fluctuate throughout the quarters potentially resulting in unallocated days.

Note 3: 'Other chargeable' days equate to times where there has been, for example, significant disruption to the IT provision resulting in lost productivity.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Date: 21st March 2024

AUDIT, GOVERNANCE & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Appendix 2

2023/24 Internal Audit Plan

Audit Area	Corporate Link	Risk Register Reference		Proposed Resource 2023/24	Indicative Planned Qtr.	Progress to Date
FINANCIAL						
Debtors (note 1)	Enabling	COR17 - Resolution of the approved Budget Position in both Councils		17*	3 to 4	In progress
Main Ledger/Budget Monitoring Returns/Bank Rec. (note 1)	Enabling	COR17 - Resolution of the approved Budget Position in both Councils		30*	3 to 4	Fieldwork complete
Creditors (note 1)	Enabling	COR17 - Resolution of the approved Budget Position in both Councils		17*	3 to 4	In progress
Treasury Management	Enabling	COR17 - Resolution of the approved Budget Position in both Councils		6*	3 to 4	In progress

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Audit Area	Corporate Link	Risk Register Reference		Proposed Resource 2023/24	Indicative Planned Qtr.	Progress to Date
Payroll	Enabling & Contractual Obligation	COR17 - Resolution of the approved Budget Position in both Councils		19	1 to 4	In progress
Sub TOTAL				89		
CORPORATE						
IT Audit	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	COR18 – Protection from Cyber Attack		15*	3 - 4	In progress
Corporate anti-fraud and corruption	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	COR - Cost of Living		5*	3 to 4	In progress
Procurement and Contract Management (note 2)	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	COR16 – Management of Contracts & S151 request		8*	4	In progress
Corporate Data Quality and Usage (Critical Friend)	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	S151 request		10*	4	Work will commence in March
Projects – Towns Fund	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	COR22 - Delivery of Levelling up, Towns Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund work & S151 request		8*	3	Fieldwork complete
Grants (Various incl. Disabled Facilities Grants)	Enabling	COR17 - Resolution of the approved Budget Position in both Councils		15	1 to 4	Completed
Sub TOTAL				71		

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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AUDIT, GOVERNANCE & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Audit Area	Corporate Link	Risk Register Reference			Proposed Resource 2023/24	Indicative Planned Qtr.	Progress to Date
SERVICE DELIVERY							
Community & Housing Service							
Housing Revenue Account	Finding Somewhere to Live	S151 request			20	4	In progress
Temporary Accommodation	Finding Somewhere to Live	S151 request			10	4	In progress
Right to Buy	Finding Somewhere to Live	Local Knowledge/Intelligence			10	4	In progress
Sub TOTAL					40		
Other Operational Work							
Advisory, Consultancy & Contingency	Operational support	N/a	N/a		20	1 - 4	Ongoing
Fraud & Investigations incl. National Fraud Initiative	Operational support	N/a	N/a		15	1 - 4	Ongoing
Completion of prior year's audits	Operational support	N/a	N/a		12	1	Ongoing
Report Follow Up (all areas)	Operational support	N/a	N/a		15	1 - 4	Ongoing
Statement of Internal Control	Operational support	N/a	N/a		6*	1 & 4	
Bus Operators Return	Operational support	N/a	N/a		6	1 & 3	Fieldwork complete
Sub TOTAL					74		

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Date: 21st March 2024

AUDIT, GOVERNANCE & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Audit Area	Corporate Link	Risk Register Reference			Proposed Resource 2023/24	Indicative Planned Qtr.	Progress to Date
Audit Management Meetings	Operational support	N/a	N/a		54	1 to 4	Ongoing
Corporate Meetings / Reading	Operational support	N/a	N/a				
Annual Plans, Reports & Committee Support	Operational support	N/a	N/a				
Sub TOTAL					54		
TOTAL					328		

Explanatory Notes:

*As part of the increasing joint and shared service working between Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council the audit budgets and areas will feature in both internal audit plans and be consolidated to deliver a single piece of work covering both Councils. Where practically possible the days will be split equally between the plans. Weighting will, however, be applied if it is considered the focus of the work will major on one Council.

The customer journey will be considered overall as part of the service audits.

Note 1: Ongoing risk with financial system therefore audit budgets maintained.

Note 2: Procurement - ensuring embedding continues.

Appendices A & B are indicated below and are applied to all reports.

Appendix A - Definition of Audit Opinion Levels of Assurance

Opinion	Definition
Substantial Assurance	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited
Reasonable Assurance	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Limited Assurance	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
No Assurance	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Revision to Assurance Levels 2023/24

Previous Assurance Levels	2023/24 Revised Assurance Levels
Full	Substantial
Significant	
Moderate	Reasonable
Limited	Limited
No	No

Appendix B
Definition of Priority of Recommendations

Priority	Definition
H	Fundamental control weaknesses that present a significant material risk to the function or system objectives and requires immediate attention by Senior Management.
M	Other control weaknesses where there are some controls in place but there are issues with parts of the control that need to be addressed by Management within the area of review.
L	Issues of best practise where some improvement can be made.

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

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2022/23 and 2023/24 Audit Reports.

There are no recently finalised reports.

Overview of 2023/24 Follow Up Programme

	Year of Review	Review Area	Assurance	Indicative Date of Follow Up		Position and Conclusion
RBC	22/23	GIS/Gazetteer Phase 1	Critical Review	Mar-24	Q4	To be arranged and linked to the General data Protection regulation.
RBC	22/23	Accounts Payable	Moderate	Feb-24	Q3	Included in 23/24 Audit
RBC	22/23	IT Review	Moderate	Feb-24	Q4	Included in 23/24 Audit
RBC	22/23	Treasury Management	Significant	Jan-24	Q4	Included in 23/24 Audit
RBC	22/23	Accounts Receivable	Limited	Jan-24	Q4	Included in 23/24 Audit
RBC	22/23	Council Tax	Moderate	May-24	Q1	To be arranged
RBC	22/23	National Non-Domestic rates	Significant	May-24	Q1	To be arranged
RBC	22/23	Benefits	Significant	May-24	Q1	To be arranged
RBC	22/23	Workshop Licensing Compliance	Critical Friend	June-24	Q1	To be arranged
RBC	22/23	Fuel Usage and Efficiency	Moderate	May-24	Q1	To be arranged

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	Year of Review	Review Area	Assurance	Indicative Date of Follow Up		Position and Conclusion
RBC	22/23	WRS- Animal License Activity	Critical Friend	May-24	Q1	To be arranged
RBC	22/23	Homelessness Grants	Moderate	Jun-24	Q1	To be arranged
RBC	22/23	Risk Management	Moderate	Sept-24	Q2	To be arranged
RBC	22/23	Payroll	Significant	March-24	Q4	Included in 23/24 Audit

Note:

There are no exceptions to report. 2023/24 Review areas will be added to the table when they become due for a follow up visit.

Follow Up Reports

None issued since the last meeting in January 2024.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****Quarterly Risk Update Q3**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Luke Court
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Bernard Ofori-Atta, Head of Finance and Customer Services
Report Author Peter Carpenter	Job Title: Interim S151 Officer Contact Pete Carpenter email: peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Aspiration, work and financial independence
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. SUMMARY

This report sets out Council activity to identify, monitor and mitigate risk.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee is asked to consider:

- The present list of Corporate and Departmental Risks and request any additional risks to be considered.

3. KEY ISSUES**Background**

- 3.1 In 2018/19, an audit of Risk Management provided an assurance level of limited assurance due to weaknesses in the design and inconsistent application of controls. As a result of the audit, a review was commissioned and undertaken by Zurich Municipal to consider the Council's risk management arrangements and to advise of any recommendations. In response to the Zurich review a Risk Management Strategy was produced for both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council.
- 3.2 A follow-up review was carried out by Internal Audit in March 2021 (Final Report June 2021) with the purpose of identifying what progress had been made against the Risk Management Strategies. At that time there was a lack of evidence that the actions within the Risk Management Strategies had been fully completed and embedded within the Councils and therefore no assurance could be given.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCILAudit, Governance and Standards Committee21st March 2024

- 3.3 This is now the sixth cycle of reviewing Corporate and Departmental Risks since the original baselining of Risks in April 2022. Over this period, we have seen:
- Departmental ownership of risks and reviews at Management Teams on a monthly basis.
 - Active review, mitigation, and reduction of risks – ensuring they become managed as part of business as usual.
 - Updating of the 4Risk System – as the Authorities repository of this information.
 - That the Officer Risk Group have actively reduced risk numbers through their work and that a common approach to risk is now being embedded within the organisation.
 - That the Risk Level has moved to a **Moderate Assurance** in May 2023.

The Definition of a Corporate Risk

- 3.4 The Council has existing Corporate and Departmental Risks. Members of the Risk Board were not sure of the link on how Risks on system had become Corporate in nature.

- 3.5 The following definition of a of how Risks move from being “departmental” to being “corporate” in nature was recommended by the Risk Group and approved by CMT.

“For a **Risk** to move from being **Departmental** in nature to being **Corporate** in nature that it **must have significant impact on Councils finances, be cross departmental in nature and/or result in Serious reputational damage**. The Officer Risk Board will vet departmental risks using this definition to move then to Corporate Risks at their quarterly meetings.”

- 3.6 At the June 2022 Officer Risk Board it was agreed that “Green” Departmental Risks should be taken off this list if they have been to two consecutive meetings and mitigating actions have been fully put into place for them. This report takes account of this requirement being 6 meetings since the original baseline was reported.

Corporate Risks

- 3.7 Corporate Risks are summarised in the following table. There is now an additional corporate risk linked to the new Environment Act and its links to the level of coworking required and the expense of setting up the associated infrastructure. As the table below highlights, a number of the risks have moved from due increased risk in those areas despite all the mitigations we have and are putting in place.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024**

Council	Pos Q1	Pos Q2	Pos Q3	Corporate Risk Description
Both	COR 9	COR 9	COR 9	Non Compliance with Health and Safety Legislation
Both	COR 10	COR 10	COR 10	Decisions made to address financial pressures and implement new projects that are not informed by robust data and evidence
Both	COR 14	COR 14	COR 14	Non adherence with Statutory Inspection Policy
Both	COR 15	COR 15	COR 15	Impact from Changes to Partner Funding Arrangements
Both	COR 16	COR 16	COR 16	Management of Contracts
Both	COR 17	COR 17	COR 17	Resolution of the Approved Budget Position
Both	COR 18	COR 18	COR 18	Protection from Cyber Attack
Both	COR 19	COR 19	COR 19	Adequate Workforce Planning
Both	COR 20	COR 20	COR 20	Financial Position Rectification
Both	COR 22	COR 22	COR 22	Delivery of Towns Fund, UK SPF Initiatives
Both	COR 23	COR 23	COR 23	Cost of Living Crisis
Both	COR 24	COR 24	COR 24	New Customer Facing Interface
Both			COR25	Environment Bill

Note, Appendix A sets out the complete listing of Departmental Risks. These have been linked to Corporate Risks where relevant.

3.8 Mitigating factors for the Corporate Risks are:

Non-Compliance of Health and Safety Data Standard Operating Procedures - SOP (H&S etc) Health and Safety Committee meets regularly H & S training for staff Health checks DSE assessment and reporting software First Aid training in place Safeguarding Policy and procedures Risk Assessments Updated inspection policy Regular review of policies Continued updates to Health and Safety Committee Data on intranet. There are 4 departmental risks linked to this corporate risk.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****Projects being informed by robust data and evidence –**

Executive have now approved an updated Project Management Process and extra resource, based on work initially highlighted by the Audit Task Group work in February 2023. Due to this risk level has reduced from Amber to Green. Once the new structure is in steady running it will come off this register as those risks will be dealt with locally as that framework will be in place.

Non Adherence with the statutory inspection policy - Specialist resource in place to support delivery actions.

- Further review of monitoring arrangements
- Further implementation of insurance recommendations
- Contracts reviewed to ensure suppliers undertake roles
- Training plan developed to ensure staff clear of responsibilities
- Development of robust action plan

There are 11 departmental risks linked to this corporate risk. Should this not be delivered the consequences are significant, including threat to life.

Impact from changes to partner funding arrangements - Council Members are on WRS Board and S151 Officer is the S151 Officer for the WRS therefore will know of issues well before they happen. There is a reserve, which required approval for use from all partners. This remains a Corporate Risk as the impact of a partner leaving or stopping services might make delivery unviable for others. This had been increased to an amber rating due to budgetary pressures at Partner organisations however agreement has now been reached and the level is again green.

Management of contracts - Procurement Strategy was updated by C Young and training provided. Service Protocols, setting out expectations of service user and procurement went live 1st Jan 23 and now being monitored. No PO No Pay Policy went live on the 1st April 2023 and reports are going to Executive quarterly setting out new requirements in terms of contracting and transparency for the upcoming year as part of the quarterly Finance and Performance Report. There will be changes to procurement legislation on the 1st April 2024 and processes will be updated accordingly. This remains a key Corporate Risk due to the magnitude of contracts under management.

There are 4 departmental risks linked to this corporate risk.

Resolution of the approved budget position - MTFP process now 2 stages. 2023/4 budget was approved in February 2023. The final MTFP contains the S151 Officer's robustness statement which is key to sign off of a sustainable budget. Finance and Budget Working Group scrutinise proposals before Executive. The same process has been used for the 2024/5 budget process. Certainty of medium term government support means this remains a significant risk for the authority.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024**

Protection from cyber attack – weekly penetration test, annual PSN Security Audit, regular internal audits, occasional LGA audit, Cyber Insurance requirements. In addition, we are also implementing KnowBe4, a new software tool for both officers and Members. Cyber Insurance has also been extended for a further year but importance and risks in this area have moved this risk to red despite all the mitigations in place. A recent Internal Audit has highlighted possible risk areas across a number of systems which will now require mitigating.

There are 2 departmental risks linked to this corporate risk.

Adequate workforce planning - Workforce plan was launched in the summer and services now know their high risk areas and the wider scheme is there to help mitigate risk through loss of staff. The challenges remain on delivering to these high risk areas. Three departmental risks are linked to Workforce Planning. There is now a specific workstream, linked to Projects risk, on the implementation of this initiative.

There are 2 departmental risks linked to this corporate risk.

Financial position rectification - External Audit reports financial recovery process Reporting to Executive, Audit & Council. Risk has now been uprated to Red due to lack of clarity from the Government over Audit deadlines, the updated S24 Statement issues in November, and the significant risk that the Council will run out of time for the 20/21 and 2021/22 Audit processes. Quarterly reporting is taking place and Council is delivering to the Key Recommendations of the 2020/21 and 2021/2& 2022/3 Draft External Audit Reports. There are still issues in relation to debt management which will remain until the suspense accounts are cleared which is programmed to take place by the end of the Calendar year.

Delivery of Towns Fund, and UKSPF Projects – There is a 6 weekly project Board overseeing all projects and formal governance structures for Towns Fund and UKSPF projects. The biggest issue in all these workstreams remains delivery before the funding deadlines and present cash flow show 1 project out of the 3 not being able to deliver within present Grant Funding timescales. This was raised by multiple Councils at the Towns Fund Conference in Manchester and again during the “Deep Dive” review of Redditch Towns Fund processes in the Summer which validate our overall Governance processes. However, there is limited guidance, and the Council carries the significant risk of having to fund any projects after the grant funding closure dates.

Cost of Living Crisis - Housing Register Access to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Council budget. We are also noting an increase in insurance claims due to fires which are linked to this. Our Partnership Boards also guide people to alternate providers of support.

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New Customer facing interface - Presently delivered by a number of systems that are not linked together and require manual intervention for internal reporting. This has increased in risk to Red due to the volume of work required in relation to the ensuring the Council's data is up to date and can be used directly by our customers in self service interfaces.

The Environment Bill - New Statutory Requirements for delivery of a dedicated Food Waste Service, and changes to materials requiring collection by both Domestic & Commercial Waste Services. Financial impact on Councils to deliver new services. Primarily increased revenue costs on staff and vehicle operation and maintenance. Offset by Capital funding from Central Government to support assets related to "new burdens".

Mitigation is partnership working with Worcestershire Waste Board and Members Task group to review requirements and future service delivery direction. Jointly funded partnership role by all Worcestershire LA's to support this work, alongside support from WRAP (Environmental NGO specialising in the Waste Industry)

It should be noted that another potential corporate risk, where government guidance is just about to come out, in relation to terrorism protection.

Departmental Risks

- 3.9 The Council procured the 4Risk system to manage its risks. Risks are subdivided into Corporate Risks and then Departmental Risks. Each risk has an individual record applied to it to ensure all the pertinent information is captured.

The original Risk Baseline in April 2022 was (as shown in Appendix B):

- 119 Departmental Risks – 16 Red, 42 Amber, 61 Green
This reduced through the first set of reviews in June 2022 to:
- 96 Departmental Risks – 3 Red, 36 Amber, 57 Green
The next set of reviews in September reduced this number further to
- 83 Departmental Risks – 4 Red, 26 Amber, 53 Green
The third Set of reviews in December reduced this number to
- 62 Departmental Risks – 1 Red, 27 Amber, 34 Green
The fourth Set of reviews in March reduced this number to
- 58 Departmental Risks – 1 Red, 31 Amber, 26 Green

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024**

The fifth set of reviews in June reduced this number to

- 51 Departmental Risks – 1 Red, 31 Amber, 19 Green

3.10 Position as at the 30th September 2023

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	1	6	6	13
Finance	0	1	1	2
Environmental Services	0	5	1	6
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	1	0	1
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	0	3	2	5
ICT	0	2	1	3
Planning Services	0	1	0	1
Housing	0	10	5	15
Community Services	0	1	3	4
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	1	30	20	51

Red Risks – 1 in total

REV7 - Revenues - Performance Indicator data is not robust

3.11 Position as at the 31st December 2023

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	1	6	4	11
Finance	0	1	0	1
Environmental Services	0	5	1	6
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	1	0	1
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	0	3	2	5
ICT	0	2	0	2
Planning Services	0	1	0	1
Housing	0	10	5	15
Community Services	0	1	3	4
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	1	30	16	47

3.12 The table at Appendix A sets out the detail of these departmental Risks and links them where relevant to Corporate Risks.

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The Red Risk continues to be REV7 - Revenues - Performance Indicator data is not robust.

WRS risks, as per their Board Pack for June 2023 are attached at Appendix C.

- 3.13 This report sets out the position a year following the initial baselining of council risks. This is the fifth review, following the implementation of the Action Plan due to the “No Assurance” internal Audit reports. The key point a year in is to ensure that risk management is embedded within the organisations:
- Officer Risk Board continues to take place quarterly to embed processes and validate Risks on the register.
 - Each department has nominated a representative to a Risk Board. These report back to management teams who ensure Departmental Risk Registers are updated at least quarterly and discussed at management teams monthly.
 - The Audit Committee’s of both Councils reviewed Risk Registers on a quarterly basis. These reports have also been presented to Executive although this has stopped after June 2023 as this should be a function of the Audit Committees.
 - CMT are updated on risk management issues in their monthly “assurance” meeting, which is a week after the Risk Board meets on a quarterly basis.
 - The Corporate Risk Register is now discussed as an early item on the agenda at meetings of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, as per the Audit Task Group’s recommendation.
 - The Risk Level has moved from a Limited Assurance in March 2022 to a Moderate Assurance in May 2023.

In terms of departmental lists:

- 3.14 Community risks, even though many are green, are still all relevant as departmental and cannot be moved to the lower level of “business as usual”. The most significant risk is now the Safeguarding Risk which affects all service areas. It was noted that the movement of CCTV to the 4th Floor of the Town Hall has been successful, although the risk here is the works carried out in upgrading networks under streets and how these changes can affect the lifeline system.
- 3.15 The majority of Housing risks are compliance and/or Health and Safety led. We noted earlier in the year the issues in relation to “disrepair” claims (60), fires in premises, which has increased significantly over the past 2 years, and due to cost of living, the volume of tenants who now have no Council contents insurance (see the later insurance section). Ther volume of these disrepair claims are going down however it should be noted that as disrepair is linked to workmanship it is non insurable for the Council. There is still significant work being undertaken at St Davids.
- 3.16 The Building Control risk will become more focused towards the end of the financial year as if Building Control staff are not accredited, we cannot used them. This will also possibly limit the number of staff available in the agency market.

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- 3.17 It should be noted that the Members Data Protection risk in ICT clearly depends on Members undertaking the training. Given the significant cyber risks faces by Council's, as noted in the Corporate Risks section, it is important Members engage to mitigate this risk. Using KnowBe4 will assist in mitigating this risk. As noted earlier, the Council have successfully renewed their cyber insurance policy.
- 3.18 With Property, the biggest risk we face in the future is the new works in the Town Hall. The NHS have in the main mitigated noise but once these works start there will be the requirement to decant members and officers for the build period. We are reviewing all our assets as there is a significant impact on EPC (Energy) ratings and what will be allowable after 2026. This could have significant cost impacts for the Council.

Insurance

- 3.19 We have successfully renewed our Cyber insurance. It seems that the markets have settled down following the issues we had in renewing in 2022 and the premium has only increased marginally.
- 3.20 The Council are in their final year of the present insurance contracts, these will be renewed next year – this process is a joint process delivered across all districts in Worcestershire. An issue remains Property values, as there are now significant differences between asset values and insurance re-instatement values. We are seeing significant increases in fires, which are mostly linked to electrical equipment and disposable vapes. This will affect the Property renewal figures.
- 3.21 In assessing renewal data we have seen a large reduction in trips/slips, although this could be due to more of the population working from home and potholes is not the issue in Redditch that it is in other areas.

The Risk Management Framework

- 3.22 Risk Management Training. Given the active management of risks by service departments, we have seen numbers of departmental risks reduced by over 50% although Corporate Risks have increased by 20%. There is the requirement for Corporate Risk training (Members and Officers) and existing processes need further embedded in the organisations to increase assurance.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council spend significant sums insuring itself and must also hold Reserves to mitigate the costs of risks should they happen. A comprehensive Risk Management approach ensures risk and its consequences, including financial ones, are minimised.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****6. Strategic Purpose Implications****Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 6.1 A comprehensive Risk Management approach ensures **Risk and its Consequences** is minimised for the Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. This includes risks linked to activities and actions that link to our climate.

7. Other Implications**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 7.1 If risks are not mitigated it can lead to events that have Customer/Equalities and Diversity implications for the Council.

Operational Implications

- 7.2 Risks are inherent in almost all the Councils operational activities and therefore significant risks need to be identified, monitored and mitigated.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 This report is about Risk Management.

9. APPENDENCES

Appendix A – Present Departmental Risks
Appendix B – Previous Risk Management Reports
Appendix B – WRS Risk Report

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****Appendix A - Present Departmental Risks**

Council	Q1	Q2	Q3	Risk Description	Corp Risk
Both	BEN 1	BEN 1	BEN 1	Fail to effectively resource the service to meet demand	COR 9
Both	BEN 3	BEN 3	BEN 3	Impact of Welfare Reform Act	
Both	BEN 6	BEN 6	BEN 6	Impact of ELF scheme	
Both	BEN 7	BEN 7	BEN 7	Benefits subsidy	
Both	BEN 9	BEN 9		Failure to meet Audit requirements	
Both	CUS 3	CUS 3	CUS 3	Failure to deal with complaints to customers satisfaction	
Both	CUS 7	CUS 7	CUS 7	RBC/BDC Fail to ensure the adequate security arrangements for Customer Service Centres	COR 9
Both	REV 4	REV 4	REV 4	Failure to effectively manage change	
Both	REV 7	REV 7	REV 7	Performance Information data is not robust	
Both	REV 11	REV 11	REV 11	Reduced collection rates	
Both	REV 12	REV 12		Failure to meet Audit requirements	
Both	REV 16	REV 16	REV 16	Maintenance and Recovery of Collection Performance Post Covid	
Both	REV 17	REV 17	REV 17	Failure of corporate Fraud and Compliance team	
Both	FIN 1	FIN 1	FIN 1	Fail to provide adequate support to managers to manage their budgets	COR10
Both	FIN 4	FIN 4		Fail to effectively manage high value procurements resulting in breach of EU procurement rules.	COR16
Both	ENV 7	ENV 7	ENV 7	Fail to adequately maintain and manage car parking and On Street enforcement	
Both	ENV 9	ENV 9	ENV 9	Avoidable damage to fleet arising from staff behaviour and none compliance	

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Both	ENV 10	ENV 10	ENV 10	Fail to ensure adequate Health & Safety across the service	COR 9
Both	ENV 11	ENV 11	ENV 11	Fail to engage with the WCC regarding land associated with highway maintenance	
Both	ENV 20	ENV 20	ENV 20	Workforce planning	COR19
Both	ENV 22	ENV 22	ENV 22	PDMS - New Environmental database	
Both	L&C 2	L&C 2	L&C 2	Fail to ensure the health & safety of the Public / Staff and visitors using services (meeting regulatory requirements)	COR 9
Both	LED 9	LED 9	LED 9	Failure to ensure that Council Owned buildings, Property Assets and Facilities remain fit for purpose now and for the future.	
Both	LED 10	LED 10	LED 10	Fail to optimise the income from Commercial properties	
Both	LED 11	LED 11	LED 11	Fail to effectively manage property assets	
Both	LED 12	LED 12	LED 12	Fail to effectively manage the disposal of assets as part of asset disposal programme	
Both	LED 13	LED 13	LED 13	Leisure Contract	COR16
Both	ICT 4	ICT 4		Breach of Data Protection – disclosure of data / staff not aware of guidelines	COR18
Both	ICT 7	ICT 7	ICT 7	Failure to identify, maintain and test adequate disaster recovery arrangements	COR18
Both	ICT 15	ICT 15	ICT 15	Members and Data protection Training	
Both	PLA 11	PLA 11	PLA 11	Loss of effective Building Control service due to changes in legislation / Hackett / Grenfell	COR19
Red	HOU 2	HOU 2	HOU 2	Fail to effectively manage housing repairs and maintenance	COR14
Both	HOU 7	HOU 7	HOU 7	Fail to manage impact of increasing homelessness cases and Recruitment challenges	COR19
Red	HOU 8	HOU 8	HOU 8	Inability to collect rent and rent arrears	

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Red	HOU 9	HOU 9	HOU 9	Fail to effectively management leaseholder properties	
Both	HOU 10	HOU 10	HOU 10	Fail to effectively manage capital projects (also the right contracts are put in place, internal and external)	
Red	HOU 11	HOU 11	HOU 11	Potential for an increase in right buys	
Red	HOU 12	HOU 12	HOU 12	Failure to Achieve CQC Compliance at St Davids House	COR14
Both	HOU 14	HOU 14	HOU 14	Failure to complete annual gas Safety Inspections	COR14
Red	HOU 15	HOU 15	HOU 15	Risk of legionella in housing with communal facilities	COR14
Red	HOU 16	HOU 16	HOU 16	Housing Revenue Account	
Both	HOU 19	HOU 19	HOU 19	Failure to comply with Charter for Social Housing and the Regulator	COR14
Both	HOU 21	HOU 21	HOU 21	Non compliance with Asbestos Regulations	COR14
Both	HOU 22	HOU 22	HOU 22	Non compliance with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 - Blocks of flats and communal entrances	COR14
Both	HOU 27	HOU 27	HOU 27	Failure to comply with IEE regulations	COR14
Both	HOU 28	HOU 28	HOU 28	Damp and Mould In Council Housing	COR14
Both	COM 3	COM 3	COM 3	Safeguarding - Inadequate child and adult protection systems/process.	COR14
Red	COM 16	COM 16	COM 16	Lifeline - Impact of the telephony network digital upgrade on the service	
Both	COM 17	COM 17	COM 17	Starting Well Partnership – underperformance of contract	COR16
Both	COM 18	COM 18	COM 18	Social Prescribing – underperformance of contract	COR16

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Both	HR 2	HR 2	HR 2	Fail to monitor and respond to changes in employment legislation	COR14
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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****Appendix B - Previous Quarters Risk Reports**

The baseline risks April 2022 are included in the following table – this is prior to any Risk Board meetings.

Original Baseline April 2022

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	12	20	13	45
Finance	0	0	4	4
Environmental Services	0	2	11	13
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	3	3	6
Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services	0	0	7	7
ICT	2	4	5	11
Planning Services	0	1	1	2
Housing	1	11	11	23
Community Services	1	1	5	7
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	16	42	61	119

After the Risk Board on the 22nd June, the following changes have been made which saw the number of risks reduce as follows to 96 Risks

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	0	6	12	18
Finance	0	2	2	4
Environmental Services	0	2	11	13
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	3	3	6
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	0	3	9	12
ICT	2	6	2	10
Planning Services	0	2	1	3
Housing	1	10	10	21
Community Services	0	2	6	8
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	3	36	57	96

The departmental red risks are:

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- REV7 - Revenues - Performance Indicator data is not robust
- ICT 7 - Failure to identify, maintain and test adequate disaster recovery arrangements
- ICT 11 - System functionality to manage records

After the Risk Board on the 21st September, the following changes have been made which saw the number of risks reduce as follows to 83 Risks

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	1	5	13	19
Finance	0	2	2	4
Environmental Services	0	1	11	12
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	1	0	1
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	0	1	9	10
ICT	2	4	4	10
Planning Services	0	1	0	1
Housing	1	9	7	17
Community Services	0	2	6	8
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	4	26	53	83

Red Departmental Risks were:

- REV7 - Revenues - Performance Indicator data is not robust.
- ICT7 - IT - Failure to identify, maintain and test adequate disaster recovery arrangements.
- ICT11 - IT – System functionality to manage records.
- Hou26 - Housing – Failure to deliver a service to QCQ requirements at St David's House.

After the Risk Board in December, the number reduced to 62

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	1	5	10	16
Finance	0	2	2	4
Environmental Services	0	5	3	8
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	1	0	1
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	0	1	5	6
ICT	0	2	2	4
Planning Services	0	1	0	1
Housing	0	9	6	15
Community Services	0	1	5	6
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	1	27	34	62

Red Risks – 1 in total

- REV7 - Revenues - Performance Indicator data is not robust

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After the Risk Board on the 22nd March, the following changes have been made reducing the overall number of departmental risks to 58.

Service Area	Red	Amber	Green	Total
Customer Access and Financial Support	1	6	9	16
Finance	0	2	0	2
Environmental Services	0	5	3	8
Leisure & Cultural Services	0	1	0	1
Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services & Property	0	3	2	5
ICT	0	2	1	3
Planning Services	0	1	0	1
Housing	0	10	5	15
Community Services	0	1	5	6
HR	0	0	1	1
Total	1	31	26	58

-
- **Red Risks – 1 in total**
- REV7 - Revenues - Performance Indicator data is not robust

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****Appendix C - Worcester Regulatory Services Risks**

Risk Description	Consequences	When is this likely to happen	Current Position			Control measures
			Likelihood	Impact	Matrix RAG Status	
Loss of Data through IT failures	Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data.	On-going	Low	High	Green	Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC upgraded relevant systems including Windows. The service moved to Office 365 during 2021/22, which provides better access to a range of provisions including Microsoft Teams and Power BI.
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required Hidden costs with add-on features	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Current contract due to be re-negotiated in February 2023. Work has commenced on negotiating new contract. The cost of moving systems is prohibitive currently and, whilst the system has its faults, it provides the necessary functionality and will allow the enablement of data transfer from electronic forms.
Effective and efficient Business Continuity arrangements in place	Disruption to service if e.g., Major Power failures or other reasons that access to Wyre Forest House is not possible.	On-going	Very Low	Medium	Amber	The pandemic has shown that we were well prepared for the need to maximise working from home and now all staff, including some previously regarded as office based can do this. Touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations. WRS Managers do need to redraft contingency plans in the event of a prolonged IT failure or cyber-attack that will allow services to be maintained. Existing BC Plans need updating and reviewing.
Maintain our capacity to achieve service delivery	Disruption to service e.g., Major staff sickness (e.g., flu pandemic) or Unable to recruit or retain suitably qualified staff.	On-going	Low	Medium	Amber	The pandemic response has shown that the service was well-placed to respond to what was required.. Consultants are available to provide short term cover and, whilst this worked well in peacetime to cover peak demand periods, the pandemic has revealed the
						limits to this type of capacity. These pressures will only be resolved in the longer term by local and central government investing in additional capacity and additional training to bring more people into the regulatory professions. Having taken on contracts with additional authorities the demand has increased, and neighbouring authorities have lost the ability to assist with some technical specialisms. This is the double-edged sword of effectively operating as a centre of excellence. Whilst we have good resource of our own, in event of an issue, there are limits to who we can ask for help. Regional and sub-regional groups are in place so can provide shared resources for local authorities if required. Effective training and development processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of staff. There is increased training budget pressure, reduced technical knowledge in neighbouring authorities and increased importance in maintaining heightened skills for contractual obligations and commercial edge. Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replace may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share.
Pest contractors cease operations.	Disruption to service. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Green	The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This should limit or eliminate risk, although the unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues.

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Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control	Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Amber	The Out of Hours and Kennelling contracts were re-tendered to enhance the existing arrangements and provide resilience however there are increases in numbers of stray dogs, dog disease and contracts are restricted by geographical location. Retendering for additional kennels remains difficult and consideration may be given to creating our own capacity.
Hosting support does not deliver necessary financial and HR support to ensure efficient management	Efficiency of management reduced; staffing issues remain unaddressed, and performance suffers	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Issues with the new BDC finance system have mainly been resolved, however some workarounds remain in place due to some unforeseen issues. Development of a self serve recruitment platform has improved recruitment systems.
One or more partners continue to be under great financial pressure and may consider alternatives to the partnership to deliver their service	Creates reputational issues for remaining partners and increases the need to manage overheads. Difficulties in delivering highly varied levels of service	On-going	Medium	High	Amber	New legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners must move to contractual relationship but this is quite high before it kicks in (20%.) Leanness of organisation minimises overheads and focuses resource at the front line. Growth strategy should generate income to support partners in the future but there are limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Invest to save capacity has been committed by partners to see if this achieves the necessary outcomes but even this is now fully occupied.
Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes.	Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation.	On-going	Low	Medium	Green	Continued close working with BDC legal team and other partners who don't use BDC for advocacy. Technical and legal training days for staff. Difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments. Membership and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist.
Service provision complies with Government requirements	Adverse comments following audits e.g., FSA	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Limited detail of what is required for statutory minima can make decision making difficult around what is required in law as a minimum.
	Intervention by Government bodies i.e., FSA, whilst highly unlikely, is damaging to reputation.					The LGA is clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear Government cannot expect what it had previously. Fewer interventions/ audits by government. The Service has developed systems that follow the principles of the requirements of bodies like FSA so can show some level of compliance, but service isn't operating to the letter of the current Code. The Code is however currently going through major changes and likely to move to a point where it is closer to the WRS model of operation. Environmental reporting for Local Air Quality Management, Pollution Prevention and Control and Private Water Supply Inspection reports to Defra and DWI have received positive responses with no issues of concern raised by these bodies.
Failure to deliver external contract work at the level expected by the business or local authority with whom we have the contract	Damage to reputation, loss of future income streams, financial impact of paying damages Loss of key staff or skills	On-going	Low	High	Green	Ensure contract negotiations are clear on performance criteria and these are clearly recorded in the final documentation. Monthly reviews against performance criteria. Select staff to ensure competence of those undertaking work outside Worcestershire. Maintain strong links with the customer's monitoring staff. Intervene early with corrective action. Ensure contingency plans in place if key staff leave to enable contract delivery, to include contractors, staff development and apprenticeship

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****Financial Compliance Report**

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Luke Court, Finance and Enabling Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Bernard Ofori-Atta
Report Author	Job Title: Head of Finance & Customer Services Contact email: Bernrad.ofori-atta@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		All
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. Appendix A contains exempt information		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee **RECOMMEND** that:

- 1) **Progress on the 2020/21 Audit process be noted.**
- 2) **Any areas of concern within this key compliance report are raised with Executive.**

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 From a Governance point of view, the financial frame work under which the Council works is set out in the Constitution. In addition to this there are legislative reporting requirements which set out what needs to be done and by when. The Accounting Policies report which was tabled at the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on the 23rd March 2023 set out the Financial Governance Framework, and associated references to key documentation, that the Council, it's Member and Officers work to. This are (in summary):

- **The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.** These set out: The framework for Executive Decisions, Decisions outside the budget or policy framework, Urgent Decisions outside of the Budget or Policy Framework, Virement rules, In-year changes to policy framework and, Call-in of decisions outside the budget or policy framework. These rules set out how decisions can be made, by whom and how they can be challenged

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- **Financial Procedure Rules** which are set out in Part 14 of the Constitution. These “operational policies” run to 36 pages and set out how the organisation financially runs its “day to day” business.
 - **Finance Protocols** which set out requirements and expectations of the Finance Team and Services in terms of financial administration and demarcation of duties.
- 2.2 One of the legislative reporting requirements the Council has not achieved is the delivery of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts. As such, the Council was issued with a Section 24 Statement. Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) were also issued with a Section 24 Statement for the same non delivery of the 2020/21 accounts which is understandable given that officers support both Councils via a shared service.
- 2.3 As reported in previous Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meetings in January, March, May, July, September, November and January draft 2020/21 accounts will be presented to the Council’s External Auditors once they have completed their work on the data take on balances. An update on this work is contained in this report.
- 2.4 The 2023/4 budget was approved at Council on the 27th February 2023. An update on the 2024/5 Medium Term Financial Plan process is contained in this report.

Legislative Requirements

- 2.5 The previous section sets out how the Council works, however equally important are the Central Government Legislative Requirements to which we deliver to and are compared to other Councils across the Council. This section lists those key deliverables.
- 2.6 The following are key legislative deliverables, which were circulated by the Government in December 2023 for the period December 2023, through the 2024/5 financial year. Delivery against these requirements will be set out in the final column of the table.

Form	Code	Description	Proposed Dispatch	Deadline	Proposed Publication	Position
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q3	CPR3	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1, Q2 and Q3 2023-24	15-Dec-23	19-Jan-24	15-Feb-24	Delivered 26/1/24
Non Domestic Rates Forecast	NNDR1	Billing authority forecasts of the amount of non-domestic rates to be collected in the 2024-25	15-Dec-23	31-Jan-24	21-Feb-24	Delivered 9/2/24 (Civica issue)
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q3	QRC3	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q3 2023-24	15-Dec-23	12-Jan-24	14-Feb-24	Delivered 15/2/24 (Civica issue)
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q3	QB3	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q3 2023-24	15-Dec-23	08-Jan-24	15-Feb-24	Delivered 17/1/24

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Quarterly Revenue Update - Quarters 3 & 4	QRU3	Quarter 1 to 3 2023-24 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update.	15-Dec-23	26-Jan-24	07-Mar-24	Delivered 19/2/24
Council Tax Requirement/ Parish Council Tax	CTR1/2/3/4	Information on council tax levels set by local authorities in 2024-25 and Council tax levels for 2024-25 set by parishes.	02/02/2024 (tbc)	11-Mar-24	21-Mar-24	Delivered 26/2/24
of which: Parish council tax	-	-	-	11-Mar-24	08-May-24	Delivered 27/2/24
Revenue Account Budget	RA	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2024-25 Budget	16-Feb-24	05-Apr-24	20-Jun-24	
Capital Estimates Return	CER	Capital forecast for 2024-25	23-Feb-24	22-Mar-24	13-Jun-24	
Non Domestic Rates Outturn-unaudited	NNDR3	Collects information from all billing authority on the amount of non-domestic rates collected in 2023-24-provisional data	28-Mar-24	30-Apr-24	10-Jul-24	
Non Domestic Rates Outturn-audited	NNDR3	Collects information from all billing authority on the amount of non-domestic rates collected in 2023-24-final data	n/a	30-Sep-24	15-Nov-24	
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q4	QB4	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q4 2023-24	22-Mar-24	05-Apr-24	13-Jun-24	
Capital payments & receipts Q4 and provisional outturn	CPR4	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 2023-24. Expanded collection, used as provisional outturn.	22-Mar-24	19-Apr-24	13-Jun-24	
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q4	QRC4	Annual data of levels of council tax and non-domestic rates collected by local authorities in 2023-24 and Q4 2023-24	12-Apr-24	03-May-24	19-Jun-24	
Capital Outturn Return	COR	Final capital outturn figures for 2023-24	26-Apr-24	26-Jul-24	10-Oct-24	
Revenue Outturn suite - provisional	RO	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2023-24 Outturn (provisional)	26-Apr-24	28-Jun-24	29-Aug-24	
Revenue Outturn suite - certified	RO	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2023-24 Outturn (final)	n/a	11-Oct-24	12-Dec-24	
Exit payments	-	Local authority exit payments 2023-24	03-May-24	07-Jun-24	18-Jul-24	
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q1	QB1	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q1 2024-25	24-Jun-24	05-Jul-24	08-Aug-24	

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Quarterly Revenue Update - Q1	QRU1	Q1 2024-25 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update	28-Jun-24	02-Aug-24	12-Sep-24	
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q1	CPR1	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1 2024-25	21-Jun-24	19-Jul-24	08-Aug-24	
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q1	QRC1	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q1 2024-25	21-Jun-24	05-Jul-24	14-Aug-24	
Local Government Pension Funds	SF3	Collect information on income and expenditure on local government pension schemes for 2023-24	05-Jul-24	13-Sep-24	23-Oct-24	
Council Tax Base/ Supplementary	CTB	Information about the 2024 council tax base for each billing authority.	20-Sep-24	11-Oct-24	06-Nov-24	
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q2	QB2	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q2 2024-25	23-Sep-24	04-Oct-24	14-Nov-24	
Quarterly Revenue Update - Q2	QRU2	Quarter 1 & 2 2024-25 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update	20-Sep-24	25-Oct-24	05-Dec-24	
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q2	CPR2	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1 and Q2 2024-25	20-Sep-24	20-Oct-24	14-Nov-24	
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q2	QRC2	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q2 2024-25	20-Sep-24	04-Oct-24	20-Nov-24	
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q3	CPR3	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1, Q2 and Q3 2024-25	13-Dec-24	17-Jan-25	13-Feb-25	
Non Domestic Rates Forecast	NNDR1	Billing authority forecasts of the amount of non-domestic rates to be collected in the 2025-26	13-Dec-24	31-Jan-25	19-Feb-25	
Quarterly Revenue Update - Quarters 3 & 4	QRU3	Quarter 1 to 3 2024-25 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update.	13-Dec-24	24-Jan-25	06-Mar-25	
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q3	QB3	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q3 2024-25	13-Dec-24	06-Jan-25	13-Feb-25	
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q3	QRC3	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q3 2024-25	13-Dec-24	10-Jan-25	12-Feb-25	
Council Tax Requirement/ Parish Council Tax	CTR1/2/3/4	Information on council tax levels set by local authorities in 2025-26. Council tax levels for 2025-26 set by parishes	Early Feb 2025	12-Mar-25	20-Mar-25	

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of which: Parish council tax	-	-	Early Feb 2025	12-Mar-25	07-May-25	
Revenue Account Budget	RA	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2025-26 Budget	14-Feb-25	04-Apr-25	19-Jun-25	
Capital Estimates Return	CER	Capital forecast for 2025-26	21-Feb-25	21-Mar-25	12-Jun-25	
Monthly Borrowing & Lending	MB	Monthly sample used to provide an estimate of the level of net borrowing by local authorities to go into the ONS/HMT monthly publication Public Sector Finance Statistics	5 working days before 1st working day of the month	Day 5 of each month	for quarter months only, see QB1, QB2, QB3, QB4 dates	
Local Government Finance Statistics	LGFS33	Annual compilation of finance data collected from local authorities covering out-turn data for 2022-23	N/A	N/A	Spring 2024	

Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts – 23/4 Delivered

2.7 In wider sets of deliverables (outside the 2024/5 DLUHC Listing) we have the following returns that have been delivered:

- **Budget**
 - Delivered by 11th March in preceding financial year – **2024/5 Budget and MTFP delivered 26th Feb 2024**
 - Council Tax Base – Yearly – **2024/25 delivered in 9th January 2024**
 - Council Tax Resolution – **Yearly 2024/5 delivered in 26th February 2024**
 - Council Tax Billing – Yearly (2 weeks before 1st DD is due to be taken) – **Bills distributed in March 2024**
- **Policies**
 - Treasury and Asset Management Strategies
 - Strategies are part of the MTFP – **2024/5 Strategy Approved 26th Feb 2024**
 - Half Yearly Report
 - **23/4 Report delivered in Q3 Monitoring Report 18 March 24**
 - Yearly Outturn Report
 - **2022/23 Draft Report delivered in September 23**
 - Council Tax Support Scheme – Yearly –
 - **24/5 Approved on 9th January 2024.**
 - Minimum Revenue Provision – yearly – **Approved as part of the 2024/5 to 2026/7 Medium Term Financial Plan in February 2024.**
 - Financial Monitoring – **delivered quarterly to Executive – Q1 23/4 went to Executive in October, Q2 went in November 2023. Q3 will be presented in March.**
 - Risk Management – **Delivered quarterly to this Committee (Q3 delivered today)**
 - Savings Report – **Delivered quarterly to this Committee (Q3 delivered Jan23)**
 - Financial Controls (still in development)

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- Clearance of suspense accounts – See the chart at the end of this Report for progress.
- Bank Reconciliation - *linked to above point although a separate stream assessing/clearing 2023/4 and prior year items.*
- Over £500 spending.
 - **Updated to January 2024.**

The following deliverables, prior to December 2023 are still to be delivered:

- **Closure**
 - Draft Accounts for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.
 - 2020/21 Audit **dependent on clearance of opening eFin to TechOne balances.**
 - Government Returns
 - VAT – Monthly
 - **Still to be delivered for 20/21 – dependent on closure of accounts, discussions ongoing with HMRC.**
 - Revenue Outturn Reports – July
 - **Still to be delivered for 20/21 and 21/22 – dependent on closure of accounts**
 - Whole of Government Accounts Returns – August
 - **Still to be delivered for 20/21, 21/22 and 22/23 – dependent on closure of accounts**

2.8 The key returns that have still not been delivered are the Revenue and Capital Outturn forms for 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the VAT returns. Although the Government now allow these returns to be completed based on estimates, the level of uncertainty due to the Cash Receipting means these cannot be completed until the External Auditors sign off the Councils take on balances and the Council provides the draft accounts to Audit for each Council.

Update on the Statement of Accounts

2.9 The key Closure deliverables for each financial year are set out below:

- Closure 2020/21
 - Agreement of Treatment of Take on Balances – The Council has supplied a reconciliation of the Closing Balances on eFin to the Opening Balances on TechOne (this was originally to be delivered by the Auditors independently but changed following review in January as reported to this Committee in January). The Auditors confirmed receipt in February and a meeting is taking place on the 18th March to take the process forward.
 - Provision of Draft 2020/21 Accounts to Audit. This is dependent on the External Auditors confirmation that they have approved both Council's take-on balances work. To date only limited high level testing has taken place although significant work has been undertaken.
 - Sign Off of 20/21 Accounts – to be confirmed with the External Auditors
- Closure 2021/22

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- Updated Outturn position – still to be provided.
- Draft Accounts ready for Auditors (without any 2020/21 Audit Adjustments) estimated May 2024.
- Audit of Accounts following Audit of 2020/21 Accounts.
- Sign-off of the Accounts – to be confirmed with External Auditors (and dependent on what is agreed with the DLUHC cutoff decision).
- Closure 2022/23
 - Budget Manager Closure Training tool place in late March with 83 staff attended closure training.
 - Draft Provisional Outturn Report – Executive Report delivered in October 2023.
 - 2022/23 draft Revenue Outturn and Capital Outturn Reports presented to DLUHC.
 - Draft 2022/23 Accounts to Audit – TBC (following External Auditors sign off 21/22 Accounts)
 - Sign off of the Accounts – to be confirmed with External Auditors.
- Value for Money Opinions for 2021/22 and 2022/23. External Auditors delivered their joint Value for Money Opinions in November 2023:
 - S24 Recommendation still in place and extended for 2021/2 and 2022/3 Accounts.
 - 5 of the 6 2020/21 Key Recommendations either delivered or now linked to Improvement Recommendations.
 - 9 of 13 2020/21 Improvement Recommendations either fully or partially delivered.
 - One new Key Recommendation – linked to Workforce Strategy.
 - Ten updated Improvement Recommendations.

2.10 As reported in the July and September reports, DLUHC have stated that they are moving to rectify these backlogs by changing how audits are performed over the medium term. DLUHC are concerned that the most time should be spent on auditing more recent accounts, so scopes of audits will be reduced (still to be confirmed) however Auditors will still be expected to serve S114 and other Statutory Recommendations. The governments' view is that Audits will be given statutory deadlines for completion as follows:

- All accounts up to 2022/23 to be completed by the 30th September 2024.
- Year ended 31 March 2024: 31 May 2025.
- Year ended 31 March 2025: 31 March 2026.
- Year ended 31 March 2026: 31 January 2027.
- Year ended 31 March 2027: 30 November 2027.
- Year ended 31 March 2028: 30 November 2028.

2.11 There are two consultations that came out with the Governments updated guidance, which was released on the 8th February, that need to be completed by early March. These consultations are for DLUHC, the National Audit Office, and the Financial Reporting Council (FRC). Following seminars on the 12th and 28th February Auditors now need to set out the real issues with their opinion on a Council's Accounts especially

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“running out of time” to deliver an Audit, as it is still far from clear on sanctions that will be used against Councils if all accounts up to 2022/3 are not audited by the 30th September and the impact this will have on reputation of the sector and future years audits.

Appendix A sets out the Council's responses to these two consultations.

- 2.12 The Council is now on the latest version of TechOne although because Redditch and Bromsgrove are still the only Council's on Cash Receipting, when the weekly updates come in they have to do additional checks to ensure the functionality is working as expected. The Council will now update to the latest version of TechOne every summer.
- 2.13 Once the External Auditors sign off the data take on balances the draft 2020/21 Accounts will be submitted. The Council has not submitted them yet as if the External Auditors have issues with the data take on balances and the draft accounts had been submitted then this could lead to qualified accounts.
- 2.14 Work is under way on the 2021/22 Accounts although they cannot be finalised until the audit of the 2020/21 Accounts is complete. The key driver is the clearance of the cash receipting suspense accounts which is expected was delivered by end of December to the required materiality level.

Update on the Budget and ongoing Monitoring

- 2.15 The Council's 2024/25 Budget was approved on the 26th February 2024 at Council. Budgets will be loaded onto TechOne in March.
- 2.16 Quarter One 2023/4 financial and performance monitoring went to Executive in October and the Quarter Two Monitoring went to Executive in November. The financial monitoring for Quarter 2 was delivered for the first time directly from the TechOne system with budget managers data input onto it and not into spreadsheets. Quarter Three Monitoring will be delivered to Executive in March.
- 2.17 To increase capacity, a number of the finance posts presently covered by Agency have been advertised internally and externally. Interviews for these posts took place on the 25th and 26th of January and 5 offers have been accepted to date.

Compliance Items

- 2.20 There are a number of areas where compliance will be measured going forwards. Compliance to process and timetable is a key underlying theme of the Draft External Audit Report 2020/21. These items are being measured to improve how we work and change behaviours. This will lead to an improved financial health/knowledge across both Councils. Not all these measures can be put in place instantly but there should be the full suite by the middle of the summer (Debt indicators depend on the clearing of suspense and the updating of the bank reconciliations).

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- Closure Training took place in March with 83 attending.
- Mandatory Budget Manager Training (including the use of TechOne) took place in September 2023 – upskilling budget managers with the tools to input their forecasts directly onto TechOne.
- Mandatory Financial Awareness Training for managers took place in August and September.
- Payments Purchase Order Training takes place monthly.

Treasury Management

- The Half Yearly 2023/4 Treasury Management Report will be presented to Executive on the 18th March.

Audit VFM Report Requirements (From the draft 2021/2 and 22/3 Reports)

- More Budget Consultation.
- Wider savings monitoring will be undertaken by this Committee quarterly.
- Capital and its deliverability will be reviewed as part of the Budget Tranche 2.
- Benchmarking is now incorporated into the budget process (using LG Futures data).
- The Internal Audit Service will be externally assessed in early 2024.
- The Council will seek an independent Audit Committee member and ensure the Committee remains apolitical in nature.
- The whistleblowing policy will be updated before the end of the financial year.
- Procurement and contract rules will be updated by the end of the financial year (to reflect changes to legislation happening in April 2024).
- Performance Indicators will be reviewed and updated following Strategic Priority setting sessions.

The Council is still to run sessions to assess its “risk appetite”.

Errors:

- Non delivery of GPC Card Data (monthly basis) – still to be started.
- Mis-coding on TechOne per month – by Service Area - will begin once the cash receipting suspense has been cleared.

Procurement:

- The new ‘No Compliance No Order’ process has been live since April 2023.
- The number of contracts in place is growing regularly. We hope that eventually we get to the place where the number of orders coming to procurement for approval as contracts are not in place are minimal.
- Council in July approved an increase of the Key Decision Level from £50k to £200k. Finance and Performance Monitoring Reports now set out:
 - All contracts requiring renewal over the next year that are over the present £200k threshold and these are placed on the forward plan.

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- All contracts requiring renewal over the next year that are between £50k and £200k for reference.
- All contracts that are being procured by Bromsgrove over this period that relate to Redditch Services.

Towns Fund Programme:

- The Council were one of 5% of those Council's receiving funding as part of the Towns Fund Programme that received a "Deep Dive" review of their Governance processes over August and September. The C
- The only areas requiring follow up were updating processes for Subsidy Control rules (as with was State Aid previously) and ensuring Board Members Register of Interest declarations were up to date.
- The Council received confirmation from DLUHC on the 11th October that after careful review of the evidence by the Assurance and Compliance Team they were pleased to confirm that the Lead Reviewer feels that all the key requirements have now been satisfactorily met.

2.21 Work is ongoing on the clearance of the Cash Receipting suspense accounts. These figures are updated every 2 weeks. The position as at early December is summarised in the table below. As reported to this committee, the Council are working to have cleared the backlog by the end of this calendar year. Present progress, as at the 31st December, indicates that there will be small, non-material balances in 2020/21. Note, significant numbers of large items on values over £1,000 are treasury transactions which are undertaken manually.

Row Labels	Number of Items under £1000	Value	Number of Items over £1,000	Value	Reconciled Items	Reconciled value	Total Items to Resolve	Total Value to Resolve
20/21 items	5,346	-150,197.64	102	-244,999.61	24,954	11,693,050.58	30,402	11,297,853.33
21/22 Items	27,207	214,783.54	261	4,723,679.65	6,814	-46,132,548.83	34,282	-41,194,085.64
22/23 Items	6,520	-82,541.29	550	140,124,905.14	18,693	-43,885,713.17	25,763	96,156,650.68
23/24 Items	10,501	86,782.18	594	-55,864,203.73	6,032	78,325,213.32	17,127	22,547,791.77
Grand Total	49,574	68,826.79	1,507	88,739,381.45	56,493	1.90	107,574	88,808,210.14

Summary

2.22 This report sets out the policies (local and national) that underpins the Council finances and the key deliverables. The significant change highlighted in July and September in proposed the new Government timescales to catch up on Audit delivery has still not been confirmed. Once this takes place the Council and its External Auditors will need to speed up their joint timetable as appropriate. This report is now updated for data as at the end of January and is delivered to each Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at Redditch to updates it on progress against targets and also alert them to any issues and risks.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 This paper sets out the financial frameworks within which the Council works.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Audit, Governance and Standards Committee****21st March 2024****4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report, however the frameworks are generally linked to statute or the Council's Constitution.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's Corporate Plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the Borough and our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all our Strategic Purposes.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no direct climate change implications arising as a result of this report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising as a result of this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Operational implications have been dealt with as part of the 2023/24 MTFP, quarterly monitoring and the Closedown process.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The financial stability and sustainability of the Council is a core underlying theme of the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Interim Auditors Annual Report on Redditch Borough Council 2021/22 & 2/22/23 – Audit Governance and Standards Committee November 2023, Council December 2023.
 Section 24 Report to Audit and Council – November 2022.
 Accounting Policies Report – March, June, July, September, November 2023 and January 2024 Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.
 Finance Recovery Report – June 2023 and October 2023 – Executive Programme Management Office Requirements – July 2023 – Executive Approvals to Spend Report - July 2023 – Executive

9. Appendices

Appendix A - Responses to DLUHC and NAO Closure Consultations (**Exempt**)

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE –
WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24**

21st March 2024

Standing items:

- Monitoring Officer's Report – Standards Regime
- Feckenham Parish Council Representative's report - Standards Regime
- Submission of Statements of Accounts (2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23)
- Risk Management Report / Corporate Risk Register
- External Audit Update Report
- Internal Audit Progress Report
- Financial Compliance Report
- Risk Champion Update
- Committee Work Programme

Meeting dates for the new municipal year will be confirmed in May 2024.

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