

AUDIT, GOVERNANCE & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THE INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen Ashley
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Peter Carpenter, s151 Officer
Report Author	Job Title: Head of Internal Audit Shared Service Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Contact email: andy.bromage@worcester.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01905 722051
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 2022 to 31st August 2022.

Summary Dashboard 2022/23:

Total reviews planned for 2022/23	15 (minimum)
Reviews finalised to date for 2022/23:	2 (incl. bus operator grant)
Assurance of 'moderate' or below:	N/a
Reviews awaiting final sign off:	1
Reviews ongoing:	3
Reviews to commence (Q3):	8
Number of 'High' Priority recommendations reported:	0
Satisfied 'High' priority recommendations to date:	0
Plan delivery to August 2022:	35%

Since the last progress report presented to the Committee, one report has been finalised, one grant return has been completed, one report is at clearance/draft report stage and three reviews are ongoing.

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Follow Up outcomes are reported when appropriate and by exception.

All 'limited' assurance reviews go before CMT for full consideration.

2022/23 AUDITS TAKING PLACE AS AT 31st AUGUST 2022

A rolling programme of testing has been undertaken during quarters 1 and 2 for Debtors, Creditors and Payroll. This is set to continue during quarter 3 and the results reported during quarter 4.

The reviews that have been finalised since the last committee:

- GIS and Gazetteer Phase 1 (Critical Friend)

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

- Fuel usage across the fleet

Reviews that had commenced and at planning and testing stages included:

- Transformation Team Utilisation
- Homelessness Grants
- Workshop Licensing Compliance

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

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 changing working arrangements that have been necessary to continue to provide Redditch residents with services post pandemic. Plan flexibility is continuing to be 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. The outcomes of the follow up

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reviews are reported in full 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 31st August 2022 a total of 131 days had been delivered against an overall target of 377 days for the year.

Appendix 2 shows the indicative plan for the year and the progress made to deliver it.

Appendix 3 provides copies of the reports that have been completed and final reports for 2022/23 issued since the previous progress report presented to Committee.

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 NFI data set uploads were completed by the end of December 2021. The next major upload of data sets is during October & November 2022. WIASS continue to provide advice and assistance regarding the process.

Monitoring

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- 3.7 To ensure the delivery of the 2022/23 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. The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service remains confident his team have provided the required coverage for the year to ensure an internal audit opinion can be reached using reviews from the authority’s core financial systems, as well as other systems which have been deemed to be ‘high’ and ‘medium’ risk. 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

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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 ~ 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan summary of delivery

Appendix 2 ~ 2022/23 Plan progress

Appendix 3 ~ 2022/23 Finalised audit reports including definitions.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Date: 27th October 2022

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APPENDIX 1

Delivery against Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23
1st April 2022 to 31st August 2022

Audit Area	Original 2022/23 Plan Days	Actual Days used to 31 st August 2022
Core Financial Systems (see note 1)	115	22
Corporate Audits	43	16
Other Systems Audits (see note 2)	165	79
SUB TOTAL	323	117
Audit Management Meetings/ Corporate Meetings / Reading	54	14
Annual Plans, Reports and Audit Committee Support		
Other chargeable (see note 3)	0	0
SUB TOTAL	54	14
TOTAL	377	131
Rubicon	10	

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 during Q4.

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.

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Appendix 2

2022/23 Internal Audit Plan

Audit Area	Corporate Link (corporate Priority / Strategic Purpose)	Risk Register Reference	Indicative Date of Delivery 2022/23	Current Position	Estimated Resource 2022/23
FINANCIAL					
Debtors (note 1)	Enabling	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q1 to Q4	Rolling Programme	17*
Main Ledger/Budget Monitoring/Bank Rec (note 1)	Enabling	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q3 to Q4		30*
Creditors (note 1)	Enabling	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q1 to Q4	Rolling Programme	17*
Treasury Management (incl. strategic acquisitions)	Enabling	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q2		6*
Council Tax	Enabling	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q3 to Q4		8*
Benefits	Enabling	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q3 to Q4		10*
NNDR	Enabling	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q3 to Q4		8*

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Audit Area	Corporate Link (corporate Priority / Strategic Purpose)	Risk Register Reference	Indicative Date of Delivery 2022/23	Current Position	Estimated Resource 2022/23
Payroll	Enabling & Contractual Obligation	Lack of robust financial accounting and monitoring arrangement	Q1 to Q3	Rolling Programme	19
Sub TOTAL					115
CORPORATE					
IT Audit (Cyber essentials)	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	N/a	Q3 - Q4		15*
Risk Management (Action plan implementation) (note 2)	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	S151 request	Q3 - Q4		10*
GIS & Gazetteer – Phase 1	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	HoS	Q1	Final Report issued 16/08/2022	10*
Transformational Team Utilisation	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	HoS	Q1 - Q2	Testing in progress	8*
Disabled Facility Grants	Enabling	N/a		Liaison with County underway	0
Sub TOTAL					43

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Audit Area	Corporate Link (corporate Priority / Strategic Purpose)	Risk Register Reference	Indicative Date of Delivery 2022/23	Current Position	Estimated Resource 2022/23
SERVICE DELIVERY					
Community & Housing Service					
Homelessness Grants	Help me to live my life independently	HoS	Q1	Testing Review	20
Housing Revenue Account	Help me to live my life independently	HoS	Q4		15
Lifeline Service	Help me to live my life independently	HoS	Q2		10
Environmental & Housing Property Services					
Workshop Licensing Compliance	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	HoS	Q2	Testing in progress	15
Fuel Usage Across the Fleet	Fundamental to strategic purpose delivery	HoS	Q1	Awaiting final sign off	25

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Audit Area	Corporate Link (corporate Priority / Strategic Purpose)	Risk Register Reference	Indicative Date of Delivery 2022/23	Current Position	Estimated Resource 2022/23
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure					
Leisure Strategy	Provide good things for me to see, do and visit	HoS	Q3 - Q4		6
Sub TOTAL					91
Other Operational Work					
Advisory, Consultancy & Contingency	Operational support	N/a	Q1 - Q4	Ongoing	20
Fraud & Investigations incl. NFI	Operational support	N/a	Q1 - Q4	Ongoing	15
Completion of prior year's audits	Operational support	N/a	Q1	Completed	12
Report Follow Up (all areas)	Operational support	N/a	Q1 - Q4	Ongoing	15
Statement of Internal Control	Operational support	N/a	Q1 & Q4	Q1 completed	6
Bus Operators Grant	Operational support	N/a	Q1 & Q3	Q1 return completed	6
Sub TOTAL					74

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Audit Area	Corporate Link (corporate Priority / Strategic Purpose)	Risk Register Reference	Indicative Date of Delivery 2022/23	Current Position	Estimated Resource 2022/23
Audit Management Meetings	Operational support	N/a	Q1 to Q4	Ongoing	54
Corporate Meetings / Reading	Operational support	N/a	Q1 to Q4		
Annual Plans, Reports & Committee Support	Operational support	N/a	Q1 to Q4		
Sub TOTAL					54
TOTAL					377

Rubicon Leisure	Arms-length LA Company	N/a	N/a		10
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Explanatory Notes:

*As part of the increasing joint and shared service working between Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council the audit budgets and areas will feature in the 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: New financial system therefore audit budget increase.

Note 2: Risk management relaunch reviewing ongoing progress against action plan and reporting.

Note 3: There was no budget included in the plan for this additional piece of work.

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

Appendix A

Definition of Audit Opinion Levels of Assurance

Opinion	Definition
Full Assurance	<p>The system of internal control meets the organisation's objectives; all of the expected system controls tested are in place and are operating effectively.</p> <p>No specific follow up review will be undertaken; follow up will be undertaken as part of the next planned review of the system.</p>
Significant Assurance	<p>There is a generally sound system of internal control in place designed to meet the organisation's objectives. However isolated weaknesses in the design of controls or inconsistent application of controls in a small number of areas put the achievement of a limited number of system objectives at risk.</p> <p>Follow up of medium priority recommendations only will be undertaken after 6 months; follow up of low priority recommendations will be undertaken as part of the next planned review of the system.</p>
Moderate Assurance	<p>The system of control is generally sound however some of the expected controls are not in place and / or are not operating effectively therefore increasing the risk that the system will not meet its objectives. Assurance can only be given over the effectiveness of controls within some areas of the system.</p> <p>Follow up of high and medium priority recommendations only will be undertaken after 6 months; follow up of low priority recommendations will be undertaken as part of the next planned review of the system.</p>
Limited Assurance	<p>Weaknesses in the design and / or inconsistent application of controls put the achievement of the organisation's objectives at risk in many of the areas reviewed. Assurance is limited to the few areas of the system where controls are in place and are operating effectively.</p> <p>Follow up of high and medium priority recommendations only will be undertaken after 6 months; follow up of low priority recommendations will be undertaken as part of the next planned review of the system.</p>
No Assurance	<p>No assurance can be given on the system of internal control as significant weaknesses in the design and / or operation of key controls could result or have resulted in failure to achieve the organisation's objectives in the area reviewed.</p> <p>Follow up of high and medium priority recommendations only will be undertaken after 6 months; follow up of low priority recommendations will be undertaken as part of the next planned review of the system.</p>

Appendix B
Definition of Priority of Recommendations

Priority	Definition
High	Control weakness that has or is likely to have a significant impact upon the achievement of key system, function or process objectives. Immediate implementation of the agreed recommendation is essential in order to provide satisfactory control of the serious risk(s) the system is exposed to.
Medium	Control weakness that has or is likely to have a medium impact upon the achievement of key system, function or process objectives. Implementation of the agreed recommendation within 3 to 6 months is important in order to provide satisfactory control of the risk(s) the system is exposed to.
Low	Control weakness that has a low impact upon the achievement of key system, function or process objectives. Implementation of the agreed recommendation is desirable as it will improve overall control within the system.

2022/23 Audit Report.

Finalised report since the last Committee sitting.

Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Final Internal Audit Report

Critical Review - GIS and Gazetteer (Land Charge Project) 2022/23

Tuesday 16th August 2022

Distribution:

To: Head of Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Critical Review of the GIS and Gazetteer Project Phase 1 was carried out in accordance with the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Audit Plan for Redditch Borough Council for 2022/23 approved by the Governance and Standards Committee on 28th July 2022 and for Bromsgrove District Council approved by the Standards and Governance Committee on 21st July 2022. The review was a Critical Review to analyse, evaluate and challenge the completed GIS and Gazetteer Project Phase 1 as project managed by Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council.
- 1.2. This review relates to the strategic purposes of:
- Run & Grow a Successful Business
 - Finding somewhere to live

-
- Aspiration, work & financial independence
 - Living independent, active and Healthy lives
 - Communities which are safe, well maintained & green

- 1.3. There were no risks on the corporate or service risk register entries that related to this review.
- 1.4. This review was undertaken during the months of May and June 2022.

2. Audit Scope and objective

- 2.1. This review was undertaken to identify lessons learnt and areas of good practice after the successful completion of the GIS and Gazetteer Project Phase 1.
- 2.2. The scope covered:
- Project planning
 - Officer engagement/collaboration
 - Overview and management of the project
 - Barriers faced and how these were overcome
- 2.3. The review covered the journey taken from when phase 1 of the project was initiated to the point of implementation.
- 2.4. This review did not cover the GIS Gazetteer system itself except in so far as it relates to the above.

3. Critical Review Overview and Executive Summary

- 3.1. As this is a critical review there is no level of assurance given.
- 3.2. During the review the auditor had meetings with various officers involved in the implementation of the project across both Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council to gain an understanding on the processes, areas which made the project a success and to reflect on areas of identified weaknesses which were lessons learnt for future improvements in project management. *(See SWOT analysis in Appendix A – page 9 below)*
- 3.3. Officers both in the Project Board and the Stakeholders Board as well as officers involved in the project implementation were consulted in order to provide a rounded picture and to gain a full understanding on the controls/monitoring in place throughout the project. This included talking to officers involved in the project from Business Transformation, IT services, System admin, Planning, Legal and Land charges.
- 3.4. From these discussions a SWOT analysis was compiled as part of the testing sample to identify success factors and what the lessons learnt were when looking back at the implementation of the GIS and Gazetteer project phase 1. *(The lessons learnt can be read in Section 4 below)*
- 3.5. It Should be noted that although there were some weaknesses and threats identified as part of the audit findings, overall the project was a big success for both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council as the Government have rewarded each authority for the hard work with an incentive. This was the first joint authority that implemented the project, it has been used as exemplar to help other authorities including Worcester City Council and Tewksbury Borough Council with the implementation of their GIS/Gazetteer project.
- 3.6. The review found success factors in the following areas:

Project Delivery

- Met the project guidelines
- Achieved within both budget and timescales provided
- No staff turnover and good resource was in place.
- Due to the backing by Central Government, all barriers encountered were able to be removed by the project board.

- The project was delivered during uncertain times with Covid-19 and when the workforce had no choice but to work from home and be creative about new ways of working.
- The panel received regularly updated highlight reports at each meeting throughout the project.
- The first joint authority to successfully implement the project nationally.

Communication

- There was good communication within the Project Board and within the Stakeholder Board.
- Officers felt that there was good communication between team leader level and staff on the ground.
- There was clear and transparent communication between all members of the project and all officers had an opportunity to raise concerns and come up with solutions to issues.
- It was a good opportunity for officers who normally work independently to be part of a team.
- Services found the project to be a good way to build bridges with other services and step out of the norm with the collaboration between different services and working with officers from different experience backgrounds.
- Having a diverse project board was seen to be working well.

Project Management

- Overall staff felt the project was well managed.
- The project empowered staff to get on with the job and not feel micro-managed.
- There was a good work ethic as once the project manager changed to systems, everything was liaised at a central point of contact and delegation was sorted by IT.

Training

- There were seminars delivered for free by Her Majesty Land Registry (HMLR) which gave a good boost in the preparation of the project.

3.7. There were some lessons learnt that audit have highlighted for management to consider in future Business Improvement/projects documented in Section 4 below.

4. Detailed Findings and Recommendations

The challenges identified during the review have been set out in the table below along with the related risks and management action plan.

Ref.	Current Position
1	<p>Project Delivery: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members of staff involved in the project must be made to feel that their ideas are valued at all levels to ensure that moral is not impacted.• It was identified that project work often goes back to a project board for discussions and approvals but tended to not have a project leader that took total responsibility during the project implementation from the start to the end, therefore consideration needs to be made for the use of a sole project lead who drives the bus from the start of a project to the very end and takes full ownership.• The project lead needs to have a full understanding of the system(s) being used and processes prior to commencing a project. If the project lead has a knowledge gap, it can lead to delays in the implementation and possibly have financial/resource implications, as well as a lack of confidence/buy-in and respect from other officers.• Appropriate pre-project planning needs to take place to identify what actions/fixes are required, to prevent unknown barriers occurring during the project, which as a result would lead into a risk of project delays and financial implications.• Work needs to continue with officers who are not strategic in the authority to gain more buy in to new processes and business improvements.• If business improvement is to continue, there needs to be clear transparency to help officers understand the reasons why the business improvements are taking place and allow officers to understand the reward as a result.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As officers since the pandemic are working more agile and there has been a move to not using printers, there needs to be a review to determine if all archived data can be moved electronically for file storage which in turn will allow quicker access to historical records.• Members of staff on the ground need a clear expectation regarding the deadlines of when a piece of work is required to be completed to allow better planning.• To consider a better way of strategizing how long it would take to unpick a problem and set the expectation to staff on providing a better and clear understanding on how big the project is.
2	<p>Culture: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If business improvements are to continue, there needs to be consistency in the approach being undertaken both operationally and strategically to push the change in culture and help staff embrace the positivity of new ways of working, otherwise there could be a loss in momentum.• One of the driving factors was the incentive by the Government to get full support and buy in, so there needs to be a driving force and promotion in the decision making and strategy to get buy in from staff without waiting on incentives.• To continue to develop on the big driving force from a strategic level to have better managerial decisions and continue to have better data and information.• To continue the shift from paper documents to full digitalisation.
3	<p>Communication: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To get the best out of the project, there needs to be consistent and clear communication being fed down from the Project board to the Stakeholder board.• There needs to be clear and consistent levels of transparency with staff at all levels involved in the project, to ensure that the authority is doing all that they can to allow staff to gain a full picture into how the project will impact their future once the project has been implemented I.E is there a risk with job security, how it will impact day-to-day work, will it make staff lives easier or add more pressure.• Staff on the ground at times felt uncertain about how the changes would impact their job role and this had an impact on their morale, therefore whilst it is accepted there may have been an element of protection involved, there needs to be an appropriate sounding board in place to allow questions to be asked and allow staff to fully understand the outcomes.

4	<p>Training: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Members of staff involved in the project felt that they had to pick up the project without any training or understanding, therefore discussions need to take place to understand what type of barriers may exist because of this at the start of the project in relation to training and system understanding.
<p>Management Comments: -</p> <p>Responsible Officer: - Head of Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">There are some valuable learning points resulting from this critical review that will be incorporated into future projects and change initiatives. Discussions will take place with relevant officers and CMT to aid with the future development of projects/business improvement processes. This will be an ongoing process to ensure maximum benefit is gained from the learning points above, including:Ensuring that a single project management lead is put in place at the start of projects.Reviewing if the project lead needs specialist technical knowledge to successfully deliver outcomes.Ensuring that project plans are regularly reviewed to incorporate learning as the project progresses. Issues and their impact should be reflected in project plans.The milestones and delivery deadlines need to be clearly articulated in the project plan and this needs to be shared with the wider project team.Consideration needs to be given to any training needs of project leads prior to implementation.A second phase of this project is planned for late 2022 that will look to exploit the successful changes implemented in phase one.	

5. Independence and Ethics:

- WIASS confirms that in relation to this review there were no significant facts or matters that impacted on our independence as Internal Auditors that we are required to report.
- WIASS conforms with the Institute of Internal Auditors Public Sector Internal Audit Standards as amended and confirms that we are independent and able to express an objective opinion in relation to this review.

-
- WIASS confirm that policies and procedures have been implemented to meet the IIA Ethical Standards.
 - Prior to and at the time of the audit no non-audit or audit related services have been undertaken for the Council within this area of review.

Head of Internal Audit Shared Services

APPENDIX A

SWOT Analysis of the GIS and Gazetteer project – Phase 1

Strengths

The review highlighted a lot of success factors and strengths including: -

Project Delivery

- Met the project guidelines.
- Achieved within both budget and timescales provided.
- The project had a good momentum.
- Overall, there was good rapport throughout the project.
- No staff turnover and good resource in place.
- Initially the project board helped with resourcing issues and brought in new members of staff on temporary contracts, which of those who stayed until the end of the contract have been able to be TUPE across to another service and remain an employee at present.
- As the project was underway, it came to a point where staff started to become passionate over the project and getting the job delivered on-time and within budget.
- Because of the type of Project, barriers were dealt with quickly within the project board.
- Made the authority look at the data they hold and how it is being held.
- As the project was underway, there was overall good Morale and motivation to get the job done.
- The first joint authority to complete the project and this is one of the reasons it has been used an exemplar.
- The project was delivered during uncertain times with COVID and the team did really well to continue the project when sent home.
- Covid provided some issues, but the teams worked well using mobile phones to communicate before MS teams was implemented.

Communication

- There were thanks from Director Level and Chief Execs for the work done by those involved in the project, which was a morale boost.
- Good communication within the project board.
- Good communication within the stakeholder board.
- Officers found that there was good communication between Team leader and staff on the ground throughout the project.
- Communication was transparent, as each meeting was used as a platform to allow honest conversations and direct questions to be carried out to help staff buy in and iron out any barriers.
- Having a Diverse project board worked well.
- Staff engagement, able to get staff to work out of SILO's and enabled a positive working ethic.
- Great team work and collaboration as everyone worked together and staff felt worthy during the project.
- Planning was extremely helpful with getting information across and provided good communication to services throughout.
- There were always officers available to talk to for support and staff always made the time if required.
- Staff on the ground in planning had fortnightly meetings with the team leader to provide and get updates.

Project reporting

- There was Highlight reports presented to each relevant section of the project.
- Each meeting there would be an updated version of the report.
- There was good detail behind the project for services to support the change.

Project management

- When the GIS Officer. was hired, it was then led by IT which felt was better.
- The work ethic improved when GIS Officer was in place and when the Government announced the incentives.
- The project was well managed.
- The project was not micro-managed which made staff feel empowered.
- There was a project board with HOS and managers
- There was a stakeholder board with members from services and Team leaders.
- There was a good work ethic as once the project manager changed to systems, everything was at liaised at a central point of contact and delegation was sorted by IT.

- A very good support team and HMLR, they were very approachable, got to know them, they came over.
- First shared service to do this. Shared service was a very big thing.

Training offered

- There was Seminars delivered for free from the HMLR which gave a good insight to the project.
- Seminars allowed the project leader to truly understand the project and push staff to get behind it.

Weaknesses

The project had areas of vulnerability/barriers in the controls, which could be improved upon further including: -

Project Delivery

- There were barriers in place prior to the Government incentive announcement from some Heads of Services to buy in.
- The project had 2 project leads. Initially it was run by Land Charges and changed midway during the project from land charges to a unique and defined GIS role. Whilst it is accepted that IT delivering the project was better overall, it did cause some initial barriers and impacted morale.
- HLMR came in in 2015 to discuss the upcoming project, so although it was delivered within the timeframe, it could have been started earlier, but it took time to get an officer to take responsibility and then it came to a point where they needed a GIS officer lead.
- They did not get complete buy in from all staff/managers until the Government Incentive was announced.
- A Major barrier was the concept of working together in a departmental basis, services were not adopting a corporate approach. Operation management does not identify it or consider it as an issue but needs addressing for the project to work correctly.
- Whilst the project did come together, there were times where Departments were found to be slow at replying.
- Staff on the ground found it difficult at times to juggle between the project and their day-to-day job. (resourcing)

Communication

- Duration of the Meetings in place were felt to go on longer than required. (i.e 15 minutes turned into 1hr).
- Initially there was a barrier with the language used between services and some of the terminology.
- There were stages within the project where officers did not like change, but this did improve as people received more engagement.
- Since the project, it was found that officers have stepped back into independent working.

- Sometimes the service felt left behind as didn't know what was happening behind the scenes. Better clarity at points would have been good.
- Whilst Land Charges were the officers responsible for the land charges registry through uniform, historically there was miscommunication at times during the project which left the service morale feeling low.
- There were times where items were not decided, so this caused frustration for those at ground level who had questions.
- Communication at times was not cascaded from the project board properly to stakeholders.
- Whilst there was good engagement between officers, there were some worries that were unable to be answered during most of the project relating to job security (Land Charges) and what would happen after the project was implemented.

Project Management

- As a joint council, RBC was ahead of BDC with the paperwork as BDC was holding a lot of old documentation, which needed to put on the TLC system.
- At times there was a lack of corporate thinking, in relation to how the project was self-funding and would provide major cost benefits.
- The Project lead tried to ease nerves, but staff were at times worried about job security and the grey areas.
- There was concern that staff and the project manager had no training or knowledge of the systems.
- It took until the Government financial reward for the ball to start rolling and more staff to invest time and energy.
- No training on the systems before expectation to implement changes.
- There was no system admin for TLC, so no one knew the back-office system, so it was hard for systems and the project lead to learn the system and get to know the Macros and lots of reading was needed and became very time consuming.
- It would have been better if land charges person should have been on the project board.
- it took time for those on ground level to understand who was on the project board.

Storage of data

- It was found that the authority could improve more with its house keeping with manual files, as people still ask for old information and it was a struggle during the project to locate some items and took officers time to look through all the archives to locate it.

Team Morale

- Day-to-day there was some frustrations like with any job, some stress factors with the communication and bugs found.

Opportunities

From the Strengths, there was opportunities that came out during/after the project including: -

Project Delivery

- From the work carried out, it has provided an advantage through the level of automation introduced which can provide steppingstones for system improvements in the future.
- The project when first looked into several years ago.

Communication & Supporting others

- Because Redditch and Bromsgrove were the first shared authority to complete the project within the timeframes and got good feedback, they have been able to help other authorities including Worcester City Council and Tewksbury. As part of this they have given consultation in the best process to undertake and also advised taking part in the Seminars delivered for free by HMLR.
- The delivery of the project was seen as a good way to get officers to work in a collaborative and included multiple services including Legal, Land Charges, Planning, Tree Ops, IT, Business Transformation and more.
- Training opportunities were provided through Seminars which were free of charge and enabled empowerment through the learning delivered to the project leader and land charge team.

Collaboration and joint projects

- It has encouraged services to work and collaborate on more unified ventures together.
- It has enabled collaboration to take place between multiple Authorities.
- It has enabled services to talk about business improvements under the same umbrella, which is not often the case.

Processes and Cost Savings

- It has provided opportunities for better Transformation and making cost savings and provide a better service.
- Forced the authority to look at the way information is being held and the processes that were undertaken and also start to plant the seed for further developments in the future.

Council Reputation

- It will allow Confidence from the public to grow with the way the Authority holds the publics information.
- It shows confidence that Redditch and Bromsgrove are capable of delivering within budget and on time.

Threats

From the weaknesses gathered as part of the SWOT analysis, the following threats and areas of risk was identified, which has been filtered into the Lessons learnt found in Section 4: -

Project Delivery: -

- During discussions there was a barrier created where services were told that they cannot implement updates to the new system until the self-funding issue is resolved, meaning that the council had to have the money available.
- It was found that a lot of projects in RBC/BDC go back to a board, but there is not one individual that drives the bus and lead the project throughout, which means often projects are delivered without a true project owner.
- The project lead did not understand the system before working on the project, so this could have caused project delays.
- If the data was not accurate, would the public lose confidence.
- There was a change in project lead within the scope of the project, which may have impacted morale and the empowerment one may feel.

Culture and Ethics: -

- Although the project was a success the culture has not changed, and staff are starting to revert back to pre-project culture of independent working. This could cause barriers in the future.
- Phase 1 did not change the perception or confidence, and this is a big lesson that needs to be learnt.
- Staff feel that ideas are not being embraced and at times been shut down, as it does not sound good at CMT etc.

Communication: -

- Job Security
- Staff in the land charge team were worried about Loss of jobs.
- Was a grey area as land charges were not involved in discussions with the project team and did not know if their questions were asked or answered, had no idea how the process change would impact the service.

Data cleansing: -

- They had issues with the data behind the land charges, it was to do with the requirements of the land registry and data integrity was extremely high, they had to get 99% and above accuracy and if this was not set up correctly, it could have caused a threat of delays.

- Data was not set up in the correct format initially.
- When looked at the system during the initial period, the system had been set up in the way RBC/BDC department wanted it to work, but the data itself and the processes behind that were not automated, so it took time to identify the first stage.

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

27th October 2022

REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

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