

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee
DATE	22 February 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Internal Audit Progress
REPORT NUMBER	IA/22/001
DIRECTOR	N/A
REPORT AUTHOR	Jamie Dale
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.2 and 2.4

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises the Committee of Internal Audit's progress against the approved 2020/21 and 2021/22 Internal Audit plans.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Reviews, discusses, and comments on the issues raised within this report and appendices

3. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

Internal Audit Plan 2020/21

- 3.1 The Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 was originally approved by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee on 12 February 2020. However, due to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, and changes to the Council's risk profile as a result, the plan was revisited by Internal Audit and, through consultation with management, a revised plan was approved by the Urgent Business Committee on 6 May 2020. The revised plan included an indicative date by when it was planned to report each audit to Committee. Progress against the plan has been reported to each subsequent meeting of the Committee.
- 3.2 As has been common practice in previous years, work was carried forward from the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan and reported to subsequent meetings of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee during 2021/22. This reflects that the Internal Audit Plan is not restricted to a single financial year: The Internal Audit annual report provides an opinion on the continued application and suitability of the Council's internal control environment. The Internal Audit team refreshes and updates their understanding of this (and helps influence it by making recommendations) through a rolling

programme of work, which is currently determined once a year in advance of the new financial year commencing. A refreshed approach, including a multi-year approach, is being developed to inform scheduling for 2022/23 onwards and has been presented to this Committee separately.

- 3.3 Appendix A to this report shows progress with audits contained in the 2020/21 plan that have still to be concluded and reported to the Committee. All audits have commenced, and the majority have been completed.
- 3.4 A summary of progress with the remaining 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan is shown in the following table:

2020/21 Planned Audit Status	As at 14 January 2022					%
	by Original Target Committee Date					
	Oct-20	Dec-20	Feb-21	May-21	Total	
Complete	5	2	2	4	13	81%
Draft Report Issued	0	0	0	1	1	6%
Work in Progress	1	0	1	0	2	13%
Total	6	2	3	5	16	100

Internal Audit Plan 2021/22

- 3.5 The Internal Audit plan for 2021/22 was approved by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee on 24 February 2021. The plan detailed we anticipated being able to review in the year, assuming stability in resources available to the Section. The plan included an indicative date by when it was planned to report each audit to Committee, noting that these may be subject to change based on availability of resources within Clusters to respond to Internal Audit’s enquiries, resources within the Department, the risk profile of the organisation, and the extent to which processes are documented and complied with. These indicative dates were included in the Committee Business Planner.
- 3.6 As previously reported, Internal Audit’s resources have been constrained due to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19, increased absences within the Section, and a series of vacancies following the departure of the former Chief Internal Auditor; the position now filled permanently as of 6 January 2022.
- 3.7 Absence statistics remain high, including experienced members of the team. During 2020/21 over 200 days were lost due to absence, and 138 days absence have been recorded to date during 2021/22. This equates to over 14% of the Service’s planned resources and has impacted on

conclusion and reporting of individual pieces of work pending reinstatement or reallocation.

- 3.8 Opportunities to improve the efficiency of the team’s work are being pursued where this will not impact on the level of assurance obtained and delivered and we do not anticipate any risks at this stage to the delivery of our Annual Report and Opinion.
- 3.9 Given the challenges set out above, the 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan has not progressed to the extent originally anticipated. This has had an impact on meeting the indicative dates originally included in the Committee Business Planner to date.
- 3.10 Work is however progressing, with a summary shown in the following table:

2021/22 Planned Audit Status	As at 14 January 2022						%
	by Original Target Committee Date						
	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Feb-22	Jun-22	Total	
Complete	1	1	0	0	0	2	11%
Draft Report Issued	0	0	1	0	1	2	11%
Work in Progress	1	2	0	1	0	4	21%
Deferred	0	0	1	3	2	6	32%
To Start	0	0	2	0	3	5	26%
Total	2	3	4	4	6	19	100

- 3.11 Appendix B to this report details the current position with audits contained in the 2021/22 plan agreed with the Audit Risk and Scrutiny Committee in February 2021. Work has been delayed commencing some of these audits, pending progress with concluding work carried forward from the previous year. Audited Services have also indicated continuing issues with their capacity to support Internal Audit’s work as they seek to re-establish and where appropriate adjust operations to manage the ongoing challenges of COVID-19.
- 3.12 Further consideration has therefore been given to prioritising the remaining audit work in line with the anticipated level of risk pertaining to each area. During 2020/21 lower-risk audits were added to a Reserve List, and

thereafter removed or deferred following consultation with Officers and the Audit Committee. A similar approach to reviewing and re-prioritising the Audit Plan has been undertaken for 2021/22. The areas in which this is currently anticipated to have an impact on the 2022-23 Internal Audit Plan, have been highlighted in Appendix B and are as follows: Recruitment, Client Transport, Following the Public Pound, Private Sector Housing, Financial Administration – Waste, and Land and Property.

3.13 Whilst delivery of the entire Internal Audit Plan within 2021/22 is unlikely due to the circumstances outlined at 3.9 above, the audits included therein remain a priority, and will be progressed as resources allow. Similar to previous years, this is likely to mean a proportion of the Audit Plan will be reported to the Committee in the following financial year, and the indicative dates for reporting audits to the Committee will be subject to delays.

3.14 To support the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report, prior to the end of the financial year, assurance will be sought from relevant services in respect of audited areas where a full review cannot be concluded within the year. More detailed review of supporting evidence will be undertaken thereafter, and reported to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee as soon as practicable in the following financial year.

3.15 The Internal Audit plan for 2021/22 also included elements of consultancy and support work. A summary of progress with these activities is set out in Appendix C to this report.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

6.1 The Internal Audit process considers risks involved in the areas subject to review. Any risk implications identified through the Internal Audit process are detailed in the resultant Internal Audit reports. Recommendations are made to address the identified risks and Internal Audit follows up progress with implementing those that are agreed with management. Where planned progress is not maintained, there is a risk that sufficient work will not have been completed by the end of the financial year for Internal Audit to complete its annual opinion on the Council's control environment. This is being mitigated as set out in paragraphs 3.15-3.17 above.

7. OUTCOMES

7.1 There are no direct impacts, as a result of this report, in relation to the Council Delivery Plan, or the Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes of Prosperous Economy, People or Place.

- 7.2 However, Internal Audit plays a key role in providing assurance over, and helping to improve, the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control. These arrangements, put in place by the Council, help ensure that the Council achieves its strategic objectives in a well-managed and controlled environment.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	An assessment is not required because the reason for this report is to report Internal Audit's progress to Committee. As a result, there will be no differential impact, as a result of the proposals in this report, on people with protected characteristics.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 Appendix A – Progress with 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan
- 9.2 Appendix B – Progress with 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan
- 9.3 Appendix C – 2021/22 Internal Audit Consultancy Work

10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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APPENDIX A

PROGRESS WITH 2020/21 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Comment where applicable
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Originally Planned for October 2020 Committee

Consilium System	To provide assurance over system controls (to include access controls, system security and backups, interfaces, business continuity and contingency plans).	Audit Commenced	14.01.21	<i>The assigned auditor had sickness absences which have delayed progress.</i> Service availability to progress the audit has been limited.
		Draft report due to be issued	08.03.21	
		Draft report issued	tbc	
		Original Target Committee date	08.10.20	Work in progress.
		Revised Target Committee Date	22.02.22	Report anticipated June 2022

Originally Planned for February 2021 Committee

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Comment where applicable
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School / Pupil Security	To provide assurance that the Council has adequate arrangements regarding school security to include those in place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Control access to schools •Ensure that knives / weapons are not brought into schools •Know where pupils are during the school day • Escort vulnerable young people 	Audit Commenced Draft report due to be issued Original Target Committee date Revised Target Committee date	02.11.20 31.12.20 24.02.21 22.02.22	<i>Commenced November 2020, access and Service availability is restricted due to Covid 19.</i> <i>Due to revised COVID-19 measures applicable between December 2020 and February 2021, the Service did not have capacity to assist Internal Audit's review.</i> This was on hold pending return from school holidays. The Service then requested the audit commence following the October break. Report anticipated June 2022.
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Originally Planned for May 2021 Committee

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Comment where applicable
Capital Project Management	To provide assurance that the management and reporting of on-going capital projects is adequate and that appropriate post completion reviews are completed so that lessons learned can be recorded and acted upon.	Audit commenced Draft report issued Service response to draft report Revised draft report issued Service response to revised draft report Original Target Committee date	22.06.21 22.12.21 21.01.21 26.01.21 TBC 12.05.21 Commenced June 2021 Delayed due to Service availability and Auditor absence. Report anticipated June 2022.

APPENDIX B

PROGRESS WITH 2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Originally Planned for June 2021 Committee

IT Infrastructure Resilience	To obtain assurance over the procurement and adequacy of the Council's IT infrastructure systems.	Audit Commenced Draft report due to be issued Revised Target Committee date	02.05.21 23.07.21 02.12.21	High (Risk to various aspects of Council business)	The audit was originally suspended pending the CO – Digital & Technology commencing in post. Service availability to progress the audit has been limited. Report anticipated June 2022.
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SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Planned for September 2021 Committee

Commissioning	Review of plans and progress with implementation of the Council's Strategic Commissioning Approach set out in the Council Delivery Plan	Audit Commenced Target Committee date Revised Target Committee date	16.07.21 29.09.21 02.12.21	Medium (Risk to strategic plan delivery)	Work in progress. Delayed due to Service availability and Auditor absence. Report anticipated June 2022.
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Children with Disabilities	To obtain assurance that care is being arranged and paid for in accordance with procedure to secure best value outcomes.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date Revised Target Committee date	30.06.21 29.09.21 02.12.21	Medium (Financial and care management risks)	Work in progress. Delayed due to Auditor absence. Report anticipated June 2022.
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SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Planned for December 2021 Committee

Recruitment	To obtain assurance over adherence to the recruitment process, including pre-employment checks and document retention.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	01.07.21 02.12.21	Medium (Key systems / processes)	This audit will now take place in 2022. This aligns with the availability of resources within the audit team and within the services. It will allow for effective business capacity planning, allowing the People & Organisation and Customer Experience teams, who have already supported multiple audits over the year, to successfully undertake their ongoing improvement activity and support the current increased demand from the organisation.
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Planned for December 2021 Committee (continued)

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update	
Attendance Management	To obtain assurance over compliance with corporate policy and determine whether the Council's absence improvement plan is having a positive impact on attendance.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date Revised Target Committee date	tbc 02.12.21 30.06.22	Medium (Key systems / processes)	In March 2020 all employee relations processes were suspended due to the pandemic, some casework was recommenced in October 2020 but a return to business as usual only recommenced in April 2021. The Service has requested that audit fieldwork be deferred until January 2022 by when there should be a period of greater normalisation from which to assess. Report anticipated June 2022.

Planned for December 2021 Committee (continued)

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022		Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
Revenue Budget Monitoring	To ensure that robust procedures are in place for monitoring the revenue budget.	Audit Commenced Draft report issued Service response to draft report Revised draft report issued Service response to revised draft report Target Committee date	03.09.21 24.11.21 19.01.22 19.01.22 TBC 02.12.21	Medium (Key systems / processes)	Delayed due to Auditor and Service availability. Report anticipated June 2022.
Care Establishments	To obtain assurance over financial administration including payroll, timesheets, purchasing.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	tbc 02.12.21	Medium (Key systems / processes)	Delayed due to Auditor availability. Report anticipated June 2022.

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Planned for February 2022 Committee

Debt recovery	To ensure that procedures for recovering debts are adequate, efficient, and consistently applied.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	11.01.22 22.02.22	High (Key systems / processes)	Delayed due to Service availability in December 2021. Report anticipated June 2022.
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Client Transport	To obtain assurance over procurement, provision and management of transport for educational and social care needs	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	. tbc Tbc.2022	Medium (Financial and care management risks)	Delayed due to Auditor availability. Procurement risks are being considered under consulting work with C&PSS (see Appendix C) Report anticipated 2022
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Following the Public Pound	To obtain assurance that grant payments to external organisations during financial year 2021/22 comply with the Council's policy and procedure, including the Following the Public Pound code of practice.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	tbc 22.02.22	High (Discretionary, Key systems / processes)	Finance has requested that this be deferred to 2022/23 and as such has been included in next year's plan. Report anticipated June 2022.
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SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Planned for February 2022 Committee (continued)

Land and Property	To review systems and procedures in place for ensuring that the Council has surety over the Land and Buildings it owns, including title.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	tbc Tbc.2022	Low (Compliance risks)	Report anticipated 2022
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SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Planned for June 2022 Committee

Payroll and HR system amendments	To obtain assurance over the accuracy and completeness of the payroll as a result of changes to the workforce.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	tbc 30.06.22	Medium (Key systems / processes)	Report anticipated June 2022.
Staff resourcing	To obtain assurance over adherence to procedures for internal movement of staff, use of relief pool staff, and agency worker engagement procedures.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	tbc 30.06.22	Medium (Key systems / processes, new system)	Report anticipated June 2022.
Private Sector Housing	To ensure that adequate control is being exercised over income and expenditure.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	N/A 30.06.22	Low (Financial risks)	Audit re-scheduled for 2023/24 based on risk / audit priority level.
Financial Administration - Waste	To obtain assurance over financial administration including payroll, timesheets, and purchasing.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	tbc Tbc.2022	Low (Financial / compliance risks)	Delayed due to Auditor availability. Report anticipated 2022

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Planned for June 2022 Committee (continued)

Care Management Recording and Transactions	To obtain assurance over coordination, recording and payment for care services.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date	tbc 30.06.22	Medium (Key systems / processes, new system)	Report anticipated June 2022.
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SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022	Risk / Audit Priority Level	Proposal / Update
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Other Committees

Transformational Programme (IJB Risk Audit & Performance Committee)	To provide assurance that the IJB is continuing to make progress with delivery of its transformation agenda.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date (IJB RAPC)	tbc February 2022	High (Key programme, main IJB audit)	In line with previous agreement between Aberdeen City Council and the IJB, the report will be presented to the next available Audit Risk & Scrutiny Committee following presentation to the IJB RAPC.
Pensions System (Pensions Committee)	To consider whether appropriate control is being exercised over the system used to administer the Fund, including access, contingency planning and disaster recovery, data input, and that interfaces to and from other systems are accurate and properly controlled.	Audit Commenced Target Committee date (Pensions)	tbc February 2022	High (Key system, main Pensions audit)	Pension fund reports are not separately reported to Audit Risk & Scrutiny.

APPENDIX C

2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT CONSULTANCY WORK

SUBJECT / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE	Progress as at 10 February 2022
Compliance with Procurement Regulations	To support the Commercial and Procurement Shared Service in developing its controls and approach to improving compliance with procurement requirements.	<p>Feedback has been provided to the Commercial and Procurement Shared Service on planned changes to improving compliance. Regular reports are being provided by C&PSS to the Risk Board.</p> <p>Feedback was provided on a revised 'Non-Competitive Action' form for administering requests for quotation exemptions in line with the Council's Procurement Regulations.</p>
Cyber Security	To support the Digital and Technology Service in obtaining assurance and further developing controls over the Council's Cyber Security arrangements.	Discussions have commenced with the new CO - Digital and Technology with a view to identifying areas where Internal Audit input might add value.
Social Care System controls and readiness for deployment	To support the Digital and Technology Service in its development of controls in respect of the new social care system.	Engagement with Digital and Technology and key service officers highlighted the key controls anticipated within the new system to ensure these are being considered at appropriate stages of system development.