

Division(s):

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 13 NOVEMBER 2019
REPORT OF THE AUDIT WORKING GROUP – 23 OCTOBER 2019

Report by Director of Finance

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report.

Executive Summary

2. The Audit Working Group met on 23 October 2019 and received an update from officers on the progress of implementation of actions from the S106 audit and the audit of Security Bonds. The quarterly update on risk management was presented to the group, including the Leadership Team Risk Register. Officers also attended to provide an update on risk management arrangements within Communities.

Introduction

Attendance:

Full Meeting: Chairman Dr Geoff Jones, Councillors: Roz Smith, Charles Mathew, Nick Carter. Deborah McIlveen (part meeting)

Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor, Ian Dyson Assistant Director of Finance, Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager, Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, (minutes)

Part Meeting:

Sue Halliwell, Director for Planning and Place, Simon Furlong Interim Strategic Director - Communities, Gwen Harris, Development Monitoring Team Leader, Ben Threadgold, Policy and Performance Team Manager, Steven Jones, Corporate Performance and Risk Manager, Rikke Hansen, Head of Integration and Improvement, Seema Masih, Technical Officer.

Matters to Report:

The group received an update on Internal Audit Resourcing and were pleased to note that all three Senior Auditor vacancies had now been filled with the new staff starting during November and December.

AWG 19.30 Security Bonds Update

3. The group received a verbal update from Internal Audit on the current probity audit that is being undertaken to provide assurance that cash bonds are recorded completely and accurately, properly accounted for and that monies are correctly reduced and returned. The group were informed that the probity

testing and reconciliation has been completed however conclusions cannot yet be drawn as there are a number of queries now being reviewed. The work has highlighted inaccuracies with the Bond Register. The Director of Planning and Place also attended the meeting and presented a report on the progress of addressing the weaknesses identified in the original audit of Security Bonds (final report issued April 2018). The group noted the actions still outstanding and agreed that a further update would be made to the December 2019 AWG meeting, which will include the concluded results of the probity audit.

AWG 19.31 S106 Update

4. The group were updated by the Interim Strategic Director of Communities and the Director of Planning and Place regarding the progress of implementation of management actions in relation to S106. The original audit was undertaken in 2017/18 and a follow up review finalised in April 2019, which concluded there had been insufficient progress in addressing the weaknesses identified.
5. Officers last attended the AWG in June 2019. The group noted that since the last update, that although there is still significant work outstanding to address the identified weaknesses, that progress is now being made, particularly with a number of actions that previously had no action taken. Whilst recruitment remains a challenge, there is now a specialist project manager in post (Development Monitoring Team Leader) and also the Planning Obligations Manager is now in post. There are clear timescales in place for the procurement and implementation of the new S106 ICT system. The group agreed that the officers would be invited back to the June 2020 AWG meeting to provide a further update.

AWG 19.32 Risk Management Update, including Leadership Risk Register

6. The group were updated that the Risk and Opportunities Strategy has now been formally approved and adopted. The group reviewed the Risk Development Plan and agreed that further updates on Risk Management would include progress with implementation of the plan. The group also reviewed the Leadership Risk Register, acknowledging that CEDR had undertaken a thorough review of the draft and there was now an updated version with revised scoring.

AWG 19.33 Communities Risk Management

7. The group received an update on the risk management arrangements within Communities, which included review of the current operational registers. The group noted the work that has been undertaken to review and refresh these since Communities last attended the AWG, acknowledging there was still work to be undertaken. The group noted the processes within Communities for the regular review of performance and risk management information. It was agreed that each Directorate will continue to attend the meeting on a rotational basis.

Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance
Contact Officer: Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor
October 2019.
07393 001246 sarah.cox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Date of next AWG meeting Wednesday 18 December 2019 at 14:00