

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
27 November 2024

Report of the Audit Working Group 8 October 2024

Report by Executive Director of Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report.

Executive Summary

2. The Audit Working Group (AWG) met on 8 October 2024. The group received an update on the implementation of management actions arising from the audits of Legal Case Management and also Supported Transport, which were both undertaken during 2023/24, and had the overall conclusion graded as Red.

Introduction

3. Attendance:
Full Meeting: Chairman Dr Geoff Jones. Councillors: Nick Leverton, Roz Smith, Glynis Phillips, Jenny Hannaby, Charlie Hicks.

Officers: Full meeting: Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor, Ian Dyson, Director of Financial and Commercial Services, Mohamed Cassimjee, Committee Officer, Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager, Emma Vickers, Auditor

Officers: Part meeting: Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer, Janice White, Head of Law LBP, Adult Social Care and Litigation, Diane Surman, Legal Practice Manager, Sandra Pearce, Head of Supported Transport, Andrew Richards, Operational Manager Supported Transport.

Apologies: Cllr Ted Fenton, Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Matters to Report:

Internal Audit of Legal Case Management 2023/24

4. The Internal Audit of Legal Case Management was undertaken during 2023/24. The overall conclusion was graded Red. The audit identified that policies and procedures required updating, training was needed around legal case management and the use of the case management system, the case

management system was not being used accurately or consistently and improvements were required to the quality review process and service performance monitoring.

5. Officers updated the group, including the restructure within Legal Services that took place in 2023 and the subsequent recruitment activity to key management positions within the team. The legal services improvement plan includes applying for the external practice mark “Lexcel” and management had found the internal audit a useful assessment of the case management processes in operation and identifying the improvements required to bring them up to standard.
6. The Audit Working Group noted that good progress has been made with the implementation of the management action plan. Eleven management actions had been agreed and officers report that ten management actions have been fully implemented. The remaining action, which was not yet due for implementation at the date of the AWG, is in progress and completion is being monitored.
7. The Audit Working Group were satisfied with the response taken to the issues identified within the Internal Audit report and will be updated on the implementation of the remaining action through the routine Internal Audit follow up process. The Group also noted that Internal Audit were undertaking a “Follow Up” audit of a sample of actions from several 2023/24 audits and that this audit was included for follow up testing.

Internal Audit of Supported Transport 2023/24

8. The audit of Supported Transport was undertaken in 2023/24. The overall conclusion was graded Red. Weaknesses were identified in the contract procurement processes and controls and also with the contract management activity. Follow up of actions from previous internal audit work identified actions that had not been implemented or found not to be effectively working.
9. The Audit Working Group noted that good progress has been made to implement eight of the ten agreed management actions, with work in progress to implement the remaining two. Actions outstanding from previous internal audit work have also been reported as implemented by officers.
10. The group discussed the wider operational difficulties, reported by Supported Transport Officers, due to the different IT systems in use within the service which to date have not been able to integrate with the wider council contract procurement and contract management systems. The group noted the risks around managing multiple individual complex systems and the impact this can have on delivering greater efficiency and performance.
11. The group were satisfied with the response taken to the issues identified within the Internal Audit report. The group agreed that implementation of the remaining

actions will be continued to be monitored through the routine Internal Audit follow up process. The group noted that further internal audit activity in the area of Supported Transport will be considered during internal audit planning for 2025/26.

Financial Implications

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by: Ian Dyson, Director of Financial and Commercial Services ian.dyson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

14. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
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Lorna Baxter
Executive Director of Resources

Annex: None
Background papers: None

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October 2024.

Next AWG meeting: 11 December 2024.