



Report to Audit and Governance Committee

Date:	5 July 2023
Title:	23/24 Draft Business Assurance Strategy (incl. Internal Audit Plan)
Relevant councillor(s):	N/A
Author and/or contact officer:	Maggie Gibb, Head of Business Assurance (& Chief Auditor)
Ward(s) affected:	N/A
Recommendations:	To approve the Business Assurance Strategy and Internal Audit Plan
Reason for decision:	N/A

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the draft 2023/24 Business Assurance Strategy which includes the proposed Internal Audit Plan.
- 1.2 The Business Assurance Team delivers the Council's Risk Management, Business Continuity, Internal Audit, Assurance and Counter Fraud services.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (S5) state that the Council must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance; these are defined as the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards 2017.
- 2.2 The Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards defines "Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and

improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.”

- 2.3 The Internal Audit plan is produced with reference to the Strategic and Directorate Risk Registers and is prepared using a risk-based methodology that enables the provision of an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems of internal control (comprising of risk management, corporate governance, financial and operational controls).
- 2.4 Whilst we have a plan in place, we recognise the need to have a fluid approach to enable an effective response to emerging risks and the needs of the organisation, as such a risk-based planning model has been used to assess and identify the key audit engagements that ‘must’ be delivered this year. The remaining audits in the plan that are RAG rated ‘medium’ or ‘low’ will be carried out based on availability of resource and other urgent requests.
- 2.5 We have identified a number of contingency days to allow us to react to ad-hoc and unplanned requests for assurance or fraud work. We will present proposed changes to the plan to the Audit Board and Audit and Governance Committee for approval.
- 2.6 We present quarterly updates to each of the directorates, and the planned audit and assurance activity is reviewed for appropriateness each time. We also seek the views of the directorates on the work of the Business Assurance Team to enable continuous improvement and ensure that we are meeting the needs of the organisation as best we can.
- 2.7 The strategy was presented to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 29 June 2023, and the proposed plan was agreed.
- 2.8 The strategy has been presented to, and agreed by, the Audit Board (S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Director of Legal Services).

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 N/A.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 None.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 None.



6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 N/A

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 N/A.

8. Next steps and review

8.1 An update on delivery of the Business Assurance Strategy and a summary of the internal audit output will be presented as a standing agenda item at Audit and Governance Committee meetings.

9. Background papers

9.1 None.

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.