

18 September 2014

10. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

(a) SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Hive – Governance Arrangements

1. Although the overall structure has not changed since the last report to Council, there has been a continued reduction in meetings associated with the governance of The Hive and each governing committee has been reviewed in terms of The Hive's operational requirements. The Strategic Services Board and Project Liaison Group hold quarterly meetings now that the defects have almost been resolved. The other committees meet monthly or bi-monthly dependent on business need.
2. The Hive has improved business use and its facilities, with commercial bookings increasing steadily. The University of Worcester has improved its offer to students at the Hive through more student support and offering quiet study in the Hive's meeting rooms.
3. The defects programme has now been almost fully signed-off apart from outstanding issues remaining with the function of the Building Management System (BMS) with regard to river water cooling and ventilation. Meetings have been held with the contractors and plans are now in place to repair and reinstate the water cooling system by the end of September 2014. The BMS will not be fully signed-off until there is complete satisfaction from the relevant parties. There is no time-scale for the sign off final completion. Any risk on not completing defects or having to look at replacement or re-design of equipment rests entirely with the contractor and not the County Council.
4. The Committee has noted the current governance structure and the general progress in a number of issues reported to it at The Hive. However, the Committee wishes to draw the attention of Council and the Economy, Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to the issues associated with the delay in signing off the BMS as a result of the defects in the river water cooling and ventilation system at The Hive. The Committee has agreed that future reports on The Hive be received on an exception basis.

Sales, fees and charges

5. In May 2010 a review was commissioned to produce an "Income Diagnostic" report for the County Council. Whilst the Council receives income from a variety of sources, the report had a specific focus on income generated from sales, fees and charges. A comparison was made of the level of income generated by Worcestershire County Council against other Counties. The conclusion was that although Worcestershire was performing better than average "it was not amongst the best performing authorities".

6. Following the external report, approval was given at Cabinet in October 2010 for a review of fees and charges. A cross-Council group was established to review opportunities for further income generation. However, the conclusion was that there was minimum potential for further increases in income, mainly due to the fact that work was already taking place within directorates in this area.

7. The initial report was a lengthy document, based on data from the 2008/09 Revenue Outturn (RO) returns. The most recent available information is based on the 2012/13 RO information. The high level analysis confirms that overall, the Council's percentage income as a proportion of total service expenditure has marginally increased since 2008/09. The analysis purely from the RO returns should be viewed with some caution. There is the potential for inconsistent completion of returns and it is difficult to view income in isolation. It should be noted that the initial analysis included 34 authorities. However, this 2012/13 analysis is for 27 shire counties, which takes into account the local government reorganisation which took place in April 2009.

8. The Committee has noted the recent report, and requests that further investigation be carried out on those areas where this Council's income is significantly low in the table of comparators counties, in particular Adult Social Care where income is £7m below what would be achieved if it reached the median level of income as a percentage of total service expenditure.

Internal Audit Commissioning update

9. Internal Audit is following Worcestershire County Council's Commissioning Cycle which involves four stages: evaluate, design, source and review. This process has included a study carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

10. The Committee was reassured that the commissioning process does not exclude the option of continuing internal provision of this service.

11. The Internal Audit commissioning process is on track. The following table shows the latest Future Fit Commissioning Dashboard timetable. The pre-procurement market engagement has now been completed.

Pre-procurement market engagement	February-August 2014
Tender specification development	September-December 2014
Tenders invited	January 2015
Tenders returned	February 2015
Assessment and clarification	March-April 2015
Contract award	May-July 2015
Transition and new state	August-September 2015

12. The Internal Audit Commissioning process is being undertaken in line with the organisation's Commissioning Roadmap and the Committee has agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee be kept informed of its progress and their views sought on the Internal Audit Invitation to Tender specification. A further update report will be brought to the Audit and Governance Committee on 12 December 2014.

13. The Committee has agreed that a workshop be held to capture the thoughts and needs of Committee members around the commissioning process prior to its meeting in December 2014.

14. The Committee has approved the content of the Draft Internal Audit Progress Report 2014/15 and noted in particular that the seven High Recommendations on the use of external consultants had been implemented.

15. As part of the 2014/15 Internal Audit Plan an audit of IT Disaster Recovery (ITDR) was carried out. The objective of this review was to evaluate the effectiveness of the processes and controls surrounding ITDR Management. The overall opinion of this review was limited assurance.

16. The Committee expressed its concern about disaster recovery risks associated with the Framework i system which had been identified as a high priority in the Internal Audit Report. In particular, the Committee were concerned about the length of time this has been an issue for the Council. The Committee has requested that the Head of Systems and Customer Access write to members of the

Internal Audit Progress Report 2014/15

IT Disaster Recovery

Committee outlining whether all options to address this risk had been considered, what mitigation measures were being planned to address the risk in the short term and the costs associated with addressing this risk.

17. The Committee has also requested that an update report on IT Disaster Recovery be brought to its meeting on 12 December 2014.

Work Programme

18. The Committee has noted its work programme and requested that a report be brought to its meeting on 12 December 2014 in relation to the Council's document retention policy.

Mr W P Gretton
Chairman

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Resources) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 12 September 2014