

SUBJECT:	EXTERNAL AUDIT 2020/21 PLANNING & PROGRESS REPORT
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	JACLYN GIBSON, CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the External Audit Progress Report to Audit Committee.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report provides Audit Committee with an update on progress in delivering responsibilities of the External Auditors.

3. Background

3.1 The External Auditor provides periodic update reports to the Audit Committee. Mazars are currently appointed as the Council's External Auditor.

4. External Audit Progress Report

4.1 The External Audit progress report attached (Appendix A) covers the following areas:

- a summary of the audit planning proposals which form the basis of the formal 2020/21 Audit Strategy Memorandum (ASM). The formal ASM is subject to external engagement quality review and will be shared with the Committee when confirmed
- an update on progress in delivering the 2020/21 audit
- a summary of recent relevant national reports and publications

4.2 External Audit will be in attendance at the meeting to present the progress report.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 There are no direct implications for the Council's strategic priorities. The external audit of the Council's financial statements and VFM conclusion is a statutory requirement and as such contributes towards the fitness for purpose of the Council's governance arrangements.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

The Audit fee for 2020/21 is £36,332, set in accordance with the scale fees set by the PSAA. The fee includes work on the VFM conclusion and the audit of the financial statements. Further separate agreement will be reached with Mazars

regarding; additional fees in relation to the Council's status as an EU Public Interest Entity; additional work required on property valuations and the net pension liability valuation; and additional testing as a result of new auditing standards.

To support implementation of the Redmond review recommendations, MHCLG is providing local authorities with £15 million in additional funding in 2021/22. This is intended to support affected local bodies to meet the anticipated rise in fees for 2020/21 audits, driven by new requirements on auditors and to enable local authorities to develop standardised statements of service information and costs. MHCLG are currently consulting on the allocation of this additional £15 million. An update will be provided to the Committee once the Council's specific allocation is announced.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no direct legal implications. The External Auditor is required to satisfy themselves that the Council's accounts comply with statutory requirements and that proper practices have been observed in compiling them.

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

There are no specific equality, diversity and human rights issues arising as result of this report.

7. Risk Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. The annual Audit Strategy Memorandum will set out the key risks, as identified by the External Auditor, relevant to the audit of the financial statements.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Audit Committee is asked to note the content of the latest External Audit Progress Report.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?

No

How many appendices does the report contain?

One

List of Background Papers:

None

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