

AUDIT COMMITTEE

27 SEPTEMBER 2006

OUTCOMES OF AUDIT ACTIVITY

Report from: Internal Audit

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1 Summary

1.1 To advise members of the outcomes of Internal Audit activity completed since the last meeting of the Audit Sub Committee.

2 Decision issues

2.1 According to the Council's recent decision to establish this committee, it is within the remit of this committee to take decisions regarding accounts and audit issues.

3 Background

3.1. This report contains the outcome of Internal Audit's work since the last report to the predecessor committee.

3.2. Generally, Internal Audit reports identify areas where improvement in the control process should be made. However, there is no standard within the internal audit profession of grading the overall control environment. Furthermore, even where recommendations are prioritised, the recipient of the report has no indication of how well the overall control process is operating.

3.3. To address this, Medway Council's Internal Audit has introduced a grading system so that managers have a clear understanding of the operation of the control environment in their area. The audit opinion is set at one of four levels and is formed on completion of the audit testing and evaluation stage but **before** management implement any of the recommendations.

3.4. All audit reports containing recommendations designed to improve the control process are presented with an action plan, which has been agreed with management and specifies the action to be taken, by whom and when. This agreed management action plan is incorporated in the issued final audit report.

- 3.5. There are no “Unsatisfactory” opinions contained in this report. However, where control is assessed at the lowest level, (“Unsatisfactory”), follow up work will be undertaken within six months.
- 3.6. This report details work completed since the last report to members. The format of the annexes is as follows: -
- Annex A Definition of audit opinions
 - Annex B Schedule of completed audit work showing the audit opinion provided and Directorates covered (exempt)
 - Annex C Summary information on key financial systems audits (exempt).
 - Annex D Summary information on financial control in schools (exempt).
 - Annex E Summary information on completed risk assessed and requested audits (exempt)
- 3.7. The information contained within annexes B to E are not available for publication as they contain sensitive information as detailed in the exempt summaries report earlier in the agenda.
- 3.8. In addition to the work set out on the following annexes, Internal Audit has also responded to requests to provide advice on control issues to managers.

4 Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 There are no major concerns to report on the operation of control. Members are asked to note the outcome of Internal Audit’s work.

7 Background papers

- 7.1 None

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DEFINITIONS OF AUDIT OPINIONS

- Good** Controls are in place to ensure the achievement of service objectives, good financial management and to protect the authority against loss. Compliance with the control process is considered to be good and no significant or material errors or omissions were found.
- Satisfactory** Key controls exist to enable the achievement of service objectives and obtain good financial management. However, occasional instances of failure to comply with the control process were identified and opportunities to strengthen the control system still exist.
- Adequate** Controls are in place and to varying degrees are complied with but there are gaps in the control process, which weaken the system, and losses could occur. There is, therefore, a need to introduce additional controls and improve compliance with existing controls, to reduce the risk of loss to the authority.
- Unsatisfactory** Controls are considered to be insufficient with the absence of at least one critical control mechanism. There is also a need to improve compliance with existing controls and errors and omissions have been detected. Failure to improve controls could lead to a decline in financial integrity and lead to an increased risk of major loss or embarrassment to the authority.