

Agenda Item: 5G

AUDIT COMMITTEE 25 JUNE 2009

OUTCOMES OF AUDIT ACTIVITY

Report from: Internal Audit

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Summary

To advise Members of the outcomes of Internal Audit activity completed since the last meeting of the Audit Committee.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

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

2. Background

- 2.1 This report contains the outcome of Internal Audit's work since the last report to this committee.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

- 2.5 Where control is assessed at the lowest level, ("Unsatisfactory"), follow up work will be undertaken within six months.
- 2.6 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
 - Annex C Summary information on completed audits
- 2.7 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.
- 3. Risk Management, Financial and Legal implications
- 3.1 There are no risk management, financial or legal implications arising from this report.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to note the outcome of Internal Audit's work.

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Background papers

None.

DEFINITIONS OF AUDIT OPINIONS

Control Audits

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.

Value For Money Audits

High assurance Objectives being achieved efficiently, effectively and

economically.

Substantial Objectives are largely being achieved efficiently, effectively and

economically, but there are areas for further improvement.

Limited Objectives are not being achieved through an appropriate

balance of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Improvements

could be made in more than one of the 3E's.

Minimal Objectives are not being achieved either economically, effectively

assurance or efficiently.

assurance

assurance

Directorate →	Opinion	Authority Wide	Children and Adults	Regeneration Community and Culture	Business Support Department
Main Financial Systems (System Controls) – Assurance audits					
Bank reconciliation	G				G
Cash Control	G				G
Council Tax	S				S
Creditors	S				S
General Ledger	S				S
Housing Benefits	S				S
Housing Rents	S				S
NNDR (Business Rates)	S				S
Payroll	S				S
Sales ledger	S				S
Fraud and Corruption assessments (Assurance Audits)					
Council Tax	•				•
Creditors	•				•
Housing Benefits	•				•
Housing Rents	•				•
NNDR (Business Rates)	•				•
Payroll	•				•
Sales ledger	•				•
Other Financial Audits					
Corporate Credit & Trade Cards	Α	Α			
Commercial Property Income	Α				Α
Interreg 4 and Urbact grant claims	•	•			
Schools Assurance Work	•		•		
Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Fund	Α		А		

Directorate →	Opinion	Authority Wide	Children and Adults	Regeneration Community and Culture	Business Support Department
Corporate Governance Audits					
Annual review (compliance with 2007 published Cipfa/Solace requirements)	S	S			
Risk Management	S	S			
Prevention of Fraud and Corruption - overall arrangements	Α	А			
Operational Audits					
PSA2 pre-outturn verification	S	S			
Customer First	А				А

Key: G = Good, S = Satisfactory, A = Adequate, U = Unsatisfactory

• Work carried out but no opinion provided in that area

Audit: Bank Reconciliation Opinion: Good

All the council's income and expenditure transactions are ultimately debited or credited to one of its 3 main bank accounts. As the bank reconciliation process matches these transactions to those recorded in the council's accounting records, it is a key control over the latter's accuracy and completeness; and the validity of transactions debited to these bank accounts. Deficiencies in this key control can expose the Council to the risk of undetected error and unauthorised transactions. Responsible managers and external auditors therefore need assurance that it is operating effectively.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion on controls to manage the risks that:

- Reconciliations are not comprehensive, effective or executed with sufficient frequency.
- Unmatched transactions are not investigated or appropriate action is not promptly applied.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Appropriate controls were in place and operating effectively. Although minor errors / omissions were identified in the audit, these were not considered to pose a material risk to the system.		Two recommendations that provide opportunities for control to be strengthened further.	Management accepted the recommendations with immediate effect.

Audit: Cash Control Opinion: Good

The Council generates income from a wide range of activities and sources, all of which is recorded and incorporated into the Council's financial records via the Radius cash receipting system. In mid 2008, the Council closed all its public cashier offices and relocated its main cashiers to the Gun Wharf offices to operate as a back-office function. The latter directly receipt telephone and internet payments, postal remittances and cash payments transferred in from pay points and satellite locations.

Income is also received indirectly via the banking and Post Office Giro systems and credited directly to the Council's General bank account. Assurance that declared income received from all locations and sources is identified, accounted for and accurately reflected in the Council's financial records is provided by a framework of interlinking activities, executed by officers in the Business Support Department's Finance Support team.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion on controls to manage the risks that:

- There may be inappropriate separation of duties to ensure the accuracy and integrity of income
- Income may not be identified, accounted for and accurately reflected in the council's financial records and bank account balances.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Appropriate controls were in place and operating effectively. Although minor errors / omissions were identified in the audit, these were not considered to pose a material risk to the system.		Three recommendations that provide opportunities for control to be strengthened further	Management accepted all recommendations with implementation expected to be complete by June 2009.

Audit: Council Tax Opinion: Satisfactory

In 2008/09 the council expected to collect approximately £128.6 million from council tax. Responsibility for its collection is a devolved function, undertaken by an in-house contractor, Medway Revenues & Benefits Service (MRBS).

The objective of this audit was to was to provide an opinion for the 2008/09 financial year on the effectiveness of controls to mitigate the following risks:

- That incorrect charges are levied and notified to all liable parties;
- That not all income collected is accounted for and correctly applied;
- Adjustments and credits entered are invalid.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
The overall control framework continues to operate well and control has been improved by the significant increase in the volume of inspections over last year. Nevertheless, management still need to consider means of improving the frequency of checks on void properties. Although the volume of inspections to the date of the audit had increased from the same stage last year, inspection reports have yet to be produced for 29 of the 63 postcode areas and no areas have been subject to a second inspection.	Potential loss of revenue through re-occupied properties not being identified.	 5 recommendations, relating to: Retaining evidence of reconciliation of the annual debit to the relevant VO notification; Seeking ways to increase the verification of voids and continuing entitlement to exemptions; Pursuing inquiries into developing reports to identify new awards of relevant classes of exemptions, discounts and reliefs directly from the iworld system; Amending the reconciliation spreadsheet to highlight where entered figures do not match; Recording the total number of transactions identified for inclusion in the potential checking sample, as well as the number of transactions actually checked. 	Management accepted to implement all recommendations, or an appropriate alternative, by the end of June 2009 at the latest.

Audit: Creditor Payments Opinion: Satisfactory

All creditor payments, including those previously paid via the cash management system (ie Council Tax and NNDR refunds) are processed via the Integra Purchase Ledger system and paid by BACS or cheque. Over 105,800 creditor payments for approximately £225 million were processed via the Purchase Ledger system in 2007/08.

The objective of this audit was to was to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of controls to minimise the risks that:

- payments may be made to non bona-fide suppliers;
- payments may be made for goods or services that have not been received by the Council;
- payments may be inaccurate, or not made at the most advantageous time;
- payments may not be reflected accurately or promptly in the Council's financial records.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Supplier records should be created only on receipt of a proforma or invoice certified by an authorised signatory, but exceptions found indicated that the requirement was not rigorously applied. Checks undertaken when setting up new suppliers should prevent duplication. However, interrogation of the supplier master file identified 262 suppliers with two or more entries showing identical address, postcode and bank account details. Further analysis identified that a number of these are due to different care homes or subsidiaries owned by a common holding company (resulting from the 'depot' facility not being used when Integra was initially set up), but at least 99	Fictitious suppliers could be set up, leading to inappropriate payments being made. The risk of duplicated payments is increased by the existence of multiple records for the same supplier.	 14 recommendations, relating mainly to: improving the integrity of the supplier database; checking validity of 'sundry supplier' payments exceeding a certain value; invoices received outside Exchequer being checked and submitted promptly; reducing the likelihood of duplicated payments. 	Management agreed to implement all recommendations, or an appropriate alternative, by the end of June 2009.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
genuine 'actual duplicates' were			
identified, suggesting that the			
control relied upon to prevent this			
is insufficient or ineffective.			
Comparison of bank account			
details held in the supplier			
database against those held on			
the payroll system identified 80			
employees set up as suppliers. In			
some cases the creditor payment	Payments may be duplicated, ie		
pre-dated the start of employment	paid through both creditors and		
and in others the employee is	payroll.		
evidently the spouse/ partner of			
the payee. However, a number of			
payments for what could be			
classified as 'additional duties' (eg	PAYE and NI liability may not be		
'tutoring fees' and 'coaching fees'	accounted for accurately.		
to teachers) through the creditors			
system were identified.			
Integra prevents duplicated			
payments by highlighting an			
invoice number that has already			
been processed when entered on			
the system. However, as supplier			
invoices are often not numbered			
or repeated characters are added			
in order to process the payment.			
Interrogation of payments	Duplicated payments made		
identified six duplicated payments	(though this not considered		
(total value £3418) that had not	significant given the volume and		
been identified previously and	value of payments processed		
corrected.	during the period)		

Audit: General Ledger Opinion: Satisfactory

Operationally, the council's financial transactions are recorded and processed by a range of systems; but details are posted either individually, or in total, to the Integra General Ledger. The latter sources the data required by the council to prepare its financial statements and many grant claims, to set and monitor budgets and to formulate future financial strategy. As a key element in these activities, the data held must be accurate, complete, valid and up-to date.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion on controls to manage the risks that:

- Data held is inaccurate, not comprehensive, invalid or up-to date.
- Possible failings in data quality are not promptly identified and investigated.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Appropriate controls were generally in place and operating effectively. However, the audit identified weaknesses in the journal transfer authorisation process and some reconciliations.	Errors in the GL system.	Five recommendations were made to reduced the risk of errors occurring or remaining in the GL system.	All recommendations were agreed by management and will be implemented by July 2009.

Audit: Housing Benefits Opinion: Satisfactory

In 2008/09 the Council expected to pay approximately £88.9m in housing and council tax benefits, which Central Government was anticipated to refund fully by way of subsidy. Responsibility for the assessment and payment of benefit entitlements is a devolved function, undertaken by an in-house contractor, Medway Revenues & Benefits Service (MRBS).

The objective of this audit was to was to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of controls to minimise the risks that:

- Computerised data and programs are not protected from unauthorised input and amendment;
- Entitlements to benefit are not valid and their assessment is not accurate, prompt and comprehensive;
- · Payments are not valid and do not reflect system input;
- Overpayments are not properly identified and classified and recovery is not pursued;
- Adjustments to entitlements and overpayments are not valid and accurate.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
In general, management monitoring arrangements are operating effectively to ensure that claims received are processed in a timely manner, appropriate verification measures are carried out and assessments are accurate. However, although management advised that claims in receipt of interim awards for more than 28 days are identified by checking a regular report, only nine 'interim awards' reports had been produced between 1.4.08 and 31.1.09, three of which were not produced within a month of the previous report, the longest period being over 7 weeks. Before setting up new landlords on the IWorld system, in order for them to receive payments on behalf of their tenants, a number	Overpayments could arise through extended payment of interim claims.	 7 recommendations, relating mainly to: Considering whether the sample sizes specified for checking in the Benefits Control Framework, devised in 2001, continue to reflect current requirements; Checking claims subject to interim awards for longer than 28 days more frequently, at least monthly; Recording details of all checks made to validate new landlords on the documents retained; Improving the overpayment recovery and write-off process. 	Management agreed to implement all recommendations, or an appropriate alternative, by the end of September 2009 at the latest.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
of specified checks should be			
made to validate the landlords'			
details. However, the majority of a	If insufficient proof of residence is		
sample of 20 documents selected	obtained payment may be made		
showed evidence of only a check	to individuals or organisations that		
against the CT system, four	are not genuine landlords.		
indicating not liable at either			
claimant or declared residential			
address. Management advised			
that additional checks of electoral			
roll, or subsequent checks of CT			
records, had been made but were			
not recorded on the 'setup'			
documents.			
To minimise the risk of duplicated			
payments, urgent manual cheque			
payments should be recorded			
promptly on the IWorld system.	Any manual payment not input to		
However, reconciliation between	IWorld may not be identified in		
monthly reports from IWorld and	sufficient time to prevent duplicate		
the manual payment spreadsheet	payment.		
is not always completed promptly,			
with delays of up to 3 months			
noted.			
Although controls to identify			
overpayments were found to be	Whilet it is calmouled and that a		
operating effectively, recovery	Whilst it is acknowledged that a		
procedures were considered to	significant proportion of these will		
require improvement, there being	be subject to instalment		
1,200 invoices at 'final demand'	arrangements or further enquiries		
stage (ie 31 days past invoice	such as trace action, records for 7		
date) with a total value exceeding	of a sample of 16 'aged' invoices		
£780,000 – just over 300 of these	contained no evidence of ongoing		
(totalling £152,138) created prior	recovery activity.		

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
to 1.4.08 had not been modified			
since that date.			
Overpayments written-off as	Irrecoverable overpayments		
irrecoverable not always	written off without sufficient		
authorised as required per the	authorisation.		
Overpayment Recovery Policy.			

Opinion:

Satisfactory

Audit: Housing Rents

This is an annual audit, undertaken on behalf of the council's external auditors, to provide an opinion on arrangements controlling the administration, levying and collection of housing rents.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion on controls to manage the risks that:

- Weekly charges and system parameters on Academy may not be correct
- Debt may not be updated correctly and notified to the tenants
- Income may not be promptly and accurately accounted for
- Arrears may not be identified and pursued.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Appropriate controls were generally in place and operating effectively to ensure tenants have been charged correctly and income has been accounted for. However: • There has not been a comprehensive review of user access permissions for a number of years. • There is scope for a number of improvements to the checking and reconciliation processes.	Unauthorised/ inappropriate access to the Academy system.	 10 recommendations, relating principally to: Review of user access requirements to the Academy system. Improvements in checking and reconciliation processes. 	Management accepted all recommendations and agreed implementation by May 2009.

Audit: NNDR Opinion: Satisfactory

In 2008/09, the council expected to collect approximately £78.9 million from NNDR business rates. Responsibility for its collection is a devolved function, undertaken by an in-house contractor, Medway Revenues & Benefits Service (MRBS).

The objective of this audit was to was to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of controls operating in 2008/09 to mitigate the following risks:

- That incorrect charges are levied and notified to all liable parties;
- That not all income collected is accounted for and correctly applied;
- Adjustments and credits entered are invalid.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
The overall control framework continues to operate well and control has been improved by the significant increase in the volume of inspections over last year. Nevertheless, management still need to consider means of improving the frequency of checks on void properties. Although the volume of inspections to the date of the audit had increased from the same stage last year, inspection reports have yet to be produced for 29 of the 63 postcode areas and no areas have been subject to a second inspection.	Potential loss of revenue through re-occupied properties not being identified.	 Retaining evidence of reconciliation of the annual debit to the VO notification; Seeking ways to increase the verification of voids and continuing entitlement to exemptions; Initiating a comprehensive review of all existing awards of charitable relief, Pursuing inquiries into developing reports to identify new awards of relevant classes of exemptions, discounts and reliefs directly from the iworld system; Amending the reconciliation spreadsheet to highlight where entered figures do not match; Recording the total number of transactions identified for inclusion in the potential checking sample, as well as the number of transactions actually checked. 	Management accepted to implement all recommendations, or an appropriate alternative, by the end of September 2009.

Audit: Payroll Opinion: Satisfactory

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion for the current financial year on the effectiveness of controls to minimise the risks that:

- payments may be made to individuals who are not legitimate employees of the Council, or for work that has not actually been performed;
- amounts paid may not be accurate or not on time;
- deductions (statutory and voluntary) may be inaccurate and not paid over correctly to the appropriate agencies;
- payments and deductions may not be reflected accurately and promptly in the Council's main financial records;
- access to confidential payroll data (computerised and documentary) may not be restricted to only appropriate persons.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
The system was found to contain a number of good controls and these were operating satisfactorily. However weaknesses found include:			
Some input forms (starters and leavers) had been processed and payments made (in some cases e.g. timesheets) without authorisation.	Fraudulent claims may be processed, though the risk is minimised by other compensating controls.	The Payroll Operations Manager (POM) to remind all payroll officers not to process any claim that is not signed by the claimant and authorised by an appropriate manager.	Agreed. To be implemented immediately.
No confirmation is provided to the POM that backup data is routinely restored and tested.	The payroll system may not operate satisfactorily in an emergency, resulting in difficulties with employee payments.	The POM should ensure that the back up data is restored and tested periodically and at least annually	ICT to provide evidence of successful data restores. These are currently undertaken at least annually, and prior to the load of legislation software releases.
Sample checked had no evidence of employee approval for voluntary deductions.	Third party deductions are being made without the employees' formal authorisation.	The POM should obtain a list of officers for whom voluntary deductions are being made and obtain confirmation from the appropriate organisation (e.g. Unison) that those on the list are	A notice will be posted on connections and the schools forum, to remind all staff of the importance of checking their payslips.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
		current members of that organisation.	
Payroll documents for last 3 months are kept in unsecured cupboards and cabinets.	Unauthorised access to confidential documents and breach of Data Protection Act 1998.	The POM should ensure that arrangements are made to keep all payroll related records in more secure facilities.	Agreed. To be implemented in April 2009.

Audit: Sales Ledger Opinion: Satisfactory

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion for the current financial year on the effectiveness of controls to minimise the risks that:

- all identified debts may not be promptly recorded and notified to liable parties.
- income may not be promptly and accurately accounted for.
- debt records may not be accurate, complete and valid.
- outstanding debts may not be identified and pursued.
- debts raised and collected may not be accurately reflected in the council's accounting records.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Most of the controls expected are in place and operating satisfactorily. However weaknesses found include:			
The system does not highlight duplicate debtor records.	Risk of invoice being made to 'incorrect' debtor or wrong address.	Periodically produced reports of duplicated records should be used to erase erroneous records.	Agreed. To review first report in June 2009.
The Exchequer and Insurance Services Manager had not obtained appropriate authorisation to 'write back' transactions, some of which were valued between £3.6k and £29k.	Breach of the Council's financial rules and could potentially stop the payment of a due debt to the Council.	A list of transactions to be 'written back' should be authorised by the CFO.	Agreed and implemented with immediate effect.

Opinion:

Adequate

Audit: Corporate credit and trade cards

Corporate credit cards enable officers to discharge official expenses without using personal funds or credit allowances on their personal card. Businesses provide trade card facilities to customers to enable the procurement of goods without either having to provide an authorised order form or paying at the point of sale.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion on controls to manage the risks that:

- Unauthorised individuals may use corporate credit and trade cards.
- Corporate credit and trade cards may be used for unauthorised and/or inappropriate purposes.
- Corporate credit and trade cards may be used to procure goods and services that the council does not receive/benefit from.
- Responsibility for use of such cards may not be identifiable.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Named officers hold 7 NatWest		The Chief Finance Officer should	All recommendations were agreed
and 3 American Express cards on		determine whether existing cards	in full by management.
behalf of the Authority. All were		providing credit should be	
used appropriately.		retrospectively authorised or	
)		terminated.	
We identified 33 fuel cards that	Expenditure outside the	0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 -	
were not authorised by the Chief	Authority's Scheme of Delegation.	8 other recommendations:	
Finance Officer. We identified a	Durchages may be made that are	Fire to income a control of fire	
number of issues surrounding their use:	Purchases may be made that are not for the benefit of the Authority.	Five to improve control of fuel card use.	
 No central record of fuel cards. 	Thot for the benefit of the Authority.		
 No written agreement with fuel 		Three to improve the security of all credit cards.	
card suppliers.		of all credit cards.	
No formal guidelines covering			
the custody, security or use of			
fuel card(s).			
There is not a designated			
holder for fuel cards.			
Failures in checking			
procedures.			

Opinion:

Adequate

Audit: Commercial Property - Rental income

Medway Council has a significant property portfolio, comprising land and buildings used for operational and non-operational purposes. The latter include residential properties (other than those used for social housing), shops, offices and business units, many of which were originally developed to foster local fledgling businesses. The Council derives rental income from approximately 480 such properties with a current rental value of £2.4 million per annum, which it seeks to maximise by optimising occupation and ensuring the rents charged are competitive, regularly reviewed and collected.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion on controls to manage the risks of:

- Failure to comprehensively identify and charge for all properties designated for commercial letting;
- Failure to maximise occupation and/or income.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
The Council's entire portfolio of properties is recorded on a database, these being categorised as operational (used for provision of direct services) or non-operational (held for investment or schemes to support council objectives, indirect services and surplus properties). Properties designated for letting include those let on both a commercial and non-commercial basis and, as the database does not distinguish between them, descriptors are used to identify properties available to let. Reports of amendments made to these descriptors are reviewed periodically, but by the officer responsible for creating and amending the property data in the first instance.	Any erroneous or improper changes to property descriptors may not be identified, with consequent potential loss of rental income.	 4 recommendations, relating to: independent verification of changes to property type and status and enhancing the information available on database records; maintaining a central record of inspections of vacant Councilowned properties for insurance purposes, with periodic independent physical review of vacant properties; completing the 'unoccupied buildings' checklist whenever properties become vacant; consistently updating debtor diary records on Integra sales ledger with details of collection arrangements and discussions with tenants. 	Management accepted to implement all recommendations, or an appropriate alternative, by the end of June 2009.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Occupation and tenancy details			
are not reconciled and/or			
independently verified to the			
database. Similarly, lease			
agreements are not reconciled to			
rent collection records on Integra			
and the officer updating the	Property and/or rent collection		
property database with tenancy	records may be inaccurate, with		
arrangements also issues	consequent potential loss of rental		
requests to Exchequer for setting	income.		
up new debtors and revised billing			
details for existing tenants. There			
is no subsequent check to Integra	Any unactioned requests may not		
to confirm that these requests	be identified during budget		
have been actioned accurately.	monitoring.		
Individual surveyors have overall			
responsibility for valuation, letting			
and inspection of individual			
properties, undertake final	Properties may be re-occupied		
inspections when these are	without a lease agreement or		
vacated and carry out ongoing	rental charge being raised.		
inspections while the property is			
vacant, there being no			
independent verification of			
vacancies.			
The Council's insurers require void properties to be inspected			
weekly and, in the event of a claim			
being lodged, proof of	In the absence of a central record,		
inspections/s to be provided.	void properties may not be		
Inspection visits are recorded	inspected, or the inspection		
informally in diaries, but the	frequency may not meet insurance		
'unoccupied buildings checklist',	requirements.		
issued by the Insurance Claims	roquiromonio.		
issued by the insurance Claims			

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Officer for completion prior to			
tenants vacating properties, is not			
used.			
Exchequer staff are responsible			
for collecting rent and recovering			
debts, but staff in Asset &			
Property Management also	Possible duplication of recovery		
progress outstanding rents with	action and impact on tenants.		
tenants. However, diary records			
on Integra sales ledger are not			
consistently updated to reflect			
discussions/ arrangements with			
tenants.			

Audit: Grant claims Opinion: n/a

URBACT is a European Programme, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which aims to improve the effectiveness of sustainable integrated urban development policies with priority given to competitiveness, growth and jobs.

Interreg 4 is funded by the European Regional Development Fund for the period 2007-2013, under the European Territorial Co-operation objective. It has three priorities which are:

- Supporting an economically competitive, attractive and accessible area
- Promoting and enhancing a safe and healthy environment
- Improving quality of life

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
	No significant issues arose.	None	N/a.

Audit: Financial control self-assessment in primary schools (tranche 2) Opinion: n/a

Under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, management of Individual Schools Budgets is delegated to schools' governing bodies, but Medway Council's Chief Finance Officer (CFO) retains a statutory duty to ensure the adequacy of financial control over this delegated funding.

In line with the national requirement for schools to achieve the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS), Medway's non-secondary schools have been split into three tranches, based on the size of delegated budgets, the second of these consisting of 36 primary, junior and infant schools which were scheduled to meet FMSiS by 31st March 2009.

The CFO is required to sign a declaration on the annual Section 52 outturn statement to the effect that all applicable schools either meet the requirements of FMSiS or are making satisfactory progress towards meeting the standard. It was anticipated that the assurance required would be received through schools either gaining FMSiS accreditation through one of the external assessors approved by the DCSF or opting for the 'light touch' assessment approach provided by LA Finance staff.

To support their achievement of FMSiS the tranche 2 schools were required to complete modules 1-8 of the FCSA questionnaire – which is designed to provide supporting evidence for section 5.7 of the FMSiS assessment - on a phased basis and requested to submit these to Internal Audit between May 2008 and February 2009. However, at 5 June 2009 two of the schools had not yet submitted any FCSA and two more had submitted only partially completed questionnaires.

We have been advised of only five of the tranche 2 schools engaging a DCSF-accredited external assessor, the majority opting for the 'light touch' approach. The latter requires schools to submit their FMSiS applications and supporting evidence to Finance, with Internal Audit reviewing the related FCSA questionnaire and providing feedback to contribute towards the overall assessment.

However, as at 5 June 2009 Finance had received FMSiS applications and supporting documentation from only 21 schools – we have reviewed the FCSA questionnaires from these schools and provided feedback to Finance staff to contribute towards their overall assessment. No significant control weaknesses were identified, but schools have not been visited to verify the accuracy of their FCSA responses. As only five schools have opted for external assessment, there is concern that 10 (28%) of the schools in this group do not appear to have completed all the necessary steps to provide evidence that they meet FMSiS – which is likely to impact on the CFO's ability to sign the declaration on the S52 outturn statement for 2008/09 in August.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

Opinion:

Adequate

Audit: Youth Opportunity & Youth Capital Funds

"The Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund provide funding to local authorities to improve opportunities for young people to become involved in "positive activities". The 2008/09 sums available to Medway Council, by way of grant funding from the Government Office for the South East, are £150,300 and £129,000 respectively.

The audit examined eligibility rules; bids on the funds; responsibilities; administrative processes; decision making; records; financial processes and budget monitoring.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Nearly all risks were satisfactorily mitigated by system controls which were confirmed to be working well in practice. There were however two significant exceptions: Records of panel decisions on approval or rejection of bids were sparse and in many cases missing, reliance being placed on verbal communications and memory. There were no procedures for ensuring that grants were spent by the recipients in accordance with agreements. This was to be expected at this stage, as the first projects only began in July 2008.	 Lack of evidence to resolve possible later dispute about what was agreed. Lack of evidence to validate financial transactions. Possible undetected misuse of grant monies. 	 Assignment of responsibility for making a "record of decisions" at each voting session. Design of a standard format for the record. The youth panellists party to the decisions to read and sign off the record. In the case of deferred decisions, a written record to be kept of subsequent action. Project monitoring procedures to be put in place. Policy to be decided and communicated on what to do in the event of spending agreements being breached. 	All recommendations were fully accepted and detailed arrangements were made for their implementation. Several had been implemented by the time the audit report was finalised.

Audit: Corporate governance Opinion: Satisfactory

Corporate governance is a key issue for all local authorities, and impacts on their Comprehensive Area Assessment. In view of this, Internal Audit carries out an annual review of the extent to which the Council's Constitution, political and management structure and decision-making processes comply with the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' framework.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion for 2008/09 on Medway Council's compliance with the 'best practice requirements' of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
In general, Medway's Constitution,		7 recommendations, relating to:	Management agreed to implement
political and management		 a minor amendment required to 	all recommendations, or an
structure and decision-making		the local code of governance;	appropriate alternative.
processes continue to address the		 obtaining assurance from 	
requirements of the		management in the 'service	
CIPFA/SOLACE framework and		delivery' directorates and each	
demonstrate the Council's		AD in Business Support	
commitment to openness and		Department as part of the AGS	
transparency.		process;	
Medway's local code of		 all partners signing up to the 	
governance, updated in 2008,		LSP governance arrangements;	
includes requirements for	Partners may not be aware of their	 formalising a method of 	
partnership arrangements and a	responsibilities.	obtaining service users' views	
governance code relating		on the quality of services	
specifically to the Local Strategic		received and making	
Partnership has been produced;		appropriate arrangements to	
however, all partners have not		measure trends on a consistent	
signed this.		basis;	
Although 'putting the customer at		 introducing a central monitoring 	
the centre of everything we do' is		process to confirm that all new	
one of the council's priorities, the	Customer satisfaction may not be	members of staff have worked	
corporate planning documents do	measured consistently.	through and completed the	
not specify how the quality of		relevant induction pack;	
service for users is to be		 Considering the introduction of 	
measured.		a performance management	

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
There is no evidence of O&S		system for members to	
committees 'calling in' a single	The overview and scrutiny	demonstrate compliance with	
Cabinet decision during 2008/09 -	function may be perceived to not	the suggested best practice.	
however, Cabinet reports are	effectively challenge the		
subject to pre-decision scrutiny	Administration on key decisions.		
and scrutiny observations are			
included in those reports.			
The Council has received external			
recognition for its member	The Council is unable to		
induction and development	demonstrate that members' skills		
programme, but Learning &	are being developed on a		
Development were unable to	continuing basis to improve		
provide any evidence of member	performance.		
development activity during			
2008/09, apart from the induction			
of a newly-elected member.			
Managers are encouraged to	The Council is unable to		
ensure that new staff members	demonstrate that officers are		
work through the appropriate	provided with induction		
induction pack, but there is no	programmes tailored to individual		
central monitoring to confirm that	needs.		
this happens.			
Medway has no formal			
performance management system			
for members, but all members are			
offered 1:1 performance reviews,	The Council is unable to		
framed around the IDeA's political	demonstrate that it meets the		
skills framework - we were	CIPFA/SOLACE best practice		
advised that about 30% of	requirement "effective		
members have participated so far.	arrangements are in place for		
Each portfolio holder is also 'held	reviewing the performance of the		
to account' annually by the	executive as a whole and of		
relevant O&S committee.	individual members".		

Audit: Risk management Opinion: Satisfactory

Risk management forms an intrinsic component of corporate governance, and thus impacts on local authorities' Comprehensive Area Assessment. In view of this, Internal Audit carries out an annual review of the Council's progress in adopting and embedding a consistent method for the identification, evaluation and recording of risk.

The objective of this audit was to was to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of measures to address the risks that:

- there may be a lack of policy/guidance to ensure a consistent risk management methodology is adopted and embedded across the Council;
- risks to achieving the objectives of the Community Plan, Council Plan and the Local Area Agreement may not be identified;
- · risks identified may not be recorded and evaluated in a consistent manner;
- mitigating controls may not be identified, or their ongoing effectiveness may not be monitored by responsible managers;
- actions to address residual risks may not be clear;
- risk registers may not be reviewed/refreshed periodically to ensure that existing risks continue to be relevant and new risks are identified.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Overall, we consider that significant progress continued to be made during 2008/09 in demonstrating that the Council's key business risks are being managed effectively. However, the situation regarding identification and management of operational/service level risks and risks associated with partnership working, on which the revised Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE) place considerably more emphasis than previously, continues to require further development. Management anticipate that these issues will be addressed through revised templates for service planning and AD quarterly reports, the appointment of two new performance managers and the	The Council is still unable to demonstrate that a risk management culture had been fully embedded into its planning and operating processes.	 13 recommendations, relating to: increased oversight of operational/service level risks by DMTs and relevant O&S committees; improved training for new members of staff with, and existing staff taking on, risk management responsibilities; identifying and managing risks relating to partnership working and obtaining assurance on the management of those risks; obtaining assurance from management in the 'service delivery' directorates and each AD in Business Support Department as part of the AGS process; updating directorate risk registers to ensure that all 	Management agreed to implement all recommendations, or an appropriate alternative.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
phased implementation of the new Covalent performance management system. Although periodic reports relating to risk management were submitted to Cabinet and Business Support O&S Committee, no reports were made to the other overview & scrutiny committees during the financial year. We were advised that providing relevant extracts of directorate risk registers had been considered, but it was decided that these were not sufficiently current (reflecting the position at March 2008) or of sufficient quality to be of use. The induction packs for new managers and supervisors now expect "an understanding of your role in relation to management, financial reporting and risk management" and include a link to the managers' toolkit (which includes a section on risk management), but this does not constitute training; there is also no monitoring to ensure that all new starters work through the pack.	Overview & scrutiny committees are not fulfilling their responsibility (defined in the Council's constitution) "to scrutinise and review the operation of risk management". Managers may have insufficient awareness to enable them to effectively identify, evaluate and manage risks to their service.	services are covered and each risk is rated for likelihood and potential impact; clarifying responsibility for the maintenance of existing controls and implementation of additional actions required.	

Audit: Prevention of fraud and corruption Opinion: Adequate

In agreement with the external auditors, Internal Audit carries out annual audits of the Authority's overall arrangements for the prevention of fraud and corruption, based on the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE) for arrangements designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of authorities' business.

The objective of the audit was to provide an opinion on management arrangements to minimise the risks that:

- the Council may not be able to demonstrate a strong ethical framework and culture; and
- the Council's fraud and corruption arrangements may not be effective.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
The Council has adopted the model code of conduct for members and officers and has a number of policies in place to provide a good framework for preventing & minimising risks of fraud and corruption occurring. There are also arrangements in place for monitoring compliance with the established arrangements. However, the following were also highlighted:			Management agreed to implement all recommendations, or an appropriate alternative.
There is no link on the Council's website or intranet to report suspected breaches of the standards of conduct. There is no central monitoring of use of IT resources. No training in ethics was available to either members or officers during the year.	Suspected breaches of the codes of conduct may not be reported, or not reported promptly. ICT resources could be abused without detection. Officers and members may not be fully aware of the Council's expectations for ethical behaviour	Links should be placed on the website and intranet for reporting any allegations of a breach of the standards of conduct. ICT should consider purchasing and installing software that would highlight specified uses of ICT resources for investigation. The Head of Workforce Development and Service Improvement should ensure that	

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
	or what to do in the event that they	training in ethics is provided for	
	suspect a breach of the codes of conduct.	both officers and members.	
The Council's counter fraud and corruption arrangements do not encompass all issues recommended as best practice.	Potential failure to detect certain types of fraud	Revise the anti-fraud and corruption policy to encompass all issues recommended as best practice.	
No formal arrangements to ensure that the Council's partners are made aware of how to raise concerns.	Partners may be unaware of their ability to raise concerns about the conduct of any Council member or employee	Ensure that the Council's partners are provided with information about how to raise concerns.	

Satisfactory

Completed Audit Activity

Audit: Public Service Agreement 2 - pre-outturn validation **Opinion:**

Medway Council entered into a second three-year Public Service Agreement (PSA) in 2006, which specified 12 'stretch' targets for improving services and attracted an initial 'pump priming' grant (PPG) of just over £1 million. A further performance reward grant (PRG) of over £6 million is available if all 12 targets are achieved by the end of the PSA period. Consequently, the Council needs to ensure that performance against these targets is monitored regularly so that any potential shortfall is identified in sufficient time for corrective action to be taken.

To support the claim for payment of PRG after the conclusion of the PSA in March 2009, the Council's Internal Audit unit is required to provide a certificate "regarding the robustness of the reported performance information on the claim"; the claim letter is also required to include a "certification that PPG has been used to support eligible expenditure".

The objective of this audit was to provide an interim opinion, in advance of the conclusion of PSA2, on the effectiveness of data processing, monitoring and reporting arrangements to ensure that:

- accurate and sufficient records are maintained to generate and support performance against each of the targets;
- calculation of interim performance against these targets is accurate and substantiated by robust supporting records;
- appropriate assurance is obtained from partners or other external bodies on the reliability of performance information provided to the Council;
- sufficient records exist to provide evidence that the pump-priming grant was spent on qualifying activities.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Cabinet approved the PSA2 targets in June 2006, the report showing the performance expected without the additional funding and the projected performance enhancement with it. Each target was allocated originally to a responsible officer, but accountability for two targets was not totally clear - one now fell within two directorates following the organisational restructure and the 'owner' of the other was not responsible for delivery of three of the four services involved or for the method of data collection.	Unclear 'ownership' could result in insufficient management action to achieve the performance targets.	13 recommendations were made, relating mainly to actions desirable for future initiatives of this type to minimise the likelihood of any queries arising in respect of the Council's entitlement to funding. However, some addressed concerns over several responsible managers' inability to produce accurate supporting evidence for the latest performance figures reported for their targets.	Appropriate actions have already been taken, or will be implemented by the end of September 2009, to address the issues raised in respect of the current LAA targets, which postdate PSA. PSA2 outturn figures will require formal sign off by responsible managers or partners, including an assurance on data quality, and backing papers will be provided.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Evidence to support the baseline	Inability to substantiate the		
figures shown in the PSA	baseline figures used could create		
document had been retained for	problems in verifying that the		
only six targets, and in many of	improvements in performance		
these cases the records available	reported are accurate.		
did not support the figures shown.			
Although no 'milestones' for			
measuring performance			
throughout the duration of the			
programme were specified in the			
PSA2 document, it was stated that			
progress would be reported			
quarterly to DMTs. However, we			
found little evidence of progress			
against many targets being			
reported to DMTs, unless they are			
also Critical Success Factors.			
Similarly, progress reports to CMT	Potential failure to achieve		
had been rather spasmodic, in	performance targets may not be		
November 2006, October 2007	recognised in sufficient time for		
and January 2008. The only	remedial action to be initiated.		
progress report to members			
identified was to Cabinet Briefing			
in January 2008, but there is no			
evidence of this proceeding to a			
full Cabinet meeting.			
Progress reports indicated 'latest			
target available' and 'actual			
performance' for each target,			
together with an indication of			
whether achievement of the target	In some cases senior		
is forecast. However, review of	management and members had		
the January 2008 report to CMT +	been presented with unclear		
Cabinet Briefing indicated that the	information regarding progress		

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
latest targets and actual	and the likelihood of targets being		
performance reported did not	achieved.		
always relate to the same point in			
the project, or were inaccurate.			
Partners have been stated to be			
involved in the delivery of five	Partners may fail to provide the		
targets, but other organisations	data required, or provide		
were instrumental in achieving a	insufficient, inaccurate or untimely		
number of other targets and/or	data, impacting on the Council's		
relied on to provide data to	ability to monitor progress.		
measure performance. There			
were no formal agreements with			
most partners.			
Cabinet approved the allocation of			
£901K of the pump-priming			
funding to the 12 targets, with			
£100K being retained as a			
contingency. An indication of how			
the funding allocated to each			
target would be spent was			
provided, but in some cases this			
was not particularly specific – for			
example contributing to "staff costs" and "running costs".			
However, there was evidence for			
most targets that pump-priming			
funds had been used to contribute			
towards achievement of the			
'stretch' target.			
The pump-priming funding was	It is not possible to provide		
recorded in the Council's financial	indisputable evidence that all the		
records as an income receipt in	PPG has been spent on furthering		
August 2006. Funding for some	achievement of PSA2 targets.		
projects was initially allocated to	There is further scope for		

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
dedicated account codes, but	confusion where this has been		
much of this was subsequently	mixed with other sources of		
transferred, and the funding for	income, eg EU and LAA funding.		
the remaining targets allocated			
directly, to operational budget			
codes and thus subsumed into the			
general expenditure of the			
function.			
A small balance of the	Failure to spend this residual		
contingency funding had not yet	balance could result in it being		
been transferred to operational	'clawed back' by central		
budgets and it was unclear how	government (this was		
this was to be allocated.	subsequently addressed).		

Audit: Customer First Performance Measures Opinion: Adequate

Customer First's contact centre evolved from the Frontline Taskforce Division's contact centre in 2005 and has seen an expansion in services to cover the range of council services. Customer First now provides the first point of contact for the Authority's customers and it should be a one-stop shop for customer service, providing people with quick and convenient access to council services. There are a number of performance indicators measuring different aspects of the Council's relationship with its customers that are "Critical Success Factors" and are reported to Members and the wider public. This reporting is only meaningful in providing the public with an assessment of performance if the measures match public perceptions i.e. "one and done" is an unambiguous reflection of when a service has been delivered.

The objective of this audit was to provide an opinion on controls to manage the risks that:

- Performance measures may not be properly defined;
- There may not be a sound methodology for calculating the indicators;
- Data quality may be poor;
- Performance may be reported inaccurately.

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
Customer First have a set of performance indicators used for internal performance monitoring. Some of these have become Critical Success Factors and are reported to Research and Review. However, Customer First's interpretation of these indicators does not match Research and Review's understanding.	Reported performance indicators may be misunderstood.	 7 recommendations were made primarily to ensure: Clear, commonly understood definitions of indicators Clear documentation of methodologies Retention of documentation to support reported indicators 	All recommendations were fully agreed by management.
Customer First have devised methodologies for calculating their performance indicators. The documentation of these is restricted to identifying reports (by name) to be used for each indicator, and a brief outline of the calculation for some indicators.	Indicators may be inaccurate.		

Main Findings	Main Risk	Main Recommendations	Management Response
The principles used for the production of the reports (i.e. source of data, inclusions, exclusions, cut-off dates) have not been documented.			
Appropriate systems are in place to capture data accurately and completely.			
Performance measures reported by Customer First are calculated using their established reports and methodology. They do not routinely retain documentation to support reported indicators. We were informed that this was because reports to support submissions could be re-created from original data.	Reported performance cannot be shown to be correct.		
During the course of the audit it became clear that telephone statistics were inaccurate. Customer First recalculated them. These were tested and we were able to trace the figures to underlying records. However, Customer First could not provide other reports within the timescale of the audit.			