

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Audit and governance committee audit and governance committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>Tuesday 19 March 2019</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Certificate of completion of audit</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Chief finance officer</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

All Wards

## **Purpose and summary**

To update the committee on progress of the issue of the certificate of closure of the 2016/17 audit by the council's external auditors, Grant Thornton.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- (a) The update is noted.

## **Alternative options**

1. There are no alternative options to receiving the report; the update is provided at the request of the committee. If further information about the matter is necessary the committee will need to consider exclusion of the public and press.

## Key considerations

2. The council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, have not issued an audit certificate in respect of the 2016/17 accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office's Code of Audit Practice until they have completed their consideration of matters brought to their attention by the council. The matters are dependent on the successful conclusion of third party work being carried out on behalf of the council. Since the last audit and governance committee meeting further progress has been made by the third parties, however the matter is not yet concluded as the council is awaiting a response from a third party. Council officers have continued ongoing dialogue with Grant Thornton keeping them informed of progress. This has not affected the external audit opinion in any year.
3. The phase of the work being carried out by the third party that was mentioned to the committee at previous meeting has been concluded, the council is now awaiting external advice. The council set a deadline for a response of the middle of March 2019. The external auditors will provide further progress reports in their regular updates to the committee.

## Community impact

4. One of the principles in the council's code of corporate governance is to implement good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.
5. To support effective accountability the council is committed to reporting on actions completed and outcomes achieved, and ensuring stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the council plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner.
6. External audit contributes to effective accountability.

## Equality duty

7. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:  
  
A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –
  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
8. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report is for information only, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

## **Resource implications**

9. None

## **Legal implications**

10. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 specifies the general duties of the council's auditors. Section 20 requires the auditor to enter a certificate. It is permissible not issue a certificate at the same time as the statement of accounts and this does not affect the accuracy of the statement of accounts.
11. Section 100F of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that any document which is in the possession of the council and contains material relating to any business to be transacted at the meeting shall be open to inspection by any member of the council. However a document does not have to be open for inspection if it appears to the proper officer that the document discloses exempt information.
12. In accordance with the council's constitution the monitoring officer has determined that access to any other information is withheld because the material falls within many of paragraphs 1 to 7 in schedule 12A and is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. As the matter has not yet reached a conclusion and the disclosure of information may affect the ability to conclude the matter it is not in the public interest to disclose any further material at this time.

## **Risk management**

13. The work completed has not identified any significant risks.

## **Consultees**

14. Grant Thornton have been consulted in the drafting of this report.

## **Appendices**

None.

## **Background papers**

None identified.