

Title of report: Auditor's Annual Report 2020/21

Meeting: Audit and governance committee briefing

Meeting date: Tuesday 10 May 2022

Report by: Director of resources and assurance

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To present to the audit and governance committee the auditor's draft Annual Report 2020-21 for information and discussion.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee reviews the auditor's report, notes its findings and recommendations and considers the management responses.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative recommendations. The auditor's Annual Report forms part of the statutory external audit of the Council.

Key considerations

2. The external auditor's draft Annual Report for 2020/21 is attached at Appendix 1. Under the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice, the external auditor is required

to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

3. As well as reporting on overall arrangements, the external auditor will consider whether there were any significant risks or weaknesses in the arrangements in place. The report includes the external auditor's findings together with their recommendations as to how any weaknesses identified can be addressed.
4. Officers are asked to provide management responses to the findings and recommendations and the responses are also included at Appendix 1.
5. The report has been finalised with officers.

Community impact

6. 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. 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. External audit contributes to effective accountability.

Environmental impact

7. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
8. Whilst this is a report for information and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

9. 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.
10. 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. We do not believe that this report will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

11. There are no specific resource implications from the report itself. However, there may be resource implications from implementing specific recommendations. If these cannot be contained within approved budgets, then a specific decision will be presented for approval.

Legal implications

12. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report itself.

Risk management

13. Specific risks are included within the external auditor's report.

Consultees

14. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 Auditor's Annual Audit Report on Herefordshire Council 2020-21

Background papers

None identified.