



AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, 15 January 2024

REPORT TITLE:	EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND SECTOR UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE (S151 OFFICER)

REPORT SUMMARY

This report presents Committee with a progress update on the work being undertaken by the external auditor, Grant Thornton. The report also includes a sector update which provides a summary of emerging national issues and areas for the Committee to consider in relation to these.

There are no direct ward implications, and the report is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is recommended to note the update provided by the Council's external auditors.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 For the Committee to exercise its duties and responsibilities within its Terms of Reference for considering reports of the External Auditor.
- 1.2 The Audit update sets out the current progress of the audit that the Council's Auditors, Grant Thornton will be carrying out in their statutory audit on the Council's financial statements and arrangements for securing value for money.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options as this is for information, to allow the Committee to comment and note.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Grant Thornton are the Council's independent external auditors. Their annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work.
- 3.2 The report provides members of the Committee with an update on progress of the external audit; it also includes details of national publications relevant to the Council.
- 3.3 The external auditor's progress report attached at Appendix 1 provides the committee with a brief update on their 2022/23 external audit work, and an update on planning for 2023/24.
- 3.4 The sector update includes the following: -
 - Audit delays and backlogs
 - National Audit Office report on schools requiring major refurbishment or rebuilding
 - Local Government Pension Scheme optimism
 - Sustainability in the public sector.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The audit fees will be met from within the revenue budget.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications identified.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no human resources implications identified.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There are no risks arising directly from this report which is for information only. However, Grant Thornton will complete a risk-based audit whereby they will focus audit effort on those areas where they have identified a risk of material misstatement in the accounts.
- 7.2 If any concerns identified by Grant Thornton are not addressed by the Council then there is a risk that the Council will not be able to meet its statutory requirements in respect to the Statement of Accounts as well as impacting upon the Value for Money and Financial Resilience of the Council and the Council's reputation.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 There are no equality implications arising specifically from this report. The files attached may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact Shaun Allen if you would like these documents in an accessible format.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report have no direct implications for community wealth.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Wirral Council External Audit Progress Report – December 2023

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Terms of Engagement
External Audit Plan

Statement of Accounts
CIPFA Code of Practice

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Audit and Risk Management Committee – Wirral Council External Audit Plan and Public Sector Update 2022-23	27 June 2023
Audit and Risk Management Committee – External Audit Progress Report	15 March 2022