



Full Council
13 July 2020

**Report from the Director of Legal,
HR, Audit & Investigations**

**Update Report from the Audit and Standards Advisory
Committee**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Debra Norman, Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations Tel:020 8937 1578 Email: debra.norman@brent.gov.uk

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the activities carried out by the Council's Audit and Standards Advisory Committee (ASAC) since the last update provided in November 2019. The ASAC is responsible for considering and advising the relevant council bodies on various governance matters relating to audit activity, the council's regulatory framework, and members' standards of conduct.
- 1.2 The report also summarises the activities of the Audit and Standards Committee which is responsible for various governance matters including reviewing and approving the Annual Statement of Accounts, adopting the council's Annual Governance Statement and promoting high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 Council is asked to note the contents of the report.

3. **Detail**

- 3.1 The ASAC has met four times since the last update was provided to Council on 25th November, 2019. This paper is a brief update on the areas covered in those meetings.

Audit and Standards Advisory Committee – 20 January 2020

Quarterly Update on Gifts and Hospitality

- 3.2 The report updated ASAC on gifts and hospitality registered by Members, the attendance record for Members in relation to mandatory training sessions and two cases reported in the media involving councillor conduct.

Member Learning & Development and Member Expenses

- 3.3 This report provided members with a summary of the Member Development Programme since last reported to Committee and information regarding the Members' Expenses Scheme.

Review of the Use of RIPA Powers

- 3.4 This report provided an update on the Council's policy in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

Internal Audit Quarterly Update - September - December 2019

- 3.5 This report provided an update on progress against the Internal Audit Plan for Quarter 3.

Counter Fraud Quarterly Update

- 3.6 This report provided an update on the counter fraud activity undertaken for Quarter 3.

Emergency Planning Resilience - Peer Review

- 3.7 The Committee received an update on Brent's Emergency Planning Resilience - Peer Review - a self-assessment on the 11 emergency planning standards for London.

- 3.8 The report summarised the progress made since the 2019 report, detailed the type and number of incidents in Brent and provided information around initiatives and programmes of work under way to enhance resilience and response arrangements.

External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update, including Certification of Grants and Returns

- 3.9 The Committee received a report on progress in delivering Grant Thornton's responsibilities as the Council's external auditors. It also included a summary of emerging national issues and developments relevant to Brent as a local authority as well as certification of grants and returns.

Additional Audit Fees 2019-20

- 3.10 The report provided a brief note on the increased audit fees for additional audit work Grant Thornton had planned to address including enhanced requirements placed upon them by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), their regulator.

-

The Complimentary Roles of the ASC, ASAC and Scrutiny Committees (Review the Performance of the Committee - self-assessment)

- 3.11 This report provided an update about the effectiveness of the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee (ASAC) following a training workshop held after the previous meeting facilitated by a CIPFA trainer.

Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

- 3.12 The Committee also reviewed Brent Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21.

Audit and Standards Advisory Committee – 11 March 2020

Draft Internal Audit and Investigations Annual Plan

- 3.13 This report set out the draft Internal Plan for 2020/21 and the basis on which the plan had been prepared.

External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

- 3.14 This report provided the Committee with an update on progress in delivering Grant Thornton's responsibilities as the Council's external auditors. It also included a summary of emerging national issues and developments.

External Audit Plan

- 3.15 The Committee also received an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of the London Borough of Brent and the statutory audit of the London Borough of Brent Pension Fund for those charged with governance.

Accounting Policies

- 3.16 The council is required to adopt accounting policies each year to set out how the Statement of Accounts will be produced. This report detailed the proposed Accounting Policies for the production of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

The ASAC scheduled for 20th April 2020 was postponed due to the Covid 19 response arrangements

Audit and Standards Advisory Committee – 5 May 2020

Emergency Planning response to COVID 19

- 3.17 The report provided ASAC with a summary of the work that had been undertaken since Emergency Planning and GOLD arrangements were stood up in the Council, as a result of the pandemic coronavirus COVID 19. The report also outlined the resource implications of the actions that had been taken by the Council.

Annual Governance Statement

- 3.18 This presented the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019/20, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The AGS was presented to ASAC for consideration, prior to formal approval by the Audit and Standards Committee, which followed on the rising of that Committee.

Audit and Standards Advisory Committee – 26 May 2020

Annual Standards Report (including quarterly update on gifts and hospitality)

- 3.19 This was the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report to the ASAC for 2019. It provided an update on Member conduct issues, work of the ASAC, the Audit and Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer during 2018 as well as the quarterly update on Gifts and Hospitality.

Draft Statement of Accounts 2019/2020

- 3.20 The Committee were presented with the Council's draft 2019/20 Statement of Accounts for consideration prior to their submission to external audit.

To review performance of i4B Holdings Ltd

- 3.21 This report provided the Committee with an update on i4B Holdings Ltd's (i4B) recent performance, audit arrangements, and risk register.

To review performance of First Wave Housing Ltd

- 3.22 This report provided the Committee with an update on First Wave Housing Limited's (FWH) business plan, recent performance, risk register, and audit arrangements.

Internal Audit Progress Report

- 3.23 The Committee also received an update on progress against the Internal Audit Plan.

Counter Fraud Progress Report

- 3.24 The Committee were provided with an update on counter fraud activity for the year to date.

External Audit Plan Update - Audit scope & additional work 2019/20

- 3.25 The report provided an update on the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of the London Borough of Brent ('the Authority') and London Borough of Brent Pension Fund ('the Fund') as reported in the Audit Plan dated February 2020, for those charged with governance.

External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

- 3.26 The Committee received a verbal update from Grant Thornton on progress in delivering their responsibilities as the Council's external auditors along with a summary of emerging national issues and developments.

Review of the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Powers

3.27 The Committee also received an update on the Council's use and conduct of covert surveillance techniques when investigating serious criminal offences relying on the powers made available to local authorities in Part II of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

Report sign off:

Debra Norman

Director of Legal, HR, Audit &
Investigations