

## RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

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meeting date: 14 FEBRUARY 2024  
 title: INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT – FEBRUARY 2024  
 submitted by: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES  
 principal author: INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGER

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Accounts and Audit Committee in respect of progress made in delivery against 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan. It brings to your attention, matters relevant as members of the Committee and provides a summary of internal audit activity which is a requirement of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
- 1.2 Detailed reports and relevant findings, recommendations and agreed actions have been provided to lead officers within the Council and are available to committee members upon request. This report covers the period December 2023 to January 2024.
- 1.3 Relevance to the Council’s ambitions and priorities:

Corporate priorities – the Council seeks to maintain critical financial management and controls and provide efficient and effective services.

Other considerations – As defined in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015, the Council “must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal audit standards”.

### 2 KEY MESSAGES & ISSUES

- 2.1 Since the last meeting of the Accounts and Audit Committee, the following areas have been a key focus:

Review Title	<b>Members Allowances</b>			
Assurance Opinion	<b>High Assurance</b>			
Overall Objective	<p>To provide assurance that claims are completed in full, in accordance with the Members Allowances Scheme, paid accurately and timely, and published appropriately.</p> <p>Members of the Council are currently able to claim a basic allowance, special responsibility allowance (where relevant), dependent carers allowance, travel and subsistence. Such payments totalled £253k in 2022/23.</p>			
Recommendations/ Risk Rating	Critical	High	Medium	Low
	0	0	0	2

Findings Summary	<p>The Council's Members' Allowance Scheme was approved by Full Council in July 2023; as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel and Policy &amp; Finance Committee. The Independent Remuneration Panel was established by the Council to undertake the four-yearly review in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. Its aim was to review the existing scheme; recognising the roles, duties and responsibilities of Members, consideration of the values of allowances paid and to whom they may be paid. The Panel concluded that the Members' Allowance Scheme in operation was a fair reflection of the Councillor duties and responsibilities. It recommended that due to the change in political make-up of the Council and the additional demands and responsibilities on group leaders, that the Special Responsibility Allowance be amended to include an allowance for the leader of each political group.</p> <p>The audit focused on the allowances paid since the May 2023 local election. It found that the controls in place were robust, designed well and operated effectively. Sample testing took place in relation to payments for basic allowances, special responsibility allowances, travel and subsistence. Two low risk recommendations have been made in relation to the claiming of travel expenses to outside body/organisation meetings and publicising the detailed Members' allowances on the Council's website to ensure full transparency.</p>
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2.4 Annex A provides a summary of the profiled delivery of the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan. The following reviews are in progress; the findings of which will be reported as per the suggested delivery:

- Council Tax – draft report
- National Non-Domestic Rates – draft report
- Emergency Preparedness – draft report
- Commercial Waste – draft report
- Sickness Absence Management – fieldwork completed
- Housing Benefits – fieldwork
- Key Performance Indicators - fieldwork
- Safeguarding – fieldwork
- Procurement - fieldwork
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund - fieldwork

- Key Financial Controls – planning
- Climate Change – planning
- Markets - planning

### **Investigations**

2.5 There has been one referral made within the period which remains an open investigation.

### **3 LIMITATIONS**

3.1 The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during our internal audit work and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required. Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the information in this report is as accurate as possible, based on the information provided and documentation reviewed, no complete guarantee or warranty can be given with regards to the advice and information contained herein.

3.2 Our work does not provide absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist. Responsibility for a sound system of internal controls and the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities rests with management and work performed by internal audit should not be relied upon to identify all strengths and weaknesses in internal controls, nor relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud or irregularity.

3.3 Effective and timely implementation of our recommendations by management is important for the maintenance of a reliable internal control system. Reports are prepared for your sole use and no responsibility is taken by the auditors to any director or officer in their individual capacity. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared for, and is not intended for, any other purpose.

### **4 CONCLUSION**

4.1 A further report has been issued since the last meeting, giving High assurance for Members Allowances. There are currently 13 audits where work of varying degrees is being undertaken. There has been one referral for investigation, and this remains an open investigation. Progress and coverage on the audit plan is good and will enable a sound audit opinion to be formed at the end of the financial year.

INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGER  
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND

AA3-24/RP/AC  
14 FEBRUARY 2024

## 2023/24 – Internal Audit Output Delivery

ANNEX A
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Review	Status/ Scheduled	Assurance Level
<b>2022/23 c'fwd reviews (contributing to the 2023/24 Opinion)</b>		
Disabled Facilities Grant	Final Report	Substantial
Key Financial Systems	Final Report	Substantial
Payroll	Final Report	Substantial
Electoral Registration	Planning	
<b>2023/24 reviews</b>		
<b>Chief Executive's</b>		
Emergency Preparedness	Draft Report	
Key Performance Indicators	Fieldwork	
Records Retention Management	Q4	
Climate Change	Planning	
<b>Community Services</b>		
Commercial Waste Management	Draft Report	
Safeguarding	Fieldwork	
Car Parking & Enforcement	Q4	
Markets	Planning	
Ribblesdale Pool	Q4	
<b>Resources</b>		
Housing Benefits	Fieldwork	
Council Tax	Draft Report	
National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR)	Draft Report	
Sickness Absence Management	Fieldwork completed	
ICT Audit – <i>scope tbd</i>	Q4	
Member Allowances	Final Report	High
Treasury Management	Final Report	High
Mandatory Training	Q4	
Procurement	Fieldwork	
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Completed	Conditions Met
Changing Places	Completed	Conditions Met*
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)	Fieldwork	Ongoing
Budgetary Control	Q4	
Key Financial Controls	Planning	

\*project delivery risks reported as part of the briefing note

<b>Review</b>	<b>Status/ Scheduled</b>	<b>Assurance Level</b>
Economic Development & Planning		
Tourism & Events	Q4	
Governance, Risk Management, Follow Up & Contingency		
Risk Management	Q1 – Q4	Continuous
Follow Up	Q2/ Q4	Q2 completed
Contingency	As required	
Planning & Reporting		
PSIAS self-assessment	Completed	N/A
Investigations	As required – one open investigation.	