

External Audit - Informing the Risk Assessment 2023/24

Governance and Audit Committee 4 December 2024

Report Author	Chris Blundell, Director of Corporate Services - S151
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Rob Yates, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Key Decision	No
Decision classification	Unrestricted
Call in status	No
Ward:	All Wards

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to contribute towards the effective two-way communication between Thanet District Council's external auditors and Thanet District Council's Audit Committee, as 'those charged with governance'. The report covers some important areas of the auditor risk assessment where we are required to make inquiries of the Audit Committee under auditing standards. A representative from Grant Thornton will present the Risk Assessment Report, which is included at Annex 1 to this report.

Recommendation(s):

1. That the committee receives the Informing the Risk Assessment document for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts and notes the report.

1. Summary of Reasons

- 1.1 External audit seek assurances from Council regarding addressing issues related to fraud and managing the risks in this area. They were seeking assurances from senior management as well as the views of Councillors and this report covers such assurances.

2. Background

- 2.1 Grant Thornton are required to report to those charged with governance whether the council's financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position, its expenditure and income for the year and whether they have been properly prepared.

- 2.2 Providing this committee with the Risk Assessment forms part of the process of supporting the main Audit of the Accounts.

3. Relevant Issues

- 3.1 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 ('the Regulations') require the Authority to publish audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 by 13 December 2024 ('the backstop date'), with draft accounts being made available for public inspection for 30 working days.
- 3.2 As is the case with the majority of Local Government, we are playing catch up with regards to the publication and approval of financial statements.
- 3.3 This report and supporting documents see us making progress towards establishing a clean slate with regards to production and reporting of the main statements.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement to produce a set of financial statements and present them to this committee for consideration.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 There is no statutory or public law duty to consult in relation to this decision.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Finance and Resources

- 6.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 Legal and Constitutional

- 6.2.1 Section 3 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 requires local authorities to prepare a statement of accounts.

Local authorities must produce their accounts in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. In England and Wales, the Code constitutes a 'proper accounting practice' under the terms of Section 21(2) of the Local Government Act 2003.

These proper practises apply to statements of accounts prepared in accordance with the statutory framework established for England by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The audit of those accounts is undertaken in accordance with the statutory framework established by Sections 3 and 20 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

6.3 Council Policies and Priorities

6.3.1 This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- To keep our district safe and clean
- To deliver the housing we need
- To protect our environment
- To create a thriving place
- To work efficiently for you

6.4 Risk

6.4.1 This report is a backward look and the impact of Risk is covered under the wider remit of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Authority.

6.5 Climate Change and Biodiversity

6.5.1 This report is a backward look and the impact of Climate Change and Biodiversity are covered under the wider remit of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Authority.

7. Equality, Equity and Diversity Implications

7.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report, however the delivery and implementation of and budgetary changes will consider this as part of the budget setting process and be reported to members in due course.

It is important to be aware of the Council's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and show evidence that due consideration had been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications and Community impact

8.1 This report is a backward look and the impact of Crime and Disorder is covered under the wider remit of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Authority.

9. Subject History

Subject history is covered within the body of the report

Appendices

Annex 1 - Informing the Risk Assessment 2023/24

Background Papers

- N/A

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Report Sign Off

Legal N/A

Finance N/A