

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
AUDIT COMMITTEE**

2nd May 2014

Report of: Strategic Director (Corporate Services)

Title: Project Specification - Review of Governance Arrangements - Phase 2

Ward: Citywide

Officer presenting report: Mark Taylor

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RECOMMENDATION

The Audit Committee are asked to note, and comment as appropriate, on Grant Thornton's project specification on Review of Governance Arrangements – phase 2.

Summary

The key objectives of this work are as follows:

- to assess the progress made against the recommendations made in our previous report in September 2013; and
- to discuss with Members the effectiveness of arrangements in place and the progress made to date.

We propose to begin our work in May and issue a draft report in July.

Policy

None affected by this report. The Audit Commission has statutory responsibility for inspection and assessment at the Council. Grant Thornton are the Council's appointed external auditors. In carrying out their audit and inspection duties they have to comply with the relevant statutory requirements. In particular these are the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Code of Audit Practice with regard to audit, and the Local Government Act 1999 with regard to best value and inspection.

Consultation

Internal: Grant Thornton consulted with the City Director, Monitoring Officer and Interim Section 151 Officer.

External: not applicable.

1 Introduction

1.1 Grant Thornton is required to form an opinion on the Council's value for money (VfM) conclusion. The findings of the review which this project specification provides details will inform our VfM conclusion for 2013-14.

1.2 Grant Thornton will be attending the Committee, and will be pleased to answer Members' questions.

Other Options Considered

Not applicable.

Risk Assessment

Not as a result of this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no issues arising from this report.

Legal and Resource Implications

None arising from this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Project specification

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None



Bristol City Council

2013-14 Value for Money: Review of Governance Arrangements - Phase 2

Project Specification – April 2014

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In November 2012 Bristol City Council (the Council) George Ferguson was elected as the Council's first Mayor, joining 15 other cities across the UK in adopting this model.

The Mayor replaced the previous Council Leader and is responsible for selecting the members of the Cabinet. The elected Mayor is now personally responsible for making key decisions which were previously taken by the Cabinet as a whole. The Mayor also performs a broader role representing the interests of Bristol's citizens.

The Council's constitution has been amended to reflect the changes and new structures required to support the Mayor. This includes a Cabinet of six members, who hold portfolios for specific areas of service delivery, and the appointment of a Deputy Mayor.

Separate committees continue for a number of areas, including planning, licencing, overview and scrutiny and audit. Neighbourhood Partnerships also remain.

Due to the significance of the change for the governance framework of the Council, it was agreed that we should consider the implications as part of our external audit in 2013 and in September 2013 we presented our findings to the Audit Committee.

Our review in 2013 identified a number of recommendations and as part of our 2013-14 audit planning, we consider that the governance arrangements at the Council may continue to be a risk to our Value for Money (VfM) conclusion.

This document sets out a detailed scope of work for phase 2 of this review. The work will provide a source of assurance to support our VfM conclusion for 2013-14.

2 Scope of work

2.1 Introduction

The key objectives of this work are as follows:

- to assess the progress made against the recommendations made in our previous report in September 2013; and
- to discuss with Members the effectiveness of arrangements in place and the progress made to date.

2.2 Sources of information

We will base our work on the following sources of information:

- the Annual Governance Statement;
- the revised constitution;
- relevant pages of the Council's website;
- relevant minutes from Cabinet and other Council meetings;
- other relevant documentation; and
- discussions with lead officers, Members and the Mayor.

2.3 Our detailed scope

By undertaking this work, we will be in a position to form a view on the key governance issues detailed within the following table.

Aspect	Issue
Role and responsibilities	Do current arrangements ensure compliance and understanding of the agreed governance arrangements, including the Mayor, Full Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny?
Decision making	<p>Do current arrangements include a formal evaluation mechanism of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance and understanding; • the role of the Mayor and the relationship between the Mayor and both officers and Members; • statutory responsibilities; and • decision making? <p>Are decisions being taken by the right people, at the right time, based on robust data?</p> <p>Are the risks relating to decisions clearly identified and managed?</p>
Strategic priorities and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a strategic plan that sets out the strategic priorities? • Have arrangements improved to ensure that the Forward Plan is up to date, complete and manageable?
Performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have Strategic objectives been set for the Council and each Directorate? • How is performance being monitored and managed at a corporate level and Directorate level?
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are communications with the Mayor timely and appropriate to ensure an appropriate response ?

3 Project delivery

3.1 Engagement team

The following Grant Thornton UK LLP personnel will undertake the work:

- Engagement lead: John Golding and Barrie Morris
- Project manager: Ginette Beal
- Client manager: Gail Turner

The Council's main sponsor for this work is Nicola Yates and the key contacts will be Mark Taylor and Liam Nevin.

3.2 Reporting

We will formally report our findings which will include a summary observation for any issues identified and our recommendations for the Council to take forward. We will ensure that an action plan is drawn up with the assistance of the Council prior to the finalisation of our report.

Draft copies of our report will be provided in line with the timetable that follows to confirm the factual accuracy of the information contained therein.

3.3 Indicative timetable

We propose to begin our work in May and issue a draft report in July. An indicative timetable and personnel involved at each stage of the process is set out in the table below.

Stage	Personnel	Timetable
Detailed field work	Ginette Beal	Commencing 19 May 2014
Draft Report	Ginette Beal	June 2014
Final report	Ginette Beal	July 2014

Grant Thornton UK LLP
April 2014



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