

Subject	Internal Audit Progress Report	Status	For Publication
Report to	Audit and Governance Committee	Date	06/03/2025
Report of	Head of Corporate Assurance (Internal Audit)		
Equality Impact Assessment	Not Required		
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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Corporate Assurance Team's internal audit activity completed, and the key issues arising from it, for the period 18th November 2024 to 23rd February 2025.
- 1.2 To provide information regarding the performance of the Corporate Assurance Team during the period.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Members consider the report and as necessary request further information and/ or explanations from the Corporate Assurance Team or Management.**

3 Background Information

- 3.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has responsibility for reviewing the adequacy of the Authority's corporate governance arrangements, including those relating to internal control and risk management. The reports issued by the Corporate Assurance Team are a key source of assurance contributing to the evidence the Committee receives to assure them that the internal control environment is operating as intended.
- 3.2 The Head of Corporate Assurance produces an Annual Report (reported into the July Committee meeting), which provides an overall opinion on the adequacy of the Authority's control environment and compliance with it during the year.

4. Implications

- 4.1 The proposals outlined in this report have the following implications:

Financial	The cost of the services of the Internal Audit service provided by the Corporate Assurance Team is contained within the budget and is periodically invoiced.
Human Resources	n/a
ICT	n/a
Legal	Section 73 of the Local Government Act 1985 requires the Authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs; and Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires the Authority to maintain an adequate and effective system of Internal Audit (Corporate Assurance) of its accounting records and of its system of internal control. This report does not contain any information which is exempt under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
Procurement	n/a

Sharon Bradley CMIIA
Head of Corporate Assurance

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Background papers and other sources of reference include: Corporate Assurance Charter 2024-26, Annual Plan 2024-25, Individual Assurance Reports, MK Insight (Audit Management System), Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2017	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Westgate Plaza, Barnsley.

South Yorkshire Pensions Authority Corporate Assurance (Internal Audit) Progress Report

Audit and Governance Committee

6th March 2025

The matters arising in this report are only those which came to our attention during our corporate assurance 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 provided 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 regard to the advice and information contained herein. Our work does not provide absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.

CORPORATE ASSURANCE (INTERNAL AUDIT) PROGRESS REPORT 18th November 2024 to 23rd February 2025

Purpose of this report

This report has been prepared to update the Committee on our activity for the period 18th November 2024 to 23rd February 2025, bringing to your attention matters that are relevant to your responsibilities as members of the Authority's Audit and Governance Committee. The report also provides information regarding the performance of the Corporate Assurance Team during the period.

Corporate Assurance (Internal Audit) Plan Progress 2024-25

The following table shows the progress of the corporate assurance plan 2024-25 up to the 23rd February 2025, analysed by the number of planned assignments and days delivered by Service Area.

To date, we have delivered 71% of the total planned days. The 2024/25 plan (as in previous years) is profiled more heavily towards the end of the financial year and Corporate Assurance has profiled its resources accordingly.

Position as at 23rd February 2025- Plan Days Delivered

2024/25 Plan	Original Plan Days	Revised Plan Days	Actual days (% of revised days)
Finance & Resources	80	80	59 (42%)
Pensions Administration	10	18	17 (12%)
Authority Wide	54	54	40 (28%)
Investment Strategy	26	23	9 (6%)
Corporate Services	28	25	16 (12%)
Contingency	2	0	
Chargeable Planned Days	200	200	141 (71%)

Position as at 23rd February 2025 – Planned Assignments With Report

	Planned assignments in year	Assignments to be completed in period	Actual assignments completed in period	Actual assignments completed to date
Finance & Resources	8	2	2	4
Pensions Administration	2	1	1	2
Investment Strategy	2	0	0	1
Corporate Services	1	0	0	1
Authority Wide	2	0	0	1
Total	15	3	3	9

Changes to the 2024/25 Plan

At the beginning of the year provision is made in the allocation of corporate assurance resources for unplanned work, through a contingency. As requests for work are received, or more time is required for jobs or changes in priorities are identified, time is allocated from this contingency. There have been no changes to the plan during this period.

Final Reports Issued

The following reports have been issued during the period.

Assurance Assignment	Assurance Opinion	Number of recommendations raised:			Total	Agreed
		High	Medium	Low		
Finance & Resources: Other Benefits	Substantial	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Finance & Resources: Fund Contributions	Substantial	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Pensions Admin: Customer Services incl. Contact Centre	Reasonable	0	0	3	3	3
Total		0	0	3	3	3

Other Corporate Assurance work undertaken

Assurance Activity	Description
Follow-up of Agreed Management Actions (AMAs)	Regular work undertaken to follow-up agreed management actions.
Planning, Liaison and Feedback	Meeting and corresponding with Senior Management regarding progress of assurance work, future planning, and general client liaison.
Advice	General advice to services regarding controls, risk, or governance.
Audit and Governance Committee Support	Time taken in the preparation of Audit and Governance Committee reports, Member training (as required), general support and development.
Audit and Governance Chair – Briefing Session	To deliver a briefing session on the role of Internal Audit and the Committee.
National Fraud Initiative	Time allocated to provide assurance that the NFI data matching exercises have been undertaken.
DPO Assurance	Time allocated for IA to undertake reviews commissioned by the Data Protection Officer.
Performance Management Framework	To provide advice, support, and guidance to management during the design and implementation of the Performance Management Framework.
Investment Management System – Design and Implementation	To provide advice, support, and guidance to management during procurement and implementation of the new Custodian.
Climate Change and Net Zero Carbon	To provide assurance that the Authority is complying with the requirements of the TCFD.

Work in Progress

The following table provides a summary of the internal audit reviews in progress at the time of producing this report:

Directorate- Assurance Assignment	Pre-Planning	Work in Progress	Draft Report
Finance & Resources: Valuation of Assets			✓
Finance & Resources: Pension Payroll		✓	
Finance & Resources: Purchase to Pay		✓	
Finance & Resources: Main Accounting		✓	
Authority Wide: Pentana Risk System Post Implementation Review		✓	
Investments: Climate Change and Zero Carbon	✓		

Follow-up of Corporate Assurance Report Management Actions

The following table shows the status of agreed management actions due for completion during the period:

Management Action Classification	Followed up	Not Yet Due	Closed - Implemented	Revised target date agreed	Awaiting Update From Mgt
High	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	4	0	3	1	0
TOTAL	4	0	3	1	0

The Corporate Assurance Team continues to get good co-operation from management including the Senior Management Team (SMT) and as such is able to closely monitor any implications that may arise from a delay in the implementation of management actions.

Corporate Assurance Team performance indicators and performance feedback for 2024/25 (Quarter 3)

The Corporate Assurance Team's performance against a number of indicators is summarised below. The Service uses a range of performance indicators to monitor operational efficiency. Quarterly performance of the function is satisfactory and all PIs for the year are either on or exceed target levels.

Ref.	Indicator	Frequency of Report	Target 2024/25	This Period	Year to Date
1.	<u>Customer Perspective:</u>				
1.1	Percentage of questionnaires received noted "good" or "very good" relating to work concluding with an assurance report.	Quarterly	95%	100%	100%

Ref.	Indicator	Frequency of Report	Target 2024/25	This Period	Year to Date
2.	<u>Business Process Perspective:</u>				
2.1	Percentage of final assurance reports issued within 10 working days of completion and agreement of the draft assurance report.	Quarterly	80%	100%	100%
2.2	Percentage of chargeable time against total available.	Quarterly	73%	71%	65%*
2.3	Average number of days lost through sickness per FTE	Quarterly	6 days	2.74 days	4.04 days*
3.	<u>Continuous Improvement Perspective:</u>				
3.1	Personal development plans for staff completed within the prescribed timetable.	Annual	100%	100%	100%
4.	<u>Financial Perspective:</u>				
4.1	Total costs v budget.	Quarterly	Within budget	Yes	Yes

* The chargeable time indicator in Q1 and Q2 was impacted upon by the profile of annual and statutory leave, which will level out throughout the year and the impact of sickness absences. These absences have not impacted on the delivery of the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority Plan.

Performance indicator definitions and supporting information

PI Ref	Indicator	Comments
1.1	Percentage of favourable questionnaire responses received (noted "good" or "very good") relating to work concluding with an assurance report.	Client Sponsor and Operational Lead Questionnaires are circulated at the end of each piece of work. The questionnaires ask specific questions covering the effectiveness of pre-planning, communication, timing, and quality of the assurance report/output. An overall assessment is sought as to the overall value of the work. This is the answer used for this PI. All questionnaires are analysed in detail to ensure all aspects of the assurance process are monitored and improved.
2.1	Percentage of final assurance reports issued within 10 working days of completion and agreement of the draft assurance report.	This is an operational PI to ensure the timely issue of final reports. This PI is influenced by the availability of Senior Corporate Assurance staff to clear the report and any issues the Service's quality assessment process highlights along with the availability of the client sponsor.
2.2	Percentage of chargeable time against total available.	A key operational measure of the 'productivity' of the Corporate Assurance Team taking into account allowances for administration, general management, training, and other absences. This PI will reflect the % chargeable time of staff in post, net of vacancies.
2.3	Average number of days lost through sickness per FTE.	A corporate PI to measure the effectiveness of good absence / attendance management.
3.1	Personal development plans for staff completed within the prescribed timetable.	The Corporate Assurance Team place a high level of importance on staff training and continuous development and are committed to ensure all staff have their own training plans derived from the personal development plan process.

PI Ref	Indicator	Comments
4.1	Total costs v budget.	This is a simple overall measure to note whether the Service's expenditure for the year has been kept within the budget.

Head of Corporate Assurance's Opinion

The Head of Corporate Assurance, as Head of Internal Audit for the Authority, must deliver an annual assurance opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its Annual Governance Statement. The annual internal audit opinion must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control.

At this point in the year, based on work completed to date, it is anticipated that a **Reasonable** (positive) overall assurance opinion will be provided.

Corporate Assurance Contacts

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KEY TO CORPORATE ASSURANCE (INTERNAL AUDIT) GRADINGS AND CLASSIFICATION OF IMPLICATIONS

1. **Classification of Implications (impact)**

- High** Requires immediate action – imperative to ensuring the objectives of the system under review are met.
- Medium** Requiring action necessary to avoid exposure to a significant risk to the achievement of the objectives of the system under review.
- Low** Action is advised to enhance control or improve operational efficiency.

2. **Assurance Opinions**

	Level	Control Adequacy	Control Application
POSITIVE OPINIONS	Substantial	Robust framework of controls exist that are likely to ensure that objectives will be achieved.	Controls are applied continuously or with only minor lapses.
	Reasonable	Sufficient framework of key controls exist that are likely to result in objectives being achieved, but the control framework could be stronger.	Controls are applied but with some lapses.
NEGATIVE OPINIONS	Limited	Risk exists of objectives not being achieved due to the absence of key controls in the system.	Significant breakdown in the application of key controls.
	None	Significant risk exists of objectives not being achieved due to the absence of controls in the system.	Fundamental breakdown in the application of all or most controls.