

Audit Committee – 22nd October 2009

5. Update on Homelessness Service Action Plan

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide members with an update on the Homelessness Service Audit Action Plan.

Recommendations

The Audit Committee is recommended to note:

- (1) the actions and progress made;
- (2) that the Implementation Target for action 8.1 has been re-scheduled for March 2010.

Background

In March 2007, South West Audit partnership (SWAP) carried out a review of the homeless service. At the time the auditors found there were inadequate controls in place, and risks were not well managed. A report was brought to the Audit committee in December 2007 updating members on the progress made to date on the action plan.

Ian Baker (Group Auditor) completed a review in April 2008. The report stated there was partial assurance, however some of the key areas were still not adequately controlled.

SWAP then undertook an audit of the Homeless Service during the final quarter of 2008/9. Through this audit, reasonable assurance was provided that most areas were found to be adequately controlled and generally risks were well managed (see appendix A at page 3).

Progress Made on the Action Plan (see appendix B)

Good progress has been made on the implementation of the 5 recommended actions arising from the latest audit action plan. Specifically, 4 actions are now complete and are being embedded into operational routines, 1 is in progress.

Details of overall progress to date is set out within the updated audit report action plan in appendix B (pages 4-6) indicating what actions have been taken and the current status.

A full report looking at whether the Homeless Prevention Fund (Spend to Save) is value for money was submitted to District Executive on the 1st October 2009. District Executive agreed to the continued use of the fund.

Progress has been made on the final action 8.1. Meetings have been held with Financial Services in order to request reporting enhancements from the CedAr Financial Reporting System. These will provide a breakdown of debtors by nominal codes, and improve

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reporting formats. They will enable Housing to look at the debt profile by type of spend, and ensure resources are given to the highest risk areas.

Housing has recently undergone a restructure, resulting from the changes made at a Senior Management level. Bridget Gloyens is now overseeing all the financial elements of the Homeless Service, Kirsty Jones is the new Housing and Welfare Manager, and Steve Joel has been appointed as Assistant Director (Health and Well Being). This new team will continue to drive improvement forward.

Summary

There continues to be steady progress on the actions identified to enhance assurance levels. Work has started on improving financial controls and procedures within Housing. Over the next few months we will continue to build on this work to improve management information in relation to aged debtors and new procedures will be introduced to maximize recovery. This work is now scheduled for completion by March 2010.

Financial Implications

None.

Background Papers: *District Executive Homeless Prevention Fund Review and Demonstration of Value for Money October 2009*
Internal Audit Report of Homelessness Service June 2009
Audit Committee Agenda and Minutes December 2007
Internal Audit Report of Homelessness Service March 2007