

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10am, Thursday, 3 June 2021

Homelessness Services Internal Audit – Actions Update

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

- 1.1 Note the progress against recommendations within the Internal Audit of Homelessness Services undertaken in July 2019.
- 1.2 Acknowledge the rationale as to why some audit actions have required change and reconsideration due to the need to deliver services differently as a result of the public health crisis.
- 1.3 Recognise the complexities and issues which have delayed progress and completion of some actions within the agreed timescales.

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Homelessness Housing and Fair Work

Homelessness Internal Audit update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report provides an update on the progress of outstanding audit actions from the audit of Homelessness Services undertaken in July 2019. This follows a previous update presented to Committee on 5 November 2020.
- 2.2 Following the public health crisis in early 2020, previously agreed actions for some recommendations required to be reconsidered as they no longer aligned to current service delivery and how we engage with service users.
- 2.3 The report provides an update on the progress of outstanding actions identified in the Internal Audit of Homelessness Services in July 2019 and highlights the complexities around implementing some aspects of the recommendations.

3. Background

- 3.1 Colleagues from Internal Audit presented findings and recommendations to the Governance Risk and Best Value Committee (GRBV) on 13 August 2019.
- 3.2 The report was referred to Homelessness, Housing and Fair Work Committee on 29 August 2019 and an update provided in 5 November 2020. It was agreed that a further report would be submitted to detail completion of the outstanding actions and any issues and complexities which may have delayed progression of any recommendations.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Internal Audit Report included twenty-five actions with varying timescales for completion, following the public health crisis, Internal Audit extended all outstanding audit action dates by four months.
- 4.2 Two high and one medium finding were identified, relating to homelessness performance and quality assurance, data quality and performance reporting and provision of homelessness advice and information.

- 4.3 Twenty-One actions are now fully implemented, have met the agreed recommendations and are now closed by Internal Audit. Two actions are marked implemented and awaiting closure, and the remaining two actions are being progressed.
- 4.4 One audit action which had been implemented and closed, was subject to a validation audit in March 2020. The finding related to invoice quality assurance procedures. The actions from the validation audit are now completed and marked closed by Internal Audit.
- 4.5 Of the remaining two outstanding audit actions, one relates to performance reporting and the other to how we engage with customers. Each action presents challenges for completing within the agreed timescales, which can't always be predicted when deadlines were agreed in 2019; one required an extension beyond twelve months.
- 4.6 The audit recommended that performance should be reported to Committee through a dashboard and consider what Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be included. This action is being progressed and KPIs will now be agreed and finalised in line with the Council Business Plan and as such, an extension has been requested until 31 August 2021.
- 4.7 We will continue to provide performance information to Committee in relation to our annual return to the Scottish Government and other pertinent reports.
- 4.8 The other outstanding action has a due date for completion in 2023, this was to allow time to fully consider and cost online self-service housing options advice tools, which would allow applicants to enter details and information about their circumstances and receive advice on pre-defined outcomes. Consideration around cost and effectiveness has determined that this requires extensive market research and concept development.
- 4.9 Taking this into account, we have undertaken work to develop an online assessment form which customers can complete prior to engagement with a Council Officer, which will inform our triage system for prioritising appointments. This will be available for customers from August 2021.
- 4.10 As noted in November's update, further work was undertaken to ascertain how we can provide a customer focused approach to accessing our services and provide the public with information about what services are available. Our [web pages](#) have been updated to include FAQ and clear routes to access services.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will continue to progress the two open audit actions and will endeavour to conclude these within the agreed timescales.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Further funding options will be considered for costs associated with developing more online capabilities and introducing digital platforms.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 N/A

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Internal Audit Opinions Report](#)
- 8.2 [Homelessness Internal Audit Report](#)
- 8.3 [HHFW - Internal Audit Update - 5 Nov 2020](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.