

## Report of the Head of Corporate Assurance (Internal Audit)

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 28<sup>th</sup> MAY 2025

### CORPORATE ASSURANCE INTERIM ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

#### Executive Summary

- i. This report provides the Head of Corporate Assurance's (Internal Audit) interim annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements based on the work of Corporate Assurance for 2024-25 and has been prepared in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
- ii. Considering the overall results of Corporate Assurance work undertaken to date, together with management's implementation of agreed management actions, the interim opinion given is **reasonable** (positive) assurance. This has been based upon an agreed programme of risk-informed assurance coverage and advisory work which has enabled a valid interim assurance opinion to be provided.
- iii. There continues to be a positive culture in the Council to explore where control and governance improvements can be made. It is therefore important that this culture continues and is focussed on maintaining an appropriate, risk-informed, and effective overall framework of governance as the Council faces significant financial and operational challenges whilst continuing to work towards Barnsley 2030.
- iv. The key results from all completed reviews have been reported throughout the year within the Corporate Assurance progress reports and are summarised in this report.
- v. The Audit and Governance Committee has also been made aware of progress in the implementation of agreed management actions.
- vi. The corporate assurance plan for 2025-26 is focussed on supporting management to consider the approach to controls in the context of the achievement of strategic objectives and priorities, the strategic planning arrangements, and national initiatives. There is also a focus on providing assurance to management in relation to improved Accountability and Compliance.

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### **CORPORATE ASSURANCE INTERIM ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 This interim annual report has been prepared adopting recommended practice contained within the updated Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. These have been replaced by the Global Internal Audit Standards UK (effective 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025) and therefore future Corporate Assurance activity will be undertaken in accordance with the new Standards. The Standards require the Head of Corporate Assurance (HoCA), the designated Head of Internal Audit, to report to the appropriate Member body, the Audit and Governance Committee, providing an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and controls based on the work undertaken by Corporate Assurance.

1.2 In order to comply with these Standards the report provides:-

- i. an interim opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and internal control;
- ii. summary of the corporate assurance work undertaken to date to formulate the interim opinion;
- iii. details of key control issues identified which can be used to inform the Annual Governance Statement (AGS); and
- iv. the extent to which the work of other review or audit bodies has been relied upon.

#### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee: -**

- i. **considers the interim opinion provided by the Head of Corporate Assurance based on the work undertaken to date relating to 2024-25, regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and internal control;**
- ii. **notes the key issues arising from the work of Corporate Assurance in the context of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).**

#### **3. Introduction / Background**

3.1 In accordance with statutory best practice provided by the PSIAS, there is a requirement that the Head of Corporate Assurance (Internal Audit) prepares an annual report to the appropriate member body providing, amongst other things, an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and internal control based on the

work undertaken. For the Authority, the appropriate member body is the Audit and Governance Committee.

- 3.2 The Accounts and Audit Regulations require all councils to publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) providing a narrative on the effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal control framework, the results of the annual governance review process, and detailing any actions to be taken in respect of any identified weaknesses.
- 3.3 This report provides a summary of key issues arising from the work of Corporate Assurance relating to the 2024-25 plan, which contributes to the overall interim assurance opinion the HoCA is able to give the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 3.4 Although providing an important and significant contribution to the assurances the Audit and Governance Committee needs in its consideration of the AGS, this report forms only part of the assurance framework. The Committee will receive the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2024-25 at its May meeting. The Audit and Governance Committee is therefore encouraged to consider this report in the context of broad governance, risk, and controls assurance.
- 3.5 The financial budget for the Corporate Assurance Team is set covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March each year and a plan of the days and where they are planned to be delivered is prepared similarly. However, the actual delivery of corporate assurance work and the constant review and revision of coverage is on a more rolling basis. In order to align the annual Corporate Assurance report to the AGS and the signing of the Statement of Accounts it is more appropriate that the Head of Corporate Assurance's opinion is provided reflecting all the work undertaken that relates/covers the year at the point of the approval of the AGS and statutory accounts. This inevitably includes work actually undertaken in the current financial year, but which relates to the control environment in existence in the 2024-25 financial year.

#### 4. Head of Corporate Assurance's Opinion on the Effectiveness of the Authority's Governance, Risk Management, and Internal Control Environment

- 4.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has received Corporate Assurance progress reports throughout the year. In each of these reports a **reasonable** (positive) assurance opinion had been given reflecting an overall satisfactory level of internal controls and their application.
- 4.2 Taking the whole year into account and the reviews completed to date in relation to the 2024-25 plan, it is appropriate to give an interim overall **reasonable** (positive) assurance opinion for the year. The information supporting this opinion is provided below.
- 4.3 The engagement of senior managers and services across the Authority has once again been excellent and reflects a positive culture to embrace corporate assurance and look to identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of governance, risk management and internal controls. However, the

challenges that Services face remain, and to maintain positive assurance in the future that positive culture needs to continue. The key issues arising from Corporate Assurance work in the year, in general terms, continue to relate to the significant pressures in most areas of the Council, relentless demand and the drive for greater efficiency and changed ways of working. There is nothing new in these challenges and so the embedded awareness of governance and internal control issues should stand the Authority in good stead to manage the risks, concerns and issues that will inevitably occur as it moves into 2025-26 which is to provide the opportunity to reflect, consider and to focus on future priorities as recommended in the Corporate Peer Review.

- 4.4 The review work undertaken, and planned for the current year, has sought to support management to embrace and meet these challenges. To highlight this issue, a number of senior managers have continued to request Corporate Assurance input during the year to provide support and assurances that the internal control framework in certain areas was effective. This Corporate Assurance support was requested to highlight key control, governance and risk issues and assist management in how best to deal with them. Of key importance of course is the consideration and management of the identified and accepted risks moving forward.
- 4.5 Section 6 of this report provides more detail regarding the results of the review work. In summary, 78% of the completed reviews providing for an assurance opinion resulted in a substantial or reasonable assurance opinion, a decrease when compared with 90% in 2023-24 and an increase from 64% in 2022-23. Generally, the review work in the year has found areas where controls remain good and effective. Three “Limited” assurance opinions have been provided in 2024-25, plus one review has resulted in a reasonable/ limited assurance opinion, compared to two limited assurance reports in 2023-24. This is reflective of the positive culture of management inviting Corporate Assurance to provide assurance (or otherwise) in areas where there is some concern and acknowledgement of opportunities to improve the existing governance, risk and internal control framework.
- 4.6 Within the Corporate Assurance progress reports a number of key issues were drawn to the Committee’s attention. These are summarised in Section 6.
- 4.7 An update with regards to the core financial system reviews for the 2024-25 financial year is given in paragraph 6.14.
- 4.8 Although review work aims to cover a broad range of services, systems, and areas of Council activity, it needs to be recognised that Corporate Assurance coverage cannot guarantee to detect all errors, systems or control weaknesses or indeed identify all of the opportunities for improvements in management arrangements that might exist. Accordingly, the interim assurance opinion provided is based on reasonable coverage, as resources allow, and cannot be regarded as absolute assurance. Equally, there is a responsibility of senior managers through the annual governance statement process to provide assurances to the Chief Executive regarding the application and effectiveness of the internal control and governance framework in their operational or functional areas.

- 4.9 To remind the Committee, assurance opinions for individual pieces of work and overall, are classified within a range of four options, two positive and two negative. The table below shows in broad terms the basis for the different opinions applied.

	Level	Control Adequacy	Control Application
<b>POSITIVE OPINIONS</b>	<b>Substantial Assurance</b>	A robust framework of controls exists that is likely to ensure that objectives will be achieved.	Controls are applied continuously or with only minor lapses.
	<b>Reasonable Assurance</b>	A sufficient framework of key controls exists that is likely to result in objectives being achieved, but the control framework could be stronger.	Controls are applied but with some lapses.
<b>NEGATIVE OPINIONS</b>	<b>Limited Assurance</b>	A 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.
	<b>No Assurance</b>	A 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.

- 4.10 Corporate Assurance seeks to work closely as appropriate with other auditors, most significantly External Audit. However, for 2024-25 no work undertaken by other auditors, or any other review body has been specifically relied upon in the provision of this interim annual overall assurance opinion.

## **5. Summary of Corporate Assurance Work and Coverage 2024-25**

- 5.1 Corporate Assurance aim to utilise a risk-informed approach to planning and delivering its work. This approach seeks to ensure that the key risks (concerns, issues, and areas of strategic focus) facing the Authority are covered where appropriate by Corporate Assurance work. The annual planning process and details of the 2024-25 assurance plan were considered by the Committee at its March 2024 meeting.
- 5.2 The Committee has received Corporate Assurance progress reports that incorporate the results of review work and management's response on a continuous basis. A summary of the Corporate Assurance reports for 2024-25 is at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 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 review work are received, or more time is required for jobs or changes in priorities are identified, time is allocated from this contingency. Over the last couple of years there has been a notable increase in the number of these adjustments which is indicative of the rapidly changing nature of service and

Authority-wide priorities. The 2024-25 financial year required an extremely flexible and fluid plan to enable Corporate Assurance to provide assurance to Senior Management that the control framework remained effective. Details of review work which has been deferred, deleted or additional requests for specific pieces of work have been reported within the Corporate Assurance progress reports.

- 5.4 It should also be noted that Corporate Assurance work is variable both in its nature and timing. The risk-based approach ensures the highest priority work is undertaken. As with all plans, the corporate assurance plan was determined at a particular time (March/April 2024) utilising information available and has been subject to significant changes during the year. The Committee should be assured that within the finite resources available to corporate assurance (which was impacted upon by a vacant post for part year due to the requirement to recruit as a team member left), the key risks identified have either received corporate assurance attention during the year or are reflected in the corporate assurance plan for 2025-26.
- 5.5 The financial year end position for core corporate assurance days relating to the BMBC 2024-25 plan shows an under delivery of 96 days, or 5%, of the original provision. As in previous years, days have been factored into the 2025-26 annual plan to complete the work that commenced during quarter 4.

#### **Position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 – Corporate Assurance Days Delivered Relating to 2024-25 Plan**

Directorate	Original 2024/25 Plan days	Revised 2024/25 Plan days	Actual days (% of revised days)
Strategic Concerns, Strategies /Policies /Frameworks	165	93	64
Place Based Health and Adult Social Care	46	11	11
Childrens Services	154*	123	113
Growth and Sustainability	79	122	122
Public Health and Communities	33	21	21
Core Services	474	423	381
Council Wide	160	241	240
Contingency	81	86	N/A
	<b>1,192</b>	<b>1,120</b>	<b>952 (85%)</b>
Corporate Anti-Fraud (incl. contingency)	300	296	370 (125%)
Corporate Governance and Risk Strategic Activity	70	114	114 (100%)
Corporate Days (Council related activity)	200**	222	220 (99%)
<b>Total BMBC Corporate Assurance Activity</b>	<b>1,762</b>	<b>1,752</b>	<b>1,656 (95%)</b>
External Clients	<b>333</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>323 (94%)</b>
<b>Total Chargeable Planned Days</b>	<b>2,095</b>	<b>2,095</b>	<b>1,979 (95%)</b>

\* Includes schools coverage.

\*\* Corporate Activity includes undertaking induction training, PDRs and 1:1s, H&S, Benchmarking etc.

- 5.6 Within the resources there remains a significant amount of time needed to respond to requests for providing advice, support to services, innovation and

initiatives, changes, projects and programmes, corporate change projects and general work that does not result in a specific report. Approximately 60% of the Corporate Assurance delivered days was spent on work that generates a specific report. Details of the non-report work have been provided through the progress reports, but in summary have covered the following:

- Supporting Families claim verification and other grant verifications.
- Charity Accounts sign-off.
- Advice, support, and challenge at capital project / programme related (e.g. Glassworks, SEAM, Levelling Up, Youth Zone, Health on the High Street, Safety & Quality Programme) in respect of the governance, risk, and control arrangements.
- Advice and support in relation to the Council's Information Governance arrangements.
- Advice, support and challenge to the Place Based Health and Adult Social Care Directorate in relation to their preparedness for a CQC inspection and also delivery of their Governance Action Plan.
- Attendance at various meetings to provide advice, support, and challenge to the Council and Berneslai Homes with regards to the Service Agreement.
- Advice, support and challenge to the Public Health Quality and Governance Group with regards to quality assurance and data quality.
- Assurance with regards to the PRIP governance, performance, and contract management arrangements.
- Feedback to and liaison with all services.
- Audit and Governance Committee support.
- Follow-up of agreed management actions.
- Annual planning process.
- Input to the Annual Governance Review.
- Corporate whistleblowing.

5.7 Whilst the work covered in the above list has not resulted in a specific assurance opinion, all work undertaken is considered in terms of the overall annual assurance provided in this annual report. Much of this work has also been considered in the 2025-26 planned coverage.

## **6. Summary of Internal Control Issues Arising from Corporate Assurance work in 2024-25**

6.1 Corporate Assurance has completed 20 individual reviews of aspects of the Authority's internal control framework during 2024-25 that resulted in a formal report. These reviews sought to identify, test, and review various controls to ensure management were meeting their responsibilities to establish and adhere to appropriate systems of internal control.

6.2 In total, 18 reports provided for an assurance opinion, and a breakdown of these is shown below together with a comparison to 2023-24 and 2022-23.

6.3 It should be noted that 13 reviews are currently in progress. As in previous years, planned work scheduled to commence or commissioned during quarter 4 of the financial year is completed during quarter one of the following year. Details are referenced within the work in progress section (Appendix 3).

Assurance Opinion		2024-25		2023-24		2022-23	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Positive Opinions	Substantial	7	39	1	5%	1	5%
	Reasonable	7.5	42	18	86%	13	59%
Negative Opinions	Limited	3.5	19	2	9%	8	36%
	No	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

It should be noted that clearly some review areas have a greater significance and potential impact on the overall assurance opinion, i.e. limited assurance opinions given for control weaknesses in areas with a narrow scope, limited transactions and financial value will have a lower impact on the overall opinion compared to say a major service or a core financial system receiving such an opinion.

- 6.4 Across the various completed pieces of work to date 100 implications were raised. These are summarised below:

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Category	2024-25		2023-24		2022-23	
High	21	21	13	14	14	9
Medium	44	44	65	68	87	58
Low	35	35	17	18	48	33
Total	100	100	95	100	149	100

- 6.5 Of the 100 implications raised, these related to: -

- 69 (69%) control adequacy;
- 29 (29%) control application;
- 2 (2%) systems efficiency.

This indicates that the work undertaken in year has resulted in over half of the agreed management actions relating to improving the adequacy of the controls in place (e.g. policies, procedures, management checks), with the remaining implications relating to issues of compliance with existing controls (29%) and also more efficient ways of working (2%).

- 6.6 Of the 21 high implications:

- 8 were raised in the COSS review;
- 5 were raised in the Early Years Education Funding review;
- 3 were raised in the CRSTS review;
- 2 were raised in the Children's Sustainability Plan review;
- 2 were raised in the Application of AI Governance & Controls review;
- 1 was raised in the LAG Cyber Security Strategy review.

In respect of the 21 implications above, 7 have been implemented, 11 have implementation dates that are not yet due and 3 require an update from management on the current status (implementation date recently passed).

Although there has been significant pressure on management throughout the year and across all services, Corporate Assurance has continued to get good co-operation from management from all Business Units.

- 6.7 Details of the key issues arising from these reviews have been presented to the Committee in the Corporate Assurance progress reports. These findings have arisen across reviews ranging from specific establishments to areas of governance.
- 6.8 In addition to the formal corporate assurance reports attracting an assurance opinion, other briefing papers/ reports have been issued in an advisory/consultancy context. A number of these reports are the product of significant Corporate Assurance input and over many months in some cases. These reports also contribute to the overall assurance opinion. Such input enables Corporate Assurance to assist management as initiatives, projects or reviews are progressing, thus helping establish effective controls and governance from the outset. In working this way, it is made clear to management in the scoping of Corporate Assurance work that we remain independent from decision-making.

The major advisory reports have covered:

- COSS Review
- Early Years Education Funding

- 6.9 As stated in the Corporate Assurance progress reports it is important to note that the identification of control weaknesses does not necessarily indicate that any loss or inefficiency has actually occurred. Weaknesses indicate an increased *potential/risk* that losses or inefficiencies could arise.
- 6.10 An important part of Corporate Assurance's assessment of controls is undertaken through the annual reviews of the core financial systems of the Authority. This work is considered by External Audit who have regard to Corporate Assurance's work to assist in their opinion on the financial systems for their audit of the Accounts.
- 6.11 A number of the core financial system reviews are completed, with others nearing completion. It is appropriate to highlight the excellent co-operation once again received from the Finance Team. A separate section on the core system reviews is given below.
- 6.12 In relation to specific establishments or other minor systems, controls are tested at a lower level to ensure the detailed operation of systems and procedures, and the use of assets and resources are effective.
- 6.13 During the year, all corporate assurance report management actions were followed up in accordance with the current protocol. As reported through the Corporate Assurance progress reports, the percentage of management actions implemented by the agreed dates has not given any cause for concern.

Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of the current status of all agreed management actions in relation to the 2024-25 planned Corporate Assurance activity.

- 6.14 The Committee has continued to monitor this situation. Senior management are aware of their responsibilities to implement agreed management actions to ensure any control, risk or governance weaknesses identified through corporate assurance work are corrected. Clearly, any significant delay in implementation or non-implementation weakens the overall control environment.

### Core System Reviews

- 6.15 Overall there are 12 systems regarded as core and fundamental to the financial management of the Authority (the Procurement Compliance system has been added into the Strategy for 2024-25). Over the last few years there has been a detailed risk assessment undertaken to establish the extent of coverage each system requires given a number of factors, namely any significant changes in the system or key personnel, the assurance opinion from the previous review and the results of an analytical review undertaken by Corporate Assurance. The outcome of this risk assessment is discussed and agreed with the Section 151 Officer.
- 6.16 Transactional and key control testing covered both 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. As External Audit do not rely directly on Corporate Assurance work, it is no longer critical that the work covers the whole financial year. The assurance opinions given for each of the systems in previous years and the agreed level of coverage for 2024-25 are shown in the table below.

<b>Core System</b>	<b>Corporate Assurance Coverage 2024-25*</b>	Assurance Opinion 2023/24	Assurance Opinion 2022-23	Assurance Opinion 2021-22
Purchase to Pay / Accounts Payable	<b>Compliance</b>	Reasonable	Advisory – no opinion	Advisory – no opinion
Income	<b>Full</b>	No Audit	Reasonable	Reasonable
Council Tax	<b>No Audit</b>	Reasonable	Reasonable	Reasonable
NDR	<b>Walkthrough</b>	Reasonable	No Audit	No Audit
Housing Benefits	<b>No Audit</b>	Reasonable	Reasonable	Reasonable
Pay, Employee Admin & Org. Management	<b>Compliance</b>	Substantial	Reasonable	Reasonable
Main Accounting	<b>Compliance</b>	Reasonable	Reasonable	Reasonable
Housing Rents**	<b>Compliance</b>	Reasonable	Reasonable	Reasonable
Fixed Assets	<b>Compliance</b>	No Audit	Reasonable	Reasonable
Treasury Management	<b>Walkthrough</b>	No Audit	Substantial	Substantial
Insurance	<b>Walkthrough</b>	No Audit	Reasonable	Reasonable
Procurement Compliance	<b>Compliance</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* A **Walkthrough** review tests the end-to-end processes to provide assurance on the internal control framework. A **Compliance** review includes sample testing of transactions in addition to the work undertaken in a Walkthrough. A **Full** review includes wider management and supervision elements.

\*\* Undertaken as part of the Berneslai Homes Corporate Assurance Plan.

### Summary of Control Issues

6.17 During the year the Committee has received Corporate Assurance progress reports that highlighted key control issues that could potentially undermine the provision of an overall positive assurance opinion for the year. The major concerns that resulted in the issue of limited assurance opinions / high implications in relation to particular reviews were: -

- **Childrens Development / Sufficiency Plan** – a review of the Sufficiency Plan noted that specific service improvement areas had been identified but sample testing confirmed that there was a lack of evidence to confirm the detailed actions to be taken to drive these forward and provide the basis upon which progress could be monitored. It was acknowledged that a series of Dashboards are being developed to capture, monitor, and report on achievement of savings. In addition, whilst a Performance Framework and KPI's have been established to measure the effectiveness of identifying and measuring the success of implementation of actions against the Development Plan and improving services within Children's Services, there was a lack of evidence to support discussions held to identify / highlight priority KPIs and concerns were raised in relation to the quality and reliability of performance data and the impact that this may have on the accuracy of reporting.
- **Application of AI (Governance and Controls)** - the assurance opinion provided is due to the absence of a robust governance framework, lack of detailed performance measures / targets and benefits realised information as well as the low uptake of mandatory training. The AMAs agreed and incorporated into this final report will put in place a robust control framework and a follow up corporate assurance review will be completed as part of the 2025/26 work programme.
- **CRSTS** – the review identified a number of governance improvements that are required and also a lack of document retention to evidence plans/ decisions/ actions etc.
- **PCNs Car Parking** – the review confirmed that the framework requires enhancement to ensure that it operates efficiently and effectively and is fully compliant with legislative and statutory guidance requirements.

## **7. Local Area Implications**

7.1 There are no Local Area Implications arising from this report.

## **8. Consultations**

8.1 All corporate assurance reports are discussed with the main auditee. Individual reports are provided to the appropriate Executive and/or Service Director to apprise him/her of key issues raised and remedial actions agreed. No specific consultation has been necessary in the preparation of this annual report.

## **9. Compatibility with European Convention on Human Rights**

- 9.1 In the conduct of investigations, Corporate Assurance operates under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

## **10. Reduction of Crime and Disorder**

- 10.1 An inherent aspect of corporate assurance work is to prevent, detect and investigate incidents of fraud, theft, and corruption. All pieces of corporate assurance work have fraud risks considered in their scope. Any control issues arising from investigations are considered to ensure improvements in overall controls. Additionally, Corporate Assurance ensures that, in specific instances, management takes appropriate action to minimise the risks of fraud and corruption re-occurring.

## **11. Risk Management Considerations**

- 11.1 Whilst there are no specific risks emanating as a result of this report there are a range of risk issues worthy of consideration and note.
- 11.2 The Committee has received a detailed report on the corporate assurance plan including the basis of the plan and the utilisation of risk information. This is a critical aspect of the corporate assurance function and seeks to ensure corporate assurance resources are targeted at the areas of the Council's business where the most significant risks have been identified.
- 11.3 There is a risk to the Authority as a whole should the Corporate Assurance function not be effective. This would undermine the internal control, risk and governance arrangements of the Authority and fail to provide the Committee with sufficient independent information upon which to base their assurance views upon. The provision of detailed Corporate Assurance progress reports during the year, plus this interim annual report and the report on the QAIP should act as mitigation in ensuring the Committee is in a position to constantly keep the corporate assurance function under review.
- 11.4 There is a risk to the Authority should Corporate Assurance not be in a position to undertake its work independently and objectively. Throughout the year, there has been no impairment of independence or objectivity.
- 11.5 There is a risk to the control and governance of the Authority if management fail to implement their agreed actions to address the implications identified during corporate assurance work. In mitigation Corporate Assurance has introduced a more rigorous 'follow-up' process to ensure the most significant issues are implemented. This is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee within the progress and annual reports.

## **12. Employee Implications**

- 12.1 There are no employee implications arising from this report.

### **13. Financial Implications**

- 13.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The costs of the Corporate Assurance function and the external audit fees are included within the Authority's base budget.

### **14. Appendices**

- 14.1 Appendix 1 - Summary of Corporate Assurance Reports 2024-25  
Appendix 2 - Details and Outcomes of other Corporate Assurance Activities  
Appendix 3 - Work In Progress  
Appendix 4 - Agreed Management Actions  
Appendix 5 – Financial Year End Performance Indicators 2024-25

### **15. Background Papers**

- 15.1 Various Corporate Assurance and External Audit reports, files and working papers.

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**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

## Appendix 1

Directorate	Title of Review & Date of Formal Report	Assurance Opinion	No. & Priority of Implications and Control Adequacy/ Application/ Systems Efficiency	Governance / Risk / Control	Governance Themes	Follow-up Action
Core Services	Financial System: Treasury Management 22/07/2024	Substantial	N/A	G/ R / C	N/A	N/A
Childrens Services	Early Years Education Funding 03/09/2024	N/A	H – 5 M – 0 L – 0  Adequacy – 5 Application - 0 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Information Governance / Security x 4  Performance Management and Data Quality x 1	Closed x 2  Management Update Required x 3
Core Services	Financial System: Income 04/09/2024	Substantial	H – 0 M – 0 L – 2  Adequacy – 2 Application - 0 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Information Governance / Security x 1  Performance Management and Data Quality x 1	Management Assurance Process x 2
Core Services	Financial System: Insurances 26/09/2024	Substantial	N/A	G/ R / C	N/A	N/A
Strategic	AGR/ AGS Process 15/10/2024	Reasonable	H – 0 M – 2 L – 4  Adequacy – 4 Application - 1 Systems Efficiency – 1	G/ R / C	Performance Management and Data Quality x 6	Closed x 2  Management Assurance Process x 4

## Appendix 1

Directorate	Title of Review & Date of Formal Report	Assurance Opinion	No. & Priority of Implications and Control Adequacy/ Application/ Systems Efficiency	Governance / Risk / Control	Governance Themes	Follow-up Action
Core Services	Business Continuity Plans (Cyber) 21/11/2024	Reasonable	H – 0 M – 4 L – 0  Adequacy – 1 Application - 3 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Business Continuity / Emergency Resilience x 4	Management Update Required x 3  Revised Date Provided – Not Yet Due x 1
Growth & Sustainability	Barnsley Property Services (BPS) 26/11/2024	Reasonable	H – 0 M – 5 L – 4  Adequacy – 3 Application - 5 Systems Efficiency – 1	G/ R / C	Performance Management and Data Quality x 2  Business Continuity / Emergency Resilience x 1  Information Systems Management x 1  Project and Programme Management x 1  Procurement / Commissioning / Contract Management x 4	Management Update Required x 4  Revised Date Provided – Not Yet Due x 1  Management Assurance Process x 4
Childrens Services	Childrens Development / Financial Sustainability Plan 04/12/2024	Reasonable / Limited	H – 2 M – 3 L – 2  Adequacy – 7 Application - 0 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Performance Management and Data Quality x 5  Financial Management x 2	Closed x 5  Management Assurance Process x 2

## Appendix 1

Directorate	Title of Review & Date of Formal Report	Assurance Opinion	No. & Priority of Implications and Control Adequacy/ Application/ Systems Efficiency	Governance / Risk / Control	Governance Themes	Follow-up Action
Core Services	Financial System: Fixed Assets 06/12/2024	Substantial	H – 0 M – 0 L – 2  Adequacy – 0 Application - 2 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Performance Management and Data Quality x 2	Management Assurance Process x 2
Growth & Sustainability	COSS Review 06/12/2024	N/A	H – 8 M – 6 L – 0  Adequacy – 10 Application - 4 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Information Governance / Security x 1  Financial Management x 3  Asset Management (Estates and Non-IT Equipment) x 3  Procurement / Commissioning / Contract Management x 4  Performance Management and Data Quality x 3	Closed x 1 (H)  Revised Date Provided – Not Yet Due x 13
Childrens Services	SEND Safety Valve Programme 13/12/2024	Substantial	N/A	G/ R / C	N/A	N/A
Core Services	Financial System: NNDR 18/12/2024	Substantial	N/A	G/ R / C	N/A	N/A

## Appendix 1

Directorate	Title of Review & Date of Formal Report	Assurance Opinion	No. & Priority of Implications and Control Adequacy/ Application/ Systems Efficiency	Governance / Risk / Control	Governance Themes	Follow-up Action
Core Services	Application of AI - Governance & Controls 20/01/2025	Limited	H – 2 M – 2 L – 4  Adequacy – 5 Application - 3 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Information Governance / Security x 3  Ethical Standards & Conduct Management x 2  Decision Making Arrangements x 1  Performance Management and Data Quality x 1  Risk Management x 1	Closed x 1 (H)  Not Yet Due x 2 (H/M)  Revised Date Provided – Not Yet Due x 1 (M)  Management Assurance Process x 4
Core Services	Financial System: Main Accounting 05/03/2025	Substantial	N/A	G/ R / C	N/A	N/A
Public Health & Communities	Counter Terrorism 18/03/205	Reasonable	H – 0 M – 2 L – 2  Adequacy – 1 Application - 3 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Legislative Compliance x 2  Risk Management x 1  Performance Management and Data Quality x 1	Not Yet Due x 2  Management Assurance Process x 2

## Appendix 1

Directorate	Title of Review & Date of Formal Report	Assurance Opinion	No. & Priority of Implications and Control Adequacy/ Application/ Systems Efficiency	Governance / Risk / Control	Governance Themes	Follow-up Action
BMBC Schools	Lacewood Primary School 19/03/2025	Reasonable	H – 0 M – 6 L – 9  Adequacy – 11 Application - 4 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Financial Management x 5  Information Governance / Security x 3  Asset Management (Estates and Non-IT Equipment) x 1  Business Continuity / Emergency Resilience x 1  Performance Management and Data Quality x 2  Health and Safety x 1  Risk Management x 1  Ethical Standards & Conduct Management x 1	Closed x 5  Not Yet Due x 1  Management Assurance Process x 9
Growth & Sustainability	CRSTS 26/03/2025	Limited	H – 3 M – 2 L – 0  Adequacy – 5 Application - 0 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Project and Programme Management x 1  Performance Management and Data Quality x 3  Information Governance / Security x 1	Not Yet Due x 5

## Appendix 1

Directorate	Title of Review & Date of Formal Report	Assurance Opinion	No. & Priority of Implications and Control Adequacy/ Application/ Systems Efficiency	Governance / Risk / Control	Governance Themes	Follow-up Action
Growth & Sustainability	PCNs Car Parking 26/03/2024	Limited	H – 0 M – 9 L – 3  Adequacy – 11 Application - 1 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Information Governance / Security x 2  Legislative Compliance x 3  Performance Management and Data Quality x 3  Business Continuity / Emergency Resilience x 3  Financial Management x 1	Not Yet Due x 9  Management Assurance Process x 3
Core Services	LGA Cyber Security Strategy 01/04/2025	Reasonable	H – 1 M – 1 L – 0  Adequacy – 2 Application - 0 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Information Governance / Security x 1  Performance Management and Data Quality x 1	Closed x 1 (H)  Not Yet Due x 1 (M)
Strategic	Strategic Risk, Concerns and Issues Framework 22/04/2025	Reasonable	H – 0 M – 2 L – 3  Adequacy – 2 Application - 3 Systems Efficiency – 0	G/ R / C	Risk Management x 5	Not Yet Due x 2  Management Assurance Process x 3

**Details and outcome of other Corporate Assurance activities concluded in the period**

<b>Corporate Assurance Work Completed</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Contribution to Assurance</b>
Place Based Health & Adult Social Care: Adult Social Care Services	Advice, support and challenge during its implementation of the Governance Action Plan, in readiness for the Funding Reforms and in preparedness of a CQC inspection.	The work contributes to assurance in respect of governance, risk, and financial management.
Childrens Services: Supporting Families – Quarterly validation	Grant claim validation.	The work contributes to assurance in respect of financial management.
Core / G&S: Capital Project Board Attendance (Various)	Provide independent and objective assurance that effective and efficient risk, control and governance arrangements exist to provide a robust framework upon which the projects can be delivered (i.e. on time, in budget & to standard).	The work contributes to assurance in respect to contract management, governance, and financial management.
Core: People Board	Provide independent and objective assurance that effective and efficient risk, control and governance arrangements exist to provide a robust framework upon which the strategy objectives can be delivered.	The work contributes to assurance in respect of governance and risk.
Core: Various Grant Claims and Charity Accounts	To independently validate and sign off the accounts in accordance with the grant T&Cs / Charity Commission requirements.	The work contributes to assurance in respect of financial management.
Core / G&S: BMBC/BH Service Agreement	To provide advice, support, and challenge to the Council and Berneslai Homes with regards to the Service Agreement.	The work contributes to assurance in respect to governance, risk, and financial management.
Core: Contract Management Toolkit	To provide independent and objective advice, support and challenge during the development of the contract management toolkit.	The work contributes to assurance in respect to governance, risk, and financial management.
Public Health & Communities: Quality and Governance	To provide advice, support and challenge to the Public Health Quality and Governance Group with regards to quality assurance and data quality.	The work contributes to assurance in respect to governance, risk, and financial management.

**Work in Progress as at 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025**

Directorate & Corporate Assurance Assignment	Status / Comment
Strategic: Strategic Concerns and Issues (Check and Challenge)	Review Stage
Strategic: Corporate Anti-Fraud Risk Management	In Progress
Strategic: MTFS	In Progress
Core Services: Financial System, Purchase to Pay	Draft Report
Core Services: Financial System, Payroll	In Progress
Core Services: Financial System, Procurement Compliance	Review Stage
Core Services: Procurement Card Compliance	Draft Report
Core Services: Use of Consultants	In Progress
Core Services: Use of Agency Staff	In Progress
Core Services: Declaration of Interests (Follow Up)	Draft Report
Childrens Services: Procurement	In Progress
BMBC Schools: Jump Primary School	Final Draft Report
BMBC Schools: Penistone Grammar School	Review Stage

## Analysis of Agreed Management Actions Relating to 2024-25 Planned Corporate Assurance Activity

Implication Categorisation	No. of Implications	Not Yet Due – Future Implementation Date Agreed	Completed	Not yet completed – Revised date agreed	Not yet completed – Awaiting Management Update
<b>Place Based Health &amp; Adult Social Care</b>					
High	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Growth &amp; Sustainability</b>					
High	11	3	1	7	0
Medium	22	11	0	7	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Childrens Services (incl. Schools)</b>					
High	7	0	4	0	3
Medium	9	1	8	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Core Services</b>					
High	3	1	2	0	0
Medium	7	2	0	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Public Health &amp; Communities</b>					
High	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	2	2	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Council Wide (Strategic)</b>					
High	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	4	0	4	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>%</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>

## Corporate Assurance Performance Indicators - Quarter Four 2024/25

Ref.	Indicator	Frequency of Report	Target 2024/25	This Period (Q4)	Year to Date
<b>1.</b>	<b><u>Customer Perspective:</u></b>				
1.1	Percentage of questionnaire received noted “good” or “very good” relating to work concluding with a report.	Quarterly	95%	100%	100%
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>Business Process Perspective:</u></b>				
2.1	Percentage of final reports issued within 10 working days of completion and agreement of the draft report.	Quarterly	80%	100%	100%
2.2	Percentage of chargeable time against total available.	Quarterly	68%	69%	78%
2.3	Average number of days lost through sickness per FTE	Quarterly	6 days	0 days	3.69 days
<b>3.</b>	<b><u>Continuous Improvement Perspective:</u></b>				
3.1	Personal development plans for staff completed within the prescribed timetable.	Annual	100%	100%	100%
<b>4.</b>	<b><u>Financial Perspective:</u></b>				
4.1	Total Corporate Assurance costs v budget.	Quarterly	Within Budget	Within Budget	Within Budget