

Internal Audit – Work during Covid-19

Internal Audit	
Background	The Internal Audit Team have continued to work from home throughout the Covid pandemic. The team have supported the wellbeing hub with two members of the team but as the demand for this service reduced one member of the team returned to audit work, however, due to pressure on other service areas we were unable to continue with audit work to the usual capacity and as a result furloughed one member of the team. The team is now back working at full capacity.
Wellbeing Hub	The two team members that have supported the Wellbeing Hub have now returned to audit work.
Business Grants	The Audit Managers have assisted the rating team with the administration and processing of the Government Business Support Grants along with the Discretionary Grants and also assisted with the post award assurance returns required by Government. We have now assigned an independent member of the team to carry out some audit testing of the business grants. Due to the Audit Managers involvement of the process the auditor has been instructed to report any concerns direct to the Director of Finance to ensure independence is maintained.
Leisure Facilities Return In-house	The Internal Audit Team have assisted with the transfer of the Leisure Facilities from Parkwood Leisure back in-house by assisting with verification checks on the inventories and stock checks.
Internal Audit Plan	As reported previously we are not going to be able to complete the agreed 2020/21 audit plan, therefore, we have made a number of proposed changes to the plan and will be seeking approval of the changes from the Audit and Governance Committee on 16/09/2020. We will be continuing to monitor the plan and will make further proposals to change the plan to ensure that our work is meeting the needs of the Council's ever changing business and risks that arise.
Current Work	Along with the work detailed above the team have just completed the audit work to support the Disabled Facilities Grant (as required by the grant provider) and are now working on the audit of the business Covid grants, Housing Benefits, Council Tax and organisational business continuity management.
Key challenges	The key challenges facing the team are; the speed of change within the organisation and making sure that our plan of work is aligned with the Council's needs. We also face challenges with all staff working from home making audit work more challenging with regard to access to information and staff, however, we are learning new ways of working to overcome these challenges.
Recovery Plans	The audit team are now working at full capacity and proposed amendments to the 2020/21 audit plan are being presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 16/09/2020. The audit plan of work is under constant review.

City Centre / BID (InExeter) Recovery Phase update

<p>Background</p>	<p>Teams within Environment and City Management have been leading the recovery phase for the City providing links to the County Council Recovery Groups. We have provided lead officers for the ECC City Centre, the Business Support and Education Recovery Groups as well the DCC Recovery Groups such as the Recovery Coordination Group, Business and Economy Recovery Task Group, as well as the Place and People Sub Groups. Environment and City Management have worked as one to help the City to recover, and continues to do so.</p>
<p>Current Work</p>	<p>Officers within Growth & Commercialisation have supported the Business Rates team with developing, administration and the processing of the Discretionary Business Grants. A new grants scheme announced by central government is being worked up, this is to support business if there is a local lockdown within Exeter.</p> <p>Work has started to pull together a number of external service providers under the banner of 'Exeter Works'. This is to work with those who have recently been made redundant, to support them back into training or employment. This is in partnership with Exeter Chamber of Commerce. This project links to the national Kickstart programme, to support young people in temporary employment. The team are leading on this activity for Exeter, to ensure SME's are able employ young people.</p> <p>Commercial Manager has returned from furlough. Work continues to support other service areas to generate new income, especially through Waste Management and Fleet to win new contracts.</p> <p>Thoughts and discussion being pulled together on the next phase of recovery for the city centre, addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the city centre. Ensuring there is a mix of retail, residential, commercial (office), study and social space.</p>
<p>Key challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoring confidence for residents to return to the City Centre • Encouraging people to adhere to social distancing measures in the city centre and a number of neighbourhoods • Footfall not returning to pre-COVID-19 levels • City centre office workers continuing to work from home • Universal Credit claimants for Exeter is the highest its been since Feb 1996 • Businesses affected by lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions • Generating additional income to the City Council • InExeter (the BID) have only received 37% of their annual income (BID levy), direct impact on the delivery of their business plan • Brexit and the potential impact of a no deal scenario
<p>Recovery Plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social distancing measures including signs, floor stencils, banners and one way pedestrian systems installed in our car parks, throughout the main shopping areas of the City Centre and a number of neighbourhood centres

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued liaison with the BID, Chamber of Commerce and Exeter FSB. Initially launched the 'Stronger Together' campaign to encourage local purchasing (both for consumers and businesses to business transactions) • Established the City Centre Recovery Group – Chair John Laramy from Exeter College – to develop a recovery plan for the city centre to ensure its long term survival and growth • Established the Exeter Business Support Recovery Group – Chair Matthew Roach from Exeter Airport – to support businesses adapting to the effects of Coronavirus and to address skill / re-training needs for residents • Established a simple, streamlined process for assessing applications for pavement licences for additional tables and chairs as per the Governments temporary legislation. This will assist hospitality businesses to trade while social distancing rules are in place
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Strata & IT Requirements

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Key Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring ICT requirements for agile and flexible working for members and officers are in place • Redesigning processes to provide high-quality and accessible online services and information • Ensuring ICT is in place to support a unified contact centre • Addressing digital exclusion