

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting:

Audit Committee – 14 January 2025

Report title:

External inspections, reviews, and audits update

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included in the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report:

Jo Brown – Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s):

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Ward(s) Affected:

All

Report Summary:

In line with the Audit Committee terms of reference, the purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the recent external inspections, reviews, and audits. The report also provides assurance that ongoing and outstanding recommendations from earlier inspections, audits and reviews, are being progressed.

The report includes a summary of progress against the recommendations from all external inspections, reviews and audits and sets out the details of arrangements for ensuring the accountability and governance around their implementation.

Recommendations:

That Audit Committee:

- Note the recent external inspections, reviews and audits which have taken place and the progress made in implementing the recommendations since the last report in July 2024.

- Note the governance arrangements that are currently in place for monitoring and managing the recommendations.
- Continue to receive regular reports in relation to external inspections, reviews and audits and the progress made.

List of Appendices Included:

- Appendix 1 - External inspections, reviews, and audits recommendations/areas for improvement updates – December 2024.

Background Papers

External audit and inspection recommendations reports to Audit Committee on 11 January 2022, 28 July 2022, 10 January 2023, 27 July 2023, 9 January 2024, and 30 July 2024.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

External audits, inspections, and reviews update

1. Background

- 1.1 In line with the Audit Committee terms of reference, the purpose of this report is to provide details of the recent external inspections, reviews and audits across the Council and assurance that recommendations and areas for improvement are being progressed.
- 1.2 The last report was presented to Audit Committee on 30 July 2024. The report referred to external inspections, reviews and audits that had taken place since January 2024 which included eleven new external inspections, reviews, and audits.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 This report focusses on progress since the last Audit Committee meeting in July 2024 and is intended to provide an overview of the outcomes of external inspections, reviews, and audits. The report also aims to provide Audit Committee with assurance that arrangements are in place for managing the Council's response, including effective governance arrangements.
- 2.2 Governance arrangements are in place for monitoring and managing external inspection, review, and audit recommendations within each directorate. Regular progress against the recommendations is also reported and considered by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 2.3 Seven new inspections, reviews, and audits have taken place since July 2024. These include:

Children and Young People's Services

Title	Date	Purpose	Outcome
Ofsted Area SEND inspection of Rotherham Local Area Partnership	September-October 2024	The review focused on the provisions for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) arrangements.	<p>The final report and recommendations were published in November 2024.</p> <p>The local area partnership's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>Two areas for recommendations were identified. Work was already ongoing prior to the inspection to the two areas for improvement and will continue.</p>
Children's Home 037521	June 2024	Residential children's homes are inspected by HMI Ofsted under	Overall rating 'good'.

		the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) and focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children.	One recommendation made.
Children's Home 2662265	July 2024	Residential children's homes are inspected by HMI Ofsted under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) and focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children.	Overall rating 'good'. One recommendation made.
Children's Home 2629335	August 2024	Residential children's homes are inspected by HMI Ofsted under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) and focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children.	Overall rating 'requires improvement to be good'. Four recommendations made.
Children's Home 2775749	July 2024	Residential children's homes are inspected by HMI Ofsted under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) and focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children.	Overall rating 'good'. Two recommendations made.

Adult Social Care, Housing and Public Health

Title	Date	Purpose	Outcome
Public Health Peer Review	October 2024	Voluntary Sector Led Improvement across the Public Health teams in the Yorkshire and Humber.	Positive feedback received and four recommendations were identified. The findings were discussed at the Public Health Senior Management Team Planning Day in November 2024 and presented to Health Select Committee in November 2024.

Regeneration and Environment

Title	Date	Purpose	Outcome
Sports Ground Safety Authority – Local Authority Audit (Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA))	August 2024	An audit by the National regulator to assess the Council's delivery of statutory functions under the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975. The audits are carried out at a frequency determined by risk assessment.	The Council was rated as low risk, and three recommendations were made. Recommendations one and three have been accepted, the one remaining outstanding recommendation will be implemented within the next 6 months.

2.4 In addition to the above and since the last report, the findings from two external reviews conducted previously have now been received:

- Care Leavers Peer Review (*Local Government Association*) conducted in March 2024.

The peer review, requested by the council, focussed on arrangements for children in care and care leavers.

Five areas for improvement were identified, which are all now complete. These are awaiting final approval at the Children and Young People's Evidence Challenge Panel before being signed off as completed.

- Ofsted Focused Visit conducted May – July 2024.

These usually take place every three years, to review the arrangements for children in need or those subject to a child protection plan.

The findings were published in July 2024 and four areas for improvement were identified. An action plan is in place to address the recommendations.

2.5 There are also four annual audits which remain ongoing. These are:

- Housing Benefit Audit 2022/23 conducted by Grant Thornton commenced in May 2024
- Statement of Accounts 2023/24 conducted by Grant Thornton commenced in March 2024
- Value for Money Review 2023/24 conducted by Grant Thornton commenced in March 2024
- Teachers' Pension Audit conducted by KPMG commenced in September 2024.

2.6 Appendix 1 provides an overview a high-level of overview of the recommendations and areas for improvement as well as he progress the Council has made in responding to these. Once recommendations and areas for

improvement are complete or closed and have been reported to Audit Committee, they will be removed from the list. Where possible to do so, recommendations and actions have been grouped together under themes.

- 2.7 In total 13 recommendations or areas for improvement have been completed since the last report. There are 21 recommendations or areas for improvement which remain ongoing and two are yet to start. Of those ongoing, two of these are delayed, however none are delayed more than 12 months. The reasons for the delays are summarised within Appendix 1.
- 2.8 With regards to residential children’s homes inspections, recommendations and progress are considered monthly with oversight from the “Regulation 44” visits and Ofsted. This is more frequent than the Audit Committee schedule and therefore any recommendations and progress against these are not included within the reports to Audit Committee.
- 2.9 The status ratings applied to demonstrate the current position for each inspection, review, and audit include:

Complete	All recommendations/areas for improvement are fully complete
In progress and on track	All recommendations/areas for improvement are on track to be delivered by the original agreed deadline
In progress and partly delayed	Recommendations/areas for improvement progressing, however target date for one or more area is behind the original agreed deadline
Significant delay	All recommendations/areas for improvement delayed or one area delayed more than twelve months past the original agreed deadline
No action required	There are no recommendations/areas for improvement, or the outcome is not yet known

3. Lessons learnt

- 3.1 The Council continues to share learning from external inspections, reviews and audits across services and other directorates, where appropriate, to prevent future concerns/problems arising and enhance service delivery.
- 3.2 Furthermore, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge report noted that the Council had *‘opened itself to a range of peer reviews to support a learning culture’*. The report also stated, *‘The council has undergone an impressive transformation and has many exemplary and commendable practices that other councils can learn from’*.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 Audit Committee to note the recent external inspections, reviews and audits which have taken place and the progress made in implementing the recommendations since the last report in July 2024.

- 4.2 Audit Committee to note the governance arrangements that are currently in place for monitoring and managing the recommendations.
- 4.3 Audit Committee to continue to receive regular reports in relation to external inspections, reviews and audits and the progress made.

5. Consultation on proposal

- 5.1 Not applicable to this report.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The timescale for each recommendation varies depending on the individual inspection or audit. Target dates for each are included on Appendix 1.
- 6.2 The next report will be presented to Audit Committee in July 2025.

7. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial and procurement implications as a result of this report.
- 7.2 Audits relating to finance and procurement and any related recommendations are outlined in the main body of the report.

8. Legal Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.
- 8.2 Audits relating to legal services and any recommendations are outlined above.

9. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 9.1 There are no Human Resources implications.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The recommendations in relation to inspections in both Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care have direct implications on the quality of services provided to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Completing the recommendations will improve outcomes for these groups.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 11.1 When implementing changes and improvements services are to consider the impacts on services users and communities, including an individual or group with a protected characteristic. This may require the completion of an equality analysis to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences.

11.2 An Equalities Informal Peer Challenge took place in March – April 2022 and actions are being progress via the existing Council’s Equality Framework Action Plan.

12. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

12.1 There are no direct CO2 emissions and climate change implications.

13. Implications for Partners

13.1 Partnership approaches are key to improving services and the improvements need to be of a multi-agency nature and owned cross the partnership.

14. Risks and Mitigation

14.1 There is a risk that actions are reported as completed without substance, it is important that arrangements are in place as part of the respective quality assurance regimes and monitored through performance management, evidencing not just completion of actions, but the associated outcomes. As governance arrangements are strengthened, these risks become mitigated.

15. Accountable Officer(s)

Simon Dennis, Policy Improvement and Risk Manager

Tanya Lound, Corporate Improvement and Risk Officer

Approvals Obtained from:-

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

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