

Assurance Group – Q1 2015/16

1. SUMMARY

1.1 DELIVERY UNIT DASHBOARD

Financial	
Projected year-end revenue budget variance	Capital actual variance
(7)	N/A

	Performance	Commissioning Intentions
Green rated	N/A	N/A
Green Amber rated	N/A	N/A
Red Amber rated	N/A	N/A
Red rated	N/A	N/A

1.2 TOP ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIONS

Top Achievements

May 2015 UK Parliamentary Elections - Successful planning, implementation and delivery of the UK Parliamentary elections in LBB's three constituencies (and of the Garden Suburb ward's by-election) on 7 May 2015. The borough had a turnout of 68.2% (against a national average of 66.1%) and a Postal Vote turnout of 81.2% (believed to be a record PV turnout for Barnet). The elections were run under the interim IER arrangements of Electoral Registration and despite the challenges that this posed it has been generally accepted by all stakeholders that the results were delivered in a professional, transparent and legitimate manner.

Annual Council Meeting – the Governance Service, with support from other areas of the Council, delivered a successful Annual Council meeting on 13 May 2015. A new Mayor was anointed and appointments to committees and other bodies were made.

Benefit Fraud Investigation Transfer to the DWP –On the 1st July 2015 Barnet became a Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) site in relation to benefit fraud investigations. SFIS is the creation of a national single integrated fraud investigation service within the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It has statutory powers to conduct single investigations and sanctions covering the totality of welfare benefit fraud (all DWP benefits, Local Authority benefits and HMRC credits). CAFT successfully migrated 105 on-going benefit cases to SFIS and 3 investigators from CAFT also transferred to the DWP.

Office of Surveillance Commissioners (OSC) Inspection – In May 2015 the council was inspected by the OSC in relation to its procedures and working practices covering ‘directed surveillance’. The council received a good inspection report with no recommendations for improvement or change made which is a great achievement for the Assurance Group who administer and control the process within the council.

Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CAFT) Prosecutions – this first quarter see’s CAFT complete two successful complex investigations as summarised below:-

1. A first successful prosecution of the new social housing offence (Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013) for Barnet. A Tenant had a two bedroom property in the EN5 area. There were suspicions that she was sub-letting her property and also claiming housing benefits for a period when she had moved abroad with her daughter. Investigations showed that she was abroad from September 2013 to August 2014. In view of the evidence gathered, the tenant was asked to attend an interview under caution. She admitted that she had been abroad for the above period. She was charged with a social housing offence contrary to Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 and also for claiming housing benefit totalling £2816.13 while she was abroad. She pleaded guilty to these offences and was given 2 years conditional discharge and ordered to pay £500 costs.
2. Relates to a case of fraudulently obtaining refund payments in respect of Barnet’s Council Tax refund process of overpaid amounts or cancellations due to vacation of property. The investigation identified the suspect, a resident in Harrow, who used false names to open more than 20 fraudulent council tax accounts by stating that he was due to move into these properties. On receipt of the council tax bill the suspect would pay the full amount (via forged or counterfeit) cheque which he deposited at a post office for onward credit to the council in respect of the fraudulent council tax account. He would then contact the council and state that he was no longer moving into the property and requested that his payment be refunded to his bank account which he supplied by email. At later date the cheque that was originally lodged at the post office would be returned as lost or stolen and the council was debited those funds by the post office leaving the council tax account with a debit balance. As well as the 20 fraudulent refunds from Barnet which totalled more than £28,000, the investigation further identified that he had used the same scam to defraud funds exceeding £4,000 from the London Borough of Merton. The suspect was arrested and interviewed by CAFT officer, during legal proceedings he pleaded guilty to 27 counts of fraud totalling more than £33,000 and was

subsequently sentenced at Harrow crown court to 14 months in prison. CAFT worked with the service during the investigation to ensure that processes and controls with regard to refunds were amended to prevent this type of fraud from re-occurring.

Key Challenges	Actions required
<p>1. Print / Courier Savings 2016/17 – the Governance Service are required to deliver print and courier savings of £50K in 2016/17. This saving is at risk of not being achieved due to iPads for Members not delivering the required print and courier savings.</p>	<p>Project established to review Members IT and Telephony. Project to establish any functionality issues with Members iPads and review existing IT provision to ensure that Members are supported to go paperless, in so far as is possible.</p>
<p>2. Delivery of the first IER Full (HEF) Canvass. Between August and November 2015 all LBB households will be canvassed using a ‘Household Enquiry Form’ (HEF) ahead of the publication of the first full IER Electoral Register on 1 December 2015. The ERO (via Electoral Services) has a duty to produce a register that is as complete and accurate as possible and to fully comply with the new legislation brought in under the ERA Act 2013.</p> <p><i>NB: The Minister for Constitution Reform (John Penrose MP) has communicated that he will be laying an order before Parliament to bring forward the removal of all non-verified pre-IER electors from the register before publication of the register this December.</i></p>	<p>A high-profile and thorough wide Public Engagement Strategy is to be implemented in order to raise awareness amongst LBB’s residents of the IER canvass and the requirement upon them to respond.</p> <p>All households (and, individually, any identified new or non-verified eligible electors) must be contacted and where necessary personally visited in order to obtain a completed response. This will be done using a combination of posted forms and reminders and visits by canvassers.</p> <p><i>The updated Electoral Register must statutorily be published on 1 December 2015 and following the Minister’s decision, there will be greater pressure on ensuring as many pre-IER electors are individually verified (LBB still has approx. 15,000 (6%) non-IER verified electors on the register).</i></p>

1.3 SUMMARY OF THE DELIVERY UNIT’S PERFORMANCE

The Assurance Group do not have any corporate priority indicators but our business does have an impact on the delivery of corporate priorities. Objectives for the remainder of the year focus on delivery of business as usual and delivery of agreed work plans.

- **Governance** - In addition to the Members IT and Telephony project there are a number of other Governance Service priority improvement projects to be delivered during 2015/16 including a review of the committee system and constitution.
- **Electoral Services** - as detailed above work is on-going in relation to the upcoming canvass and publicity campaign.
- **CAFT** – have put in place new working arrangements with the DWP to deal with the new SFIS and will continue to focus on fraud other than benefit fraud such as detailed within their annual work plan. Tenancy Fraud (TF) remains a priority and Q1 saw CAFT recover 8 properties with many more on-going TF investigations.
- **Internal Audit** – Issued a ‘Satisfactory’ opinion on the council’s control environment for 2014/15.
- **Risk Assurance** – has to continue to ensure that Risk Management arrangement across the council are effective and has reviewed and refreshed SCB risk register for Q1 in line with new corporate plan.

2. Performance

The Delivery Unit do not report against any performance indicators.

3. Commitments

The Delivery Unit do not have any commissioning intentions to report against.

4. Financial

4.1 Revenue

Description	Variations				Comments	% Variation of revised budget
	Original Budget	Budget V1	Q1 Forecast	Variation		
	£000	£000	£000	£000		
Assurance Management	527	579	580	1		0.2%
Governance	2,313	2,314	2,305	(9)		-0.4%
Elections	420	421	420	(1)		-0.2%
Internal Audit & CAFT	850	850	852	2		0.2%
Total	4,110	4,164	4,157	(7)		-0.2%

4.2 Capital

N/A

5. Risk

The following is the 5 X 5 matrix 'heat map' highlighting the number of risks at a Directorate Level and where they are currently rated:

SCORE		IMPACT				
		1 Negligible	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Catastrophic
PROBABILITY	5 Almost Certain	0	0	0	0	0
	4 Likely	0	0	0	0	0
	3 Possible	0	1	3	2	0
	2 Unlikely	0	0	4	5	0
	1 Rare	0	0	1	2	1

The following risk register lists those risks rated as 12 and above: None

Risk Commentary for Delivery Unit:

Last quarter Assurance reported 2 risks rated as 12+ and these have been reviewed for Q1 and changes are detailed below:-

AG0029 (Failure of Delivery Units to meet statutory deadlines failure to obtain all late approvals for reports; non urgent, late reports circulated) has been reviewed and the controls in place have meant that this risk rating has been downgraded to a rating of 8.

AG0032 – (If unlawful or unconstitutional decisions are made they could be invalidated and business of the Council could not proceed) has also been reviewed and the controls in place have meant that this risk rating has been downgraded to a rating of 6.

This quarter a new risk has been identified within Assurance Group level relating to the impact of the upcoming office moves /accommodation project and delivery of statutory functions such as elections and canvassing –however as this is rated below 12 it is not included within this report .

Risks are reviewed regularly at Senior Management Team meetings. The controls described are an accurate reflection of the on-going activity to control and reduce

6. Equalities - N/A

Equalities description	Comments and Proposed Intervention
	<i>Using the guidance on intervention and escalation of performance challenges, Delivery Unit and Lead Commissioner should propose the level of intervention required for the equalities indicators that significantly vary from the baseline</i>

Use this section to identify the relevant equalities indicator and the protected characteristic group(s) most affected. Include the actual data on the relevant protected characteristics and how much it deviates from the headline figure. Commentary should include a summary of what the data tells you and actions to reduce the inequality gap going forward.

7. Customer Experience - N/A

Customer Experience description	Comments and Proposed Intervention
	<i>Using the guidance on intervention and escalation of performance challenges, Delivery Unit and Lead Commissioner should propose the level of intervention required for customer experience that significantly varies from the target.</i>

Use this section to identify escalated customer satisfaction information. Include actual results from service level satisfaction surveys, resident perception survey and from customer services i.e. govmetric, mystery shopping. Commentary should include a summary of what the data tells you and actions required to improve customer satisfaction where necessary and what level intervention is required.

Appendix A

Commitments which have been completed on schedule

Intention	Commitment	When	Status
(AS/001)	UK Parliamentary General Election successfully managed in line with statutory requirements	7 th and 8 th May 2015	
(AS/002)	Annual Governance Statement produced and priorities for 2015/16 agreed	June 2015	Agreed at June SCB (to be presented to Audit Committee 30July)