

FINAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT
ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

REVIEW OF CORONER & MORTUARY SERVICE AUDIT FOR 2013-14

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REVIEW OF CORONER & MORTUARY SERVICE AUDIT FOR 2013-14

INTRODUCTION

1. This report sets out the results of our systems based audit of Coroner & Mortuary Service Audit for 2013-14. The audit was carried out in quarter Q4 as part of the programmed work specified in the 2013/14 Internal Audit Plan agreed by the Section 151 Officer and Audit Sub-Committee.
2. The controls we expect to see in place are designed to minimise the department's exposure to a range of risks. Weaknesses in controls that have been highlighted will increase the associated risks and should therefore be corrected to assist overall effective operations.
3. The original scope of the audit was outlined in the Terms of Reference issued on the 10th of December 2014. The period covered by this report is from September 2012 to December 2013.
4. The total budget for the Mortuary and Coroner's Service for 2013-14 is £371,460. Of this Bromley's costs for the Coroners Service for 2013-14 are £212,500 and those for the Mortuary service are £96,710. Coroner's costs are charged by the South London Coroners and by statute Bromley has to pay these, with no say in how they are determined, Coroners costs include cost incurred for the Body Collection contract, which for 2013-14 were budgeted at £108,441. The administration of both of these costs is carried out by the London Borough of Croydon.

AUDIT SCOPE

5. The scope of the audit is detailed in the Terms of Reference.

AUDIT OPINION

6. Overall, the conclusion of this audit was that limited assurance can be placed on the effectiveness of the overall controls. Definitions of the audit opinions can be found in Appendix C.

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

7. Controls were not working well and we would like to bring to Managers attention the following areas:
 - Contract monitoring of the Corpse collection contract should be undertaken as per the SLA.
 - Budget monitoring information has not been provided to Bromley for over six months.
 - A copy of the contract in place for Mortuary service is not held on file.
 - Meetings held with the Mortuary Service provider are not minuted
 - A formal cost sharing agreement or SLA is not in place detailing Croydon's responsibilities administering the Coroners service.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (PRIORITY 1)

8. There were no significant findings identified during the audit.

DETAILED FINDINGS / MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

9. The findings of this report, together with an assessment of the risk associated with any control weaknesses identified, are detailed in Appendix A. Any recommendations to management are raised and prioritised at Appendix B.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

10. Internal Audit would like to thank all staff contacted during this review for their help and co-operation.

DETAILED FINDINGS

| No. | Findings | Risk | Recommendation |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 1 | <p>As per the contract with the Body Collection Contractor (Page 32 of the Service Specification), the contractor has a requirement to provide a discreet and dignified service for the collection of bodies within the London Boroughs of Bromley, Bexley, Croydon and Sutton, from the place of death to the Mortuary (Mortuaries are listed).</p> <p>The service is to be available 24 hours of the day, with approximately 1600 collections per annum.</p> <p>The contractor is to provide service reports on a monthly basis. They are to provide a record to the Coroner of all collections including: Name, date of collection, time call out instruction received, address of collection point, time of arrival to collect body, time of delivery to mortuary, details of the amount claimed per body collected. There is also a specific target: bodies must be collected from the place of death within 90 minutes of a call out by the coroner's officer and taken to the mortuary.</p> <p>There are a number of other requirements of the contractor, namely standards for staff and vehicles to be maintained.</p> <p>It was discussed with the Head of Elections, Civic and Registration Services (LB of Croydon), that he does not have regular meetings with the Contractor and does not receive performance reports from</p> <p>Project Code: ECH/070/01/2013 Page 4 of 11</p> | <p>Insufficient Contract monitoring of the Corpse collection contract is undertaken.</p> | <p>Contract monitoring should be undertaken of the corpse collection contract, to ensure compliance with the terms of the contract and ensure payments made are justified, given the levels of service.</p> <p>This should include figures of actual collections for each month. [Priority2]</p> |

Priority 1
Required to address major weaknesses and should be implemented as soon as possible

Priority 2
Required to address issues which do not represent good practice

Priority 3
Identification of suggested areas for improvement

DETAILED FINDINGS

| No. | Findings | Risk | Recommendation |
|-----|---|---|---|
| | <p>them or the Coroners for this service. The annual budgeted spend this contract is £82K.</p> <p>Also as part of the contract, section 15, states that the contractor will provide to the Council's Auditors, records and accounts and will provide reason-able assistance and co-operation. Evidence of the number of bodies collected was requested to determine if invoices paid are accurate. This information was not provided and so assurance could not be given that invoices paid are accurate.</p> | | |
| 2 | <p>It was discussed with the Mortuary and Bereavement Services Manager (King's College Hospital Foundation Trust), that he does hold regular meetings with the Coroner and other Managers of Mortuary Services. However these are not minuted and thus cannot be provided.</p> | <p>Insufficient Contract monitoring is undertaken of the Mortuary contract.</p> | <p>The contract monitoring meetings held with the Mortuary service, should be minuted to ensure improvements/ changes are actioned. [Priority 2]</p> |
| 3 | <p>From discussion with the Head of Elections, Civic and Registration Services (LB Croydon), the Coroners fee is determined by the Coroners each year and will be apportioned to each of the four Boroughs, dependant on Population size. This was confirmed by the Head of Environmental Protection.</p> | <p>Invoices that are provided to us from Croydon and other information provided isn't accurate.</p> | <p>Croydon as the lead authority, should provide an estimate budget for the year and budget monitoring information to</p> |

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|-----|---|---|---|
| | <p>It was discussed with the Head of Environmental Protection and Head of Elections, Civic and Registration Services (Croydon) that prior to March 2013, Croydon had been providing Bromley and the other boroughs in the agreement with a breakdown of costs and income incurred to date. Since March 2013 this has not been received at all.</p> | | <p>Bromley on a regular basis. Additionally any other Management information relevant to the provision of the service should also be provided, to allow effective monitoring. [Priority 2]</p> |
| 4 | <p>A copy of the draft SLA in place with the Princess Royal University Hospital for the provision of the Mortuary service was provided and attached. The SLA sets out the Specification of service, the Standards, Reporting arrangements, Service Channels, duration of Service, Cost of Service, Invoicing and Payment period and dispute process.</p> <p>Part of the contract states that there is no upper limit to the number of bodies placed in a year, but should the figure go above 700 in the year then the parties will review the agreement and charges. Bromley currently pays a fixed fee for the year (£95695 in 2012/13). The number of bodies placed in the last 3 years is as follows:</p> | <p>Insufficient Contract monitoring is undertaken of the Mortuary contract.</p> | <p>A copy of contract for the provision of mortuary services should be held on file, including an SLA and any appendices for it. [Priority 2]</p> |

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| | <p>2011 573, 2012 544, 2013 579.</p> <p>The contract for the provision of Mortuary Services expired on the 31/3/13. Several options for a future contract were being looked into, with the chosen decision to be to join the contract currently in place with Bexley. Though this is currently being procured a copy has not been available to be provided and thus assurance cannot be given that a sufficient contract is in place.</p> | | |

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MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

| Finding No. | Recommendation | Priority *Raised in Previous Audit | Management Comment | Responsibility | Agreed Timescale |
|-------------|--|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | <p>Contract monitoring should be undertaken of the corpse collection contract, to ensure compliance with the terms of the contract and ensure payments made are justified, given the levels of service.</p> <p>This should include figures of actual collections for each month.</p> | 2 | <p>The responsibility for monitoring the contract against payment falls with the Coroner's officer on behalf of the LB Croydon.</p> <p>A meeting has been arranged to discuss the need to produce regular reports of body movements to be correlated with the payment to ensure that the member Boroughs are receiving value for money.</p> | Head of Environmental Protection | June 2014 |
| 2 | <p>The contract monitoring meetings held with the Mortuary service, should be minuted to ensure improvements/ changes are actioned.</p> | 2 | <p>The contract management for the Mortuary lies with Kings Hospital Trust Procurement Division and regular meetings therein would be time consuming and there would be no staff available for minuting the process.</p> <p>A meeting has been arranged with the Mortuary Manager at the</p> | Head of Environmental Protection | June 2014 |

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|-------------|--|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| | | | PRUH with a view to his acting for Kings and taking the quarterly meeting locally. Minuting of the meetings will be discussed at the March monitoring meeting. | | |
| 3 | Croydon as the lead authority, should provide an estimate budget for the year and budget monitoring information to Bromley on a regular basis. Additionally any other Management information relevant to the provision of the service should also be provided, to allow effective monitoring. | 2 | Croydon have provided the report for 2013/14 to date and have set up a system to provide an electronic monthly financial report. All other management information relevant to the service is provided at the monthly Coronial 4-Borough Management meetings, which are minuted by the Coroner. | Head of Environmental Protection Head of Environmental Protection | March 2014 In place at present |
| 4 | A copy of contract for the provision of mortuary services should be held on file, including an SLA and any appendices for it. | 2 | Agreed, It was held by Legal and should have been available to the Auditor. This Division does not have storage capacity and in the past it has not been considered | Head of Environmental Protection | Ongoing |

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|-------------|----------------|------------------------------------|--|----------------|------------------|
| | | | necessary to keep copies of these contracts. However, in view of the fact that it appears the original paper work has been lost , it is proposed to scan all future contracts and keep a scanned copy electronically. | | |

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OPINION DEFINITIONS

APPENDIX C

As a result of their audit work auditors should form an overall opinion on the extent that actual controls in existence provide assurance that significant risks are being managed. They grade the control system accordingly. Absolute assurance cannot be given as internal control systems, no matter how sophisticated, cannot prevent or detect all errors or irregularities.

Assurance Level

Definition

Full Assurance

There is a sound system of control designed to achieve all the objectives tested.

Substantial Assurance

While there is a basically sound systems and procedures in place, there are weaknesses, which put some of these objectives at risk. It is possible to give substantial assurance even in circumstances where there may be a priority one recommendation that is not considered to be a fundamental control system weakness. Fundamental control systems are considered to be crucial to the overall integrity of the system under review. Examples would include no regular bank reconciliation, non-compliance with legislation, substantial lack of documentation to support expenditure, inaccurate and untimely reporting to management, material income losses and material inaccurate data collection or recording.

Limited Assurance

Weaknesses in the system of controls and procedures are such as to put the objectives at risk. This opinion is given in circumstances where there are priority one recommendations considered to be fundamental control system weaknesses and/or several priority two recommendations relating to control and procedural weaknesses.

No Assurance

Control is generally weak leaving the systems and procedures open to significant error or abuse. There will be a number of fundamental control weaknesses highlighted.