

# SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL AUDIT SERVICES

## INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

### WEST MERCIA ENERGY

#### PAYROLL 2015/16

<b>Assurance Level</b>	<b>Reasonable</b>
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<b>Customer</b>	<b>West Mercia Energy</b>
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<b>Distribution</b>	<b>Nigel Evans – Director</b>
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<b>Auditors</b>	<b>Lucy Hammond</b>
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<b>Fieldwork dates</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> September & 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2015
<b>Debrief meeting</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2015
<b>Draft report issued</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2015
<b>Responses received</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> October 2015
<b>Final report issued</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2015

## **Introduction and Background**

1. As part of the approved internal audit plan for 2015/16 Audit Services have undertaken a review of Payroll.
2. This audit has been conducted in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
3. Audit Services would like to express their thanks to the officers who assisted during the course of the audit.

## **Scope of the Audit**

4. The scope, incorporating the objectives of the audit, was agreed with key contacts at the commencement of the audit.

Follow up of the previous recommendations and audit of the payroll control process, including overtime claims, travel and subsistence expenses and the reconciliation process in place for transferring payroll costs into the Sage nominal ledger, using established documentation and testing.

The Payroll and Human Resources function within West Mercia Energy is an administrative and authorisation process with the actual payroll calculations, statutory deductions and payment being carried out by Shropshire Council and recharged on a monthly basis.

5. Audit work was undertaken to give assurance on the extent to which the following management control objectives are being achieved:
  - To ensure that previous recommendations have been implemented.
  - There are adequate segregation of duties in place.
  - Payroll data is correctly transferred and accurately processed.
  - Permanent and temporary variations to the payroll are valid, appropriately authorised, and processed accurately.
  - Travel and subsistence is appropriately controlled and actioned in a timely manner.
  - Management information is produced in an accurate and timely manner and subject to review.
  - Workforce Requirements and costs are appropriate to the tasks undertaken and the policies of the organisation.
6. The audit was delivered on time and within budget.

## **Audit Opinion**

7. An opinion is given on the effectiveness of the control environment. This indicates the level of assurance that can be given based upon testing and evaluation of the system. This opinion will be reported to the Audit Committee and will inform the Annual Governance Statement which is included in the Annual Statement of Accounts. There are four levels of assurance; Good, Reasonable, Limited and Unsatisfactory.

As a result of the evaluation and testing of the controls that are in place in the areas examined, from work undertaken Audit Services are able to give the following assurance opinion:

<b>Reasonable</b>	There is generally a sound system of control in place but there is evidence of non-compliance with some of the controls
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8. Responsibility for the maintenance of a sound system of internal control rests with management. The audit process is designed to provide a reasonable chance of discovery of material weaknesses in internal control by means of sample testing. It cannot however guarantee absolute assurance against all material weaknesses, the overriding of management controls, collusion, or instances of fraud or irregularity.
9. Audit recommendations are rated Fundamental, Significant, Requires Attention or Best Practice according to their level of priority. Details are included in the Exception Report provided to management and the Action Plan attached at **Appendix 1**. Implementation of these recommendations will serve to address the risks identified and enhance the procedures that are currently in place. The following table summarises the number of recommendations made in each category:

Total	Fundamental	Significant	Requires Attention	Best Practice
2	0	1	1	0

10. The review identified the following areas where appropriate management controls were in place and operating satisfactorily and, upon which, positive assurance can be given:

✓	To ensure that previous recommendations have been implemented.
✓	Payroll data is correctly transferred and accurately processed.
✓	Permanent and temporary variations to the payroll are valid, appropriately authorised, and processed accurately.
✓	Travel and subsistence is appropriately controlled and actioned in a timely manner.
✓	Management information is produced in an accurate and timely manner and subject to review.
✓	Workforce Requirements and costs are appropriate to the tasks undertaken and the policies of the organisation.

11. The audit work identified one significant issue leading to the following recommendation:
  - The Service Level Agreement should be agreed and signed by WME and Shropshire Council.
12. Recommendations accepted by management at the previous audit have been reviewed and are detailed below:

Number of recommendations accepted by management at the last audit	1
Recommendations implemented	0

Recommendations partially implemented	1
Recommendations superseded	0
Recommendations not actioned	0

Limited progress has been made in the implementation of previous recommendations. Recommendations which remain outstanding are included in the attached Exception Report and Action Plan.

### **Audit Approach**

13. The approach adopted for this audit included:
  - Review and documentation of the system.
  - Identification of key controls.
  - Follow up of previous recommendations.
  - Tests of controls to confirm their existence and effectiveness.
  - Evaluation of the controls and identification of weaknesses and potential risks arising from them.
  
14. Internal Audit report only by exception; the exception report provided to management identifies only those areas where control evaluation and audit testing revealed control weaknesses and or errors. Recommendations to improve controls or enhance existing practice are detailed against each exception and the associated risk, and are also included in the Action Plan at **Appendix 1**. A more detailed report covering all of the work undertaken can be provided on request, but this is only available in a working paper note format.
  
15. In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, recommendations will be followed up to evaluate the adequacy of management action that has been taken to address identified control weaknesses.

Ceri Pilawski  
Audit Services Manager

**ACTION PLAN FOR PAYROLL 2015/16**

<b>Rec Ref.</b>	<b>Rec No.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rec Rating</b>	<b>Accepted Yes/No/Partially</b>	<b>Management Response</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Date to be Actioned</b>
2.1	1	The Service Level Agreement should be agreed and signed by WME and Shropshire Council.	Significant	Yes	Now agreed and signed	Nigel Evans	Completed
2.3	2	Individual policies within the staff handbook should be dated and should have evidence of version control.  (Updated from the previous recommendation made and agreed and originally made in 2013/14).	Requires Attention	Yes	Now reviewed and updated	Julie Wassall	Completed