

Annual Report of the Audit and Governance Committee 2018/19

DRAFT
(May 2018- April 2019)

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Foreword by the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee

As Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee following elections in May 2019, I have the honour of presenting this detailed report on the work of the Committee over the period of the 2018/19 municipal year.

The report sets out the broad range of work which has been considered over the year to support the Committee in fulfilling its Terms of Reference and is reported to full Council to provide assurance on the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose. I hope that this report helps to demonstrate the key role which is undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee and the positive contribution it makes to the Council's overall governance.

The Committee's Terms of Reference were reviewed against the new CIPFA guidance and a number of changes were recommended by the Committee to Council. These were approved and adopted following Council in December 2018.

Membership of the Audit and Governance Committee has changed significantly following the elections in May 2019 and I would like to thank the former Chair, Vice Chair and Committee members for the hard work and constructive challenge they have provided during their time on the Committee.

I would also like to thank all those who have contributed and attended the Committee meetings over the last year, supporting the Committee's work with varied reports and presentations, which are the culmination of much more preparation and work undertaken 'behind the scenes'.

I look forward to future meetings of the Committee, and working with the Committee members and the officers who support the Committee to ensure that we continue to provide independent assurance on the Council's control environment and the governance framework.



Councillor Rod Fletcher

**Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee
July 2019**

1. Introduction to the Audit and Governance Committee

Governance is defined in the “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework” (CIPFA/SOLACE 2016) as follows

Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.

To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity’s objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.

Audit Committees are therefore an essential element of good governance. Good corporate governance requires independent, effective assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes.

These functions are best delivered by an Audit Committee independent from the executive and scrutiny functions.

Effective Audit Committees help raise the profile of internal control, risk management and financial reporting issues within an organisation, as well as providing a forum for the discussion of issues raised by internal and external auditors. They enhance public trust and confidence in the financial governance of an authority.

2. Audit and Governance Committee - Statement of Purpose

- The Audit and Governance Committee is a key component of the Council’s corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
- It provides an independent assurance to the Council of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment.
- It provides independent review of the Council’s governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes.
- It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.
- It promotes high standards of ethical behaviour by developing, maintaining and monitoring performance and Codes of Conduct for

Members of the Council (including co-opted Members and other persons acting in a similar capacity).

The Audit & Governance Committee has delegated responsibilities from Council. This report provides details of how the Committee has discharged those responsibilities and delivered against its terms of reference which can be found in the Council's [Constitution](#).

Meetings of the Audit & Governance Committee were held on the following dates in the 2018/19 municipal year:

- 31st May 2018
- 31st July 2018
- 27th September 2018
- 6th December 2018
- 14th March 2019

More information on the Audit & Governance Committee Meetings, including agendas, minutes and attendance details is available [here](#).

3. Governance, Risk and Control within Cheshire East Council

Reports have been received by the Audit and Governance Committee in the following areas, providing assurance and updates on the Council's governance, risk and control framework over the past year.

Internal Audit

Meeting	Reports received
31 May 2018	Internal Audit Annual Report 2017/18
31 July 2018	Internal Audit Procurement Review
27 September 2018	Internal Audit 2018/19 Plan Progress Update Outcome of the External Assessment of Internal Audit and Compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
14 March 2019	Internal Audit Interim Report 2018/19 Internal Audit Plan 2019/20

External Audit

Meeting:	Reports received:
31 May 2018	External Audit Progress and Update report
31 July 2018	External Audit Findings & Action Plan 2017/18
27 September 2018	Annual Audit Letter 2017/18
6 December 2018	External Audit Plan 2018/19
14 March 2019	External Audit Plan 2018/19 Update
	Certification Report 2017/18

Risk Management

Meeting:	Reports received:
31 May 2018	Annual Risk Management Update
31 July 2018	Risk Management Update Report
27 September 2018	Risk Management Update Report

Corporate Governance & Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

Meeting:	Reports received:
31 May 2018	Draft Annual Governance Statement 2017/18
	Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000), Environmental Information Regulations (2004) and the Data Protection Act 1998
	Compliance with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
	Customer Feedback - Complaints, Compliments and Referrals to the Local Government Ombudsman 2017/18
31 July 2018	Annual Governance Statement 2017/18
6 December 2018	Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance Review

Accounts, Financial Statements & Treasury Management

Meeting:	Reports received:
31 May 2018	Draft Pre-Audit Statement of Accounts 2017/18
31 July 2018	Annual Statement of Accounts 2017/18
28 September 2018	Treasury Management Annual Report 2017/18
6 December 2018	Draft Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2019/20

Information Governance

Meeting:	Reports received:
31 May 2018	Information Governance Update
31 July 2018	Update on the Council's readiness for GDPR

Significant assurances the Committee has received during the year include:

- **2017/18 Internal Audit opinion:**
This was presented to the 31 May 2018 meeting.
- **2017/18 Financial Statements Opinion (External Audit):**
This was presented to the 31 July 2018 meeting.
- **2017/18 Value for Money (VFM) Conclusion (External Audit):**
This was presented to the 27 September 2018 meeting.

4. Effectiveness of the Committee

The Committee regularly undertakes a formal review of its own effectiveness. The 2017/18 self-assessment was carried out with the Chair and Vice Chair against the CIPFA guidance, Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2013 and the results reported to the Committee in May 2018.

The Committee self-assessed as compliant or partially compliant against all areas. Actions to ensure the Committee becomes fully compliant are in place, with some already implemented. In receiving the report in May 2018, the Committee noted the self-assessment and agreed that a further report on the progress of the actions be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee's 2018/19 Work Plan was developed in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference to ensure that the Committee continued to work effectively and fulfil its purpose.

CIPFA released updated guidance for Audit Committees: "Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2018 Edition" in March 2018. The Committee's Terms of Reference was reviewed against the guidance, updated where necessary and put to the Committee in September 2018 for consideration. Following this, the amended Terms of Reference were put to the Constitution Committee (November 2018) and approved by Council on 13 December 2018.

A self assessment of the Committee's effectiveness against the updated guidance will be undertaken and reported on as part of the 2019/20 work programme.

5. Additional Assurance

It was agreed at the Committee's December 2015 meeting that future annual reports of the Committee be expanded to include greater details on any areas of work requested to provide additional assurance to the Committee along with an explanation as to how this added value to the work of the Committee.

Additional assurance work requested by the Committee has been provided around emerging issues including:

Ombudsman complaints and lessons learnt

The Committee received update reports at each meeting detailing the decision notices received by the Council from the Local Government Ombudsman. The detailed reports provided the Committee with information on those decision notices which concluded that there had been maladministration causing injustice.

During 2018/19, the reports have also been supported by the attendance of senior managers from the services involved to provide assurance to the Committee that lessons have been learned from the issues and actions implemented.

Furthermore, the Committee also received a report at their September 2018 meeting detailing the referrals to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for 2017/18.

Procurement Review

In July 2018, the Committee considered a report on an Internal Audit review of Procurement, which superseded a review initially commenced during 2015 which was paused as a result of a police investigation into the award of contracts. The audit report detailed the three risks identified for the review, Internal Audit's findings and the management response to the findings in relation to the third risk. The Committee received assurance that actions were being implemented/had been implemented to address the findings of the report.

In receiving the updates, the Committee is complying with its Terms of Reference in considering reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and requesting summaries of specific internal audit reports.

Reporting of all WARNs's (Waiver and Record of Non-adherence)

The Audit and Governance Committee has a key role in overseeing governance arrangements and requirement to review all approved WARNs. The WARN process forms part of the Contract Procedure Rules(CPR's) which are intended to promote good Procurement and Commissioning practice, transparency and clear public accountability.

Since June 2016 onwards, summary information on the number and reasons for WARN's has been provided to the Committee as a standard part one agenda item, with the details being considered as part two, following exclusion of press and public from the meeting pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

The Committee has noted that the number of waivers and non-adherences being reported has significantly and consistently reduced since the reports were first presented. This provides assurance to the Committee on the positive impact of the changes to the Council's procurement management.

Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit and Compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)

In September 2017, the Committee received an update report on the Independent Public Sector Internal Audit Standards external assessment which subsequently took place in January 2018. The findings of the assessment were shared with the Committee in September 2018. The overall judgement of the assessors was that the service was "Partially Compliant" with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. An action plan has been developed to address the areas of partial and non-compliance and the Committee has received updates on the implementation of actions through the Internal Audit update reports.

Best4Business Project

In July 2018, the Committee received a presentation on the governance arrangements for the Best4Business project. This provided the Committee with clarity on the governance arrangements in place at the time for this

project which is being undertaken jointly with Cheshire West and Cheshire Council.

Member's Code of Conduct

The Committee received update reports in September 2018 and March 2019 relating to the Member's Code of Conduct. The reports detailed the number of complaints made against Cheshire East Councillors and Town and Parish Councillors; the paragraph of the Code alleged to have been breached and the outcome of each complaint, where completed. This information is provided to support the Committee's role in monitoring and maintaining high ethical standards within the authority.

Mandatory Declarations of Interest

In December 2018, the Committee considered a report on whether or not any outside organisation should be considered as being organisations which, by virtue of solely being members of the same, Councillors must declare and/or register an interest in under the Council's Code of Conduct.

The Committee noted that there were adequate provisions in the Member Code of Conduct to appropriately deal with conflicts of interest that may arise in decision making. Also, the Committee declined to particularise any outside organisation in the Code of Conduct.

6. Members of the Committee

Members of the Committee during the 2018/19 municipal year are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Following the local elections in May 2019 wholesale changes were made to the Committee membership. Whilst this does not impact upon the work undertaken during 2018/19 details of the new Committee membership have also been provided for reference.

The Audit and Governance Committee has been supported by Officers providing reports in accordance with the Committee's work programme and at the request of the Committee.

The Committee has routinely been attended by the Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services, Acting Chief Executive, Acting Director of Legal Services & Interim Monitoring Officer, the Head of Finance and Performance (Acting Section 151 Officer) and the Executive Director of Place.

The Corporate Manager - Governance & Audit left the Authority in February 2017 and, as such, the Principal Auditors continued their acting up arrangements to provide support and guidance to the Committee as would be provided by the Head of Internal Audit role.

7. Statutory Requirements, New Guidance and Recommended Practice

During the year, the Committee has carried out statutory requirements including approving the Financial Statements and the Annual Governance Statement.

It has also ensured that it is up to date in adopting new guidance and/or recommended practice. As referenced in Section 4 of this report, the Committee's terms of reference was reviewed against the recently released CIPFA guidance "*Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2018 Edition*" and subsequently updated to ensure compliance with best practice. Committee members were provided with a copy of the guidance for reference purposes.

8. Training and Development

The following training was carried out during the 2018/19 year:

- Induction for new and deputising Members of the Committee
- Annual Governance Statement & Role of the Audit Committee
- Risk Management
- Approving the Financial Statements

In addition, Members have access to copies of the CIPFA Better Governance Forum *Audit Committee Update* featuring a round-up of legislation, reports and developments of interest to Audit & Governance Committee Members.

The training and development programme for Members of the Committee is informed by an annual skills assessment exercise. This was deferred until after the local elections in May 2019 to ensure that it captured membership of the Committee going forward into 2019/20.

9. Work programme for 2019/20

The Committee has an agreed work programme for 2019/20, which includes the annual statutory requirements (e.g. approval of the Statement of Accounts, approval of the AGS etc.) of the Committee and also those regular

reports and assurances it receives on External Audit, Internal Audit, Risk Management, Treasury Management, Whistleblowing and other areas.

The forward looking work programme ensures comprehensive coverage of the Committee's responsibilities and in addition to this, the Committee will:

- Continue to develop the proactive nature of the Committee to facilitate actions by officers to ensure that risks are identified as early as possible and remedial actions are taken in a timely fashion;
- Oversee any development required of the Audit and Governance Committee work programme to comply with the requirements of recently updated CIPFA Audit Committees guidance;
- Continue to review governance arrangements to ensure the Council adopts the latest best practice and moves towards becoming an open and transparent public organisation;
- Continue to support the work of internal and external audit and ensure that responses are given to their recommendations;
- Receive assurance on compliance with best practice such as the updated Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit;
- Continue to support the Council in managing the risk of fraud and corruption;
- Continue to develop the Audit and Governance Committee to review risk and partnership issues and safeguarding of public sector assets; and
- Equip existing and new Members to fulfil their responsibilities by providing more detailed and focused training on all key areas of responsibility, including financial arrangements and risk management, governance and audit planning.

How the Audit and Governance Committee's Terms of Reference were met during 2018/19:







Terms of Reference of Committee	Relevant activity in 2018/19
Annual Report	
To report to full Council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.	The July 2018 Committee meeting reviewed the 2017/18 annual report, this was subsequently received and noted by Council in October 2018.
Governance, Risk and Control	
To review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances.	The Committee received an Annual Governance Statement progress report in December 2018
To review and approve the Annual Governance Statement and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.	The Committee received the Draft Annual Governance Statement in May 2018 and approved the final 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) in July 2018. In addition, an update report was received in December 2018.
To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the council.	The Committee received update reports on Risk Management in May 2018, July 2018, and September 2018.
To monitor progress in addressing risk related issues reported to the committee and to review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud and corruption. To monitor the counter fraud strategy, actions and resources.	The Committee monitors Anti-Fraud and Corruption arrangements through regular updates on activity provided as part of the regular Internal Audit update reports.
To review and monitor the Council's treasury management arrangements in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.	The Treasury Management 2017/18 Annual Report was received in September 2018. The 2018/19 Draft Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Position (MRP) Statement was reviewed at the






Terms of Reference of Committee	Relevant activity in 2018/19
	December 2018 meeting.
Internal Audit	
To approve the internal audit charter.	An updated Internal Audit Charter was approved at the December 2018 Committee meeting.
To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.	<p>The Committee approved the 2018/19 Internal Audit Plan in March 2018. The Committee monitored progress against the plan in September 2018 and March 2019.</p> <p>The 2019/20 Internal Audit Plan was approved at the March 2019 Committee.</p>
To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Head of Internal Audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions. To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.	<p>Internal Audit interim reports against the 2018/19 plan were received in September 2018 and March 2019.</p> <p>Internal Audit interim reports include a summary of Internal Audit work completed and the significant issues arising from individual assignments.</p>
To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.	<p>The Committee is updated in the Head of Internal Audit annual opinion report on the progress made on assessment criteria required to comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</p> <p>The Committee received a report on the outcome of the External Assessment of Internal Audit and Compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards in September 2018.</p>
To consider the Head of Internal Audit's annual report.	The 2017/18 Internal Audit Annual Report, including the annual audit opinion was presented to the Committee in May 2018.
To support the development of effective communication with the Head of Internal Audit.	The Principal Auditors (due to the vacant Corporate Manager Governance and Audit post), met on a regular basis with the

Terms of Reference of Committee	Relevant activity in 2018/19
	Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.
External Audit	
To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.	<p>The 2017/18 Audit Findings Report and Action Plan were presented to Committee in September 2018 by the External Auditor.</p> <p>The 2017/18 Annual Audit Letter was reported to the September 2018 Committee meeting.</p>
To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.	The Committee received and considered the work of the External Auditor (all meetings during the year).
To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money	Regular reports are received from the External Auditors who also meet with the Chair and Vice Chair prior to each Committee meeting.
To commission work from internal and external audit and to advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.	<p>The Committee consider the work plan at all meetings and commission additional work where Committee members determine that additional assurance is required.</p> <p>The relationship between Internal and External Audit is reviewed at least annually together with any requirements to liaise with any other relevant agencies.</p>
Financial Reporting	
To review and approve the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.	<p>The draft Statement of Accounts 2017/18 was presented to the Committee in May 2018.</p> <p>The Statement of Accounts 2017/18 was approved by the Committee in July 2018.</p>
To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with	The 2017/18 Audit Findings and Action Plan were presented to

Terms of Reference of Committee	Relevant activity in 2018/19
governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.	Committee in July 2018 by the External Auditor. The 2017/18 Annual Audit Letter was reported to the Committee in September 2018.
Related Functions	
To approve and monitor Council policies relating to “whistleblowing” and anti-fraud and corruption.	The Committee is provided with updates in relation to these matters via the interim reports on internal audit activity received during the year. Details relating to whistleblowing statistics will be reported via the Monitoring Officer report which is to be introduced during 2019/20.
To seek assurance that customer complaint arrangements are robust	The Committee received regular update reports throughout 2018/19 on the number of decision notices received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
Standards	
Promoting high standards of ethical behaviour by developing, maintaining and monitoring Codes of Conduct for Members of the Council (including co-opted Members and other persons acting in a similar capacity).	Members Code of Conduct Standards Reports recording decisions relating to complaints were submitted to the Committee in September 2018 and March 2019.
Ensuring that Members receive advice and training as appropriate on the Members Code of Conduct.	Members of the Audit & Governance Committee have been advised on the Code of Conduct during the year.
Granting dispensations under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 to enable a member or co-opted Member to participate in a meeting of the Authority.	The Committee meeting in September 2016 approved the Localism Act 2011 – General Dispensations for a four year period (to 28 Sept 2020).

Membership of the Audit and Governance Committee during 2018/19:








Members of the Audit and Governance Committee during 2018/19	
	<p>Councillor Gordon Baxendale (Chair)</p> <p>Councillor Baxendale was an elected member with Cheshire East from its inception in April 2009, and a member of the Audit and Governance Committee from June 2015 until May 2019. He chaired his first meeting in December 2016.</p>
	<p>Councillor Mike Sewart (Vice Chair)</p> <p>Councillor Sewart became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2015. He joined the Committee in March 2017.</p>
	<p>Councillor Sam Corcoran</p> <p>Councillor Corcoran became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2011 and served on the Audit and Governance Committee until May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Tony Dean</p> <p>Councillor Dean became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2015. He served on the Committee between June 2017 and May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Rod Fletcher</p> <p>Councillor Fletcher has been an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009 and has served on the Committee since May 2011.</p>
	<p>Councillor Les Gilbert</p> <p>Councillor Gilbert has been an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009. He served on the Committee from May 2016 to May 2019.</p>




Members of the Audit and Governance Committee during 2018/19	
	<p>Councillor Martin Hardy Councillor Hardy was an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009. He has previously served on the Audit and Governance Committee since its inception in June 2010 until December 2016 and was Vice-Chair from May 2011 to January 2012.</p>
	<p>Councillor Andrew Kolker Councillor Kolker has been an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009. He served as Vice-Chair of the Governance and Constitution Committee for a time and has been on the Audit and Governance Committee from June 2010 to date.</p>
	<p>Councillor Nick Mannion Councillor Mannion became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2015. He served on the Committee from March 2017 to May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Gill Merry Councillor Merry was an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009. She served on the Committee from June 2017 to May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Amanda Stott Councillor Stott became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2015, and was a member of the Audit and Governance Committee from June 2015 until May 2019.</p>
No image available.	<p>Philip Gardener Independent Member of the Committee, Mr Gardener was co-opted to the Committee in March 2017.</p>

It should also be noted that the following Councillors deputised for members of the Audit & Governance Committee, the Councillors received the necessary induction training prior to the meetings:

6th December 2018:

- Councillor M Deakin

Current members of the Audit and Governance Committee 2019/20	
	<p>Councillor Rod Fletcher (Chair) Councillor Fletcher has been an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009 and has served on the Committee since May 2011. He chaired his first meeting in May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Rachel Bailey (Vice-Chair) Councillor Bailey has been an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009. She joined the Committee in May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Mike Sewart Councillor Sewart became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2015. He joined the Committee in March 2017.</p>
	<p>Councillor Andrew Kolker Councillor Kolker has been an elected member of Cheshire East Council since its beginning in April 2009. He served as Vice-Chair of the Governance and Constitution Committee for a time and has been on the Audit and Governance Committee from June 2010 to date.</p>
	<p>Councillor David Edwardes Councillor Edwardes became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Byron Evans Councillor Evans became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2019.</p>
	<p>Councillor Andrew Gregory Councillor Gregory became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2019.</p>

Current members of the Audit and Governance Committee 2019/20	
	Councillor Sally Handley Councillor Handley became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2019.
	Councillor Steven Hogben Councillor Hogben has been an elected member of Cheshire East Council since June 2011. He joined the Committee in May 2019.
	Councillor Marilyn Houston Councillor Houston became an elected member of Cheshire East Council in May 2019.
No image available.	Philip Gardener Independent Member of the Committee, Mr Gardener was co-opted to the Committee in March 2017.