



**cw audit services**

**Hinckley and Bosworth  
Borough Council**

Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2014 - 2017  
March 2014

Getting value from your service

# 1. Introduction

## General background

This document sets out a proposed strategic plan of Internal Audit coverage for the period April 2014 to March 2017. The plan of work has been driven by the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) released by HM Treasury in December 2012, which were applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the Accounts & Audit Regulations (2011) and guidance relating to the Annual Governance Statement, which the work of Internal Audit supports and informs. The proposed plan supports an opinion based on an assessment of the design and operation of the internal control environment and the adequacy and effectiveness of control noted from our risk based audits carried out during the year. It follows therefore that the focus of the audit plan is critical to ensuring the right level of assurance to the Council.

### The aim of the plan is to:

- **Deliver a risk focused audit programme** - through a detailed risk assessment across the organisation and at component level
- **Be proactive and forward looking** - by looking at what risks the Council faces and trying to minimise these through our work.
- **Add value** – by providing practical, value-added recommendations, in areas of significant risk, by working where relevant with other functions (e.g. risk management and anti-fraud) and trying to save resources / enhance controls where possible.
- **Provide assurance to management and the ‘Audit’ Committee** - as key stakeholders, we will work closely with management and the Finance, Audit & Performance Committee with regard to your assurance needs.

## Internal Audit Charter and Standards

The PSIAS requires us to explicitly detail the purpose, authority and responsibility of our internal audit activity in a formally documented Internal Audit Charter, which is included as Appendix 2 to this document. **The PSIAS require the Charter to be approved by the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee, and accordingly this approval is sought alongside agreement of the proposed Internal Audit strategy.**

In conducting our work as your Internal Auditors we are required to adhere to a set of standards as outlined in the PSIAS. We consider that compliance with these standards is a key element of our Internal Audit service in accordance with our contract with you, and maintain quality procedures to ensure compliance.

We believe that we have established suitable arrangements to enable us to comply with the standards. We will, however, report any instances of non-compliance should they arise, as soon as we become aware of them.

## 2. Developing the plan

Our plan of work is designed to support the annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion. The required basis for forming this opinion is as follows:

- An assessment of the design and operation of the overall internal control environment, governance and risk management arrangements; and
- An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls, based upon the results of our risk based audit assignments that are reported during the course of year.

It follows that an effective risk based audit plan, focusing the resource into areas of principal risk is essential.

### **Risk Assessment**

The plan has been prepared in consultation with the management team. It has been informed by:

- A review of the risks contained within the Council's Risk Register and Annual Governance Statement.
- Discussions with senior management to identify key auditable areas based on an assessment of current and future issues and risks.
- Our understanding of the challenges to the Council to deliver its objectives within the current economic environment and changes in local government legislation.

On the basis of this process we have identified a number of priority risks/areas (see section 3) and these have been scheduled for attention in the first year of the audit plan. We have also identified a number of

other strategic issues that will require audit coverage in the remaining years of the plan. The resulting Internal Audit Plan is detailed at Appendix One. We will, however, continue to review the audit plan on an ongoing basis in response to developments and initiatives. If additional risks arise or change in priority during the year the audit plan will be reconsidered with management and, subject to Committee approval, amended to ensure that audit resources remain focused on the key risk areas.

### 3. Linking our plan to your strategic risks

The following table sets out the proposed areas of work for the 2014/5 financial year linked through to your business objectives/risk and showing the supporting rationale for that work and a summary outline of the work to be undertaken.

Area	Rationale - Links to Objectives/Risks	Work outline
<b>GENERAL</b>		
Key Corporate Project assurance	Several major projects underway reflected in the corporate risk register (i.e. MIRA/RGF, Town Centre, HRA Investment Strategy, Leisure Centre)	Ongoing assurance on key projects with Internal Audit operating alongside the project team, to cover risk management, project governance, performance, reporting etc.
Efficiency/VFM reviews (Waste collection/recycling in 2014/15)	Given the continuing constrained funding environment it will be very important to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively to make best use of resources.	To review value for money of specified services and identify potential areas for further consideration/improvement.
Fees and charges review	Specific management request. Given the continuing constrained funding environment it will be very important to ensure that a sound approach is taken to optimising fees and charges.	To review and benchmark fees and charges and identify potential areas for further consideration within current/potential Council policies.
Building Security (Hub)	Specific management request. As the Council has relocated the majority of its services to The Hub and partner organisations are also located there, it is important that overall security, and specifically the Council's areas of responsibility, are soundly provided for.	To consider key aspects of building security, e.g. access controls, arrangements with partners, staff and member awareness etc.
<b>FINANCE, REVENUES, BENEFITS, IT &amp; PROCUREMENT</b>		
Budgetary Control	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Financial strategy and management key in time of recession.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include budget setting, approval, adjustment and monitoring.
Main Accounting	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include control account reconciliations, journal entries and interfaces with other key systems.
Council Tax	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Increased risk of non-collection in a recession. Changes to Council Tax Benefit may also affect collection rates and debt levels.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor to include maintenance of property register, liability, reconciliations to valuation list, exemptions, discounts, benefits, billing and debt recovery and to highlight potential areas for improvement. Relates to all 3 authorities in the Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership.
Business Rates	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Increased risk of non-collection in a recession.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include maintenance of property register, liability, reconciliation to valuation list, exemptions, discounts, benefits, billing and debt recovery and to highlight potential areas for improvement. Relates to all 3 authorities in the Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership.
Benefits	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Challenges faced by ongoing amendments to the benefits system.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include claims processing and payment, management checking, overpayment processes etc. Relates to all 3 authorities in the Leicestershire Revenues

Area	Rationale - Links to Objectives/Risks	Work outline
		& Benefits Partnership.
Financial Systems – key controls	Key financial systems to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, including coverage of debtors, creditors, income and treasury management.
IT Audit	IT risk assessment being carried out as part of 2013/14 audit plan	Review to assess key risk area(s) arising from the risk assessment
<b>CORPORATE</b>		
Corporate Governance	Importance of sound corporate governance arrangements, e.g. Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation, Standards and codes of member and officer conduct, scheme of members allowances etc, to the proper operation of Council functions, powers, duties, compliance with the law etc.	Risk-assessed review to be agreed with management
Payroll & Expenses	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor.
Electoral Register	The operation of electoral registration and the register is very important in ensuring the robustness of the election process. Individual Electoral Registration is introduced in 2014 and there are a number of key stages the Council will need to deliver during the year.	Assurance on the arrangements for implementing and managing IER.
Human Resources (Workforce planning advisory review in 2014/15)	Careful workforce planning will become increasingly important with increasing budget pressures; ensuring the right structures, right skills and right people in place will be key to ensuring objectives can be delivered within tight budgets.	Advisory work considering various stages of the workforce planning process in light of good practice principles and to highlight areas to consider/for improvement.
<b>HOUSING, COMMUNITY SAFETY &amp; PARTNERSHIPS</b>		
Rents	Key revenue source that needs to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements with external audit. Increased risk of rent arrears in economic downturn and impact of national changes in benefits system.	Review of key controls to ensure that rent is collected intact, to be agreed with External Auditor, with specific reference to how rent arrears cases are managed and the Council's approach to dealing with changes in the benefits system. Upgrade of Orchard system in 2014 may impact on how rents processes will be delivered
Homelessness/allocations	Reputationally important processes that ensure Council housing is allocated to the correct applicants and homeless applicants are dealt with suitably and in accordance with the law/policy	Review to consider key controls in these processes.
<b>PLANNING</b>		
Section 106 agreements/contributions	Arrangements to ensure key commitments / financial provision regarding new developments are important in supporting objectives regarding infrastructure/open space etc.	Review to provide assurance on the effectiveness of arrangements to monitor and ensure delivery of agreements with developers, specifically focussing on controls regarding spending of developer contributions.
Development Control (Process review)	Specific management request. Planning application processes have been reviewed and new management is in place.	Review considering the efficiency of planning application processes following a process review.
Planning Policy/delivery	The Corporate Risk Register reflects risks regarding the Local Development Framework and public inquiries	Review of controls within planning control and the links to planning policy to ensure (in light of the corporate risks) that the local plan and supporting key documents and stages, are progressed to timescales and policy and key risks to the programme managed.
<b>CULTURAL SERVICES</b>		
Town Centre Management	The Town Centre team works to promote the town centres and support regeneration/development; it is a service shared with Oadby & Wigston Borough	To provide assurance on the outcomes and value for money of the shared arrangement.

Area	Rationale - Links to Objectives/Risks	Work outline
	Council.	
<b>BUSINESS, CONTRACT &amp; STREETSCENE</b>		
Housing Repairs	The Housing Repairs service is of key importance to the Council's many housing tenants and supports objectives regarding the fitness and decency of Council properties.	Review of the systems and controls regarding the management and financial control of housing repairs, considering key risks to be agreed with management, including implementation of revised Schedules of Rates.
Car Parks	Car Parking provision is important in supporting Council objectives for town centres, also in providing significant income as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy in a time of increasing pressure on budgets.	Review of the controls over income collection, transit and banking and key contracts (cash collection and machine maintenance).
Parking Enforcement	Parking enforcement is operated by the Council for off street car parks and by a County-wide arrangement for on-street parking. Robust enforcement is important in supporting policy objectives regarding town centres and local business.	Review of the operation of the arrangement regarding on-street parking, and of the Council's own processes to enforce off street parking provisions.
Asset Control	Management has reviewed its arrangements for controlling and securing assets and is seeking independent assurance.	To provide independent assurance on the arrangements for controlling and securing assets at the depot.

## 4. Reporting and relationships

### 4.1 Reporting Lines

The Internal Audit Charter attached at Appendix 2 outlines the reporting lines and relationships for this engagement, essentially setting out the accountability of the Head of Internal Audit to the Chief Executive, but noting that operationally in practice this accountability is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Direction). The Chief Internal Auditor also has direct right of access to the Finance, Audit & Performance Committee and the Chairman where required. This is also embodied in the Council's Financial Regulations.

### Audit Reporting

#### Periodic and Assignment Reporting

Final reports relating to individual audit assignments will be reported to the relevant operational manager and Chief Officer prior to submission to the Finance, Audit & Performance Committee (where relevant), which will also receive a progress update at each meeting detailing progress against the plan, a summary of assignment opinions issued to date and an update in relation to the implementation of audit recommendations.

#### Annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion

In line with the PSIAS and expected professional practice, we will issue a formal audit opinion taking account of:

- An assessment of the design and operation of the overall internal control environment, governance and risk management arrangements; and

- An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls, based upon the results of our risk based audit assignments that are reported during the course of year.

This opinion will be formally recorded in the Internal Audit Year End Report and presented to the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee. In addition to this formal opinion we will also bring to the attention of the Chief Executive and the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee any Significant Internal Control Issues that we feel should be declared in your Annual Governance Statement.

### 4.2 Third Party Audit Arrangements

As your Internal Auditors we are required to agree with you the arrangements for forming an appropriate opinion where either you operate key systems on behalf of other organisations, or key systems are being operated by other organisations on your behalf. We recognise that the Council operates within a number of different partnership arrangements and procures and contracts various services, however it is our current understanding that the Revenues & Benefits function remain the only key systems for which an appropriate audit opinion must be given to third parties (North West Leicestershire District Council and Harborough District Council) and that there are no other key systems provided by third parties for which the Council must obtain appropriate audit assurance.

### 4.3 Relationships with external bodies

#### External Audit

We will agree a protocol of joint working arrangements supported by a regular programme of update meetings with External Audit. We will

use these meetings to report on progress against our plan and as an opportunity to discuss any significant issues arising from our work.

### **Other Review Bodies**

Where we intend to place formal reliance on the work of any other review body e.g. external auditor, we will undertake an appropriate audit or quality assurance exercise to ascertain the level of assurance that we can derive from that work.

### **Counter Fraud**

You are required to carry out counter fraud activities, to ensure sound stewardship of public funds. We will liaise as necessary with your counter fraud officers, sharing relevant audit findings and identifying joint programmes of work where appropriate.

## **4.4 Additional Services/Ad-hoc Work**

The PSIAS requires us to define the potential role that we may have in providing ad hoc consultancy work. In providing such a service we would seek to apply the professional skills of Internal Audit through a systematic and disciplined evaluation of the policies, procedures and operations that you have put in place to ensure the achievement of your objectives. We believe that our status as Internal Auditors ensures that we can deliver such work in an independent and objective manner. We also have access to consultancy services via our strategic relationships (e.g. PwC and Deloitte).



## 5. Delivery and Fees

### 5.1 The Core Audit Team

The Audit Plan will be delivered by the following team:

Team Role	Team Member	Qual	Role
Contract Lead	Mark Watkins	CCAB	Mark will oversee delivery of the audit plan and quality assurance.
Chief Internal Auditor	Tim Ridout	CCAB	Tim will manage the audit team and audit plan on an operational basis.
Principal Auditors	Anand Persaud Lynn Gouldthorp	CCAB CCAB	Principal Auditors will deliver complex reviews and supervise a team of experienced auditors in delivering the core plan.
IT Audit			IT audit work will be delivered by qualified specialist staff.

### 5.2 Profiling Delivery

We will agree a programme of delivery for the audit plan with Chief Officers and report on delivery against this profile through our regular progress reports to Finance, Audit and Performance Committee.

**Mark Watkins**  
**Contract Lead**

Area	Audit Assignment	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
General	Key Corporate Project assurance	15	15	5
	Efficiency/VFM reviews (Waste collection/recycling in 2014/15)	10	15	10
	Fees and charges review	10	-	-
	Building Security (Hub)	-	8	-
	Business Continuity/Emergency Planning	-	-	8
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>23</b>
Finance, Revenues, Benefits, IT & Procurement	Budgetary Control	7	7	7
	Main Accounting	7	7	7
	Council Tax – Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership			
	Business Rates – Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership	60	60	60
	Benefits – Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership			
	Financial Systems key controls	15	15	15
	IT audit	10	10	10
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>
Corporate	Corporate Governance	8	-	8
	Risk Management	-	8	5
	Payroll & Expenses	7	7	7
	Electoral Register	8	-	-
	Human Resources (Workforce planning advisory review in 2014/15)	12	8	5
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>
Housing, Community Safety & Partnerships	Housing Rents	8	8	8
	Homelessness/Allocations	8	-	8
	Tenant Scrutiny	-	8	-

Area	Audit Assignment	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
	Sheltered Housing	-	8	-
	Community Safety	-	-	8
	Partnerships/Shared Services	-	-	10
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>34</b>
Environmental Health	Licensing	-	10	-
	Carbon Management Plan	-	8	-
	Corporate Health & Safety	-	-	8
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>
Planning	Development Control (Process Review)	10	-	-
	Section 106 agreements/contributions	8	-	8
	Planning Policy/delivery	8	-	-
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8</b>
Cultural Services	Leisure Centre	-	10	10
	Markets	-	8	-
	Town Centre Management	8	-	-
	Safeguarding	-	-	8
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
Business, Contract & Streetscene	Housing Repairs	10	10	10
	Car Parks	5	5	5
	Parking Enforcement	5	-	-
	Street Cleansing	-	8	-
	Recycling (2014/15 see VFM reviews planned work)	-	-	8
	Asset Control	3	-	-
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>
Follow Up etc	Recommendation Tracking	7	5	5
	Follow Up Reviews	10	10	10
	Contingency e.g. grant claim certification work	16	10	10
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>

Area	Audit Assignment	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Management & Advice	Audit Needs Assessment, Planning & Annual Report	5	5	5
	Audit Committee/External Audit/Senior Team meetings	10	10	10
	Contract Management & ad hoc advice	10	10	10
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>300*</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>288</b>

\*This includes 10 days agreed to be carried forward from 2013/14, and thus our fee will equate to 290 days.

## INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

### 1. DEFINITION

Internal Audit is an independent and objective appraisal service within the organisation:

- Internal Audit primarily provides an independent and objective opinion to the Accountable Officer (Chief Executive), the Council and the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee on the degree to which risk management, internal control and governance arrangements support the achievement of the organisation's agreed objectives. In addition, Internal Audit's findings and recommendations are beneficial to line management in the audited areas. Risk management, internal control and governance comprise the policies, procedures and operations established to ensure the achievement of objectives, the appropriate assessment of risk, the reliability of internal and external reporting and accountability processes, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and compliance with the behavioural and ethical standards set for the organisation.
- Internal Audit also provides an independent and objective consultancy service specifically to help line management improve the organisation's risk management, control and governance arrangements. The service applies the professional skills of Internal Audit through a systematic and disciplined evaluation of the policies, procedures and operations that management have put in place to ensure the achievement of the organisation's objectives, and through recommendations for improvement. Such consultancy work contributes to the opinion, which Internal Audit provides on risk management, control and governance. Approval for any significant additional consulting services not already included in the audit plan will be sought from the Audit Committee prior to accepting the engagement.

### 2. STANDARDS AND ETHICS

Internal Audit acknowledges the mandatory nature of the Definition of Internal Audit, the Code of Ethics and the Standards contained in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal Audit shall also work in accordance with any performance measures agreed with the Audit Committee.

### 3. INDEPENDENCE, OBJECTIVITY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All internal audit activities shall remain free of influence by any element in the organisation, including matters of audit selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, or report content to permit maintenance of an independent and objective mental attitude necessary in rendering reports. Internal Auditors shall have no executive or direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities they review.

Individual auditors will have an impartial, unbiased attitude, characterised by integrity and an objective approach to work, and should avoid conflicts of interest. Individual auditors must declare any conflict of interest to the Head of Internal Audit. Any conflicts of interest encountered by the Head of Internal Audit must be declared to the Section 151 Officer. Internal Auditors will have regard to the Committee on Standards of Public Life's Seven Principles of Public Life.

### 4. AUTHORITY and ACCOUNTABILITY

Internal Audit derives its authority from the Council, the Accountable Officer and Finance, Audit and Performance Committee. The Head of Internal Audit reports on a functional basis to the Council via the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee. For administrative purposes, the Head of Internal Audit reports to the Section 151 Officer. The Head of Internal Audit has a direct right of access to the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee and the Chair of the organisation if deemed necessary. The Finance, Audit and Performance Committee shall have regular private meetings with the Head of Internal Audit. The Finance, Audit and Performance Committee approves all Internal Audit plans and may review any aspect of its work.

## **5. INTERNAL AUDIT TEAM**

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for ensuring the team is adequately staffed and that there is access to the full range of knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience to deliver the Internal Audit Plan in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The team will undertake regular assessments of professional competence through an on-going appraisal and development programme (i.e. Personal Development Plans and Continuing Professional Development) with training provided where necessary. Auditors also have responsibilities for applying due professional care when performing their duties. The Head of Internal Audit must hold a professional qualification.

If the Head of Internal Audit, Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer or the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee consider that the level of Internal Audit resources or the terms of reference in any way limit the scope of Internal Audit, or prejudice the ability of Internal Audit to deliver a service consistent with the definition of internal auditing, they should advise the Council accordingly.

## **6. SCOPE**

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for developing and maintaining an Internal Audit Strategy for providing the Chief Executive, economically and efficiently, with objective evaluation of, and opinions on, the effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, control and governance arrangements. The Head of Internal Audit's opinion is a key element of the framework of assurance the Chief Executive needs to inform the completion of the Annual Governance Statement. This strategy will be realised through the delivery of considered and approved annual plans. These will systematically review and evaluate risk management, control and governance which comprises the policies, procedures and operations in place to:

- Establish, and monitor the achievement of, the organisations objectives.
- Identify, assess and manage the risks to achieving the organisations objectives.
- Ensure the economical, effective and efficient use of resources.
- Ensure compliance with established policies (including behavioural and ethical expectations), procedures, laws and regulations.
- Safeguard the organisation's assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity or corruption.
- Ensure the integrity and reliability of information, accounts and data, including internal and external reporting and accountability processes.

Internal Audit's planning will embrace risk management, control and governance processes of the organisation including all its operations, resources, services and responsibilities for other bodies.

## **7. APPROACH**

To ensure delivery of its objectives, Internal Audit will develop and implement an Audit Strategy. This will be prepared each year and will describe arrangements for the delivery of the internal audit service based upon knowledge of the organisation's objectives, risk assessment, and appropriate management consultation.

The allocation of resources between assurance and consultative work will be set out. A detailed Annual Operational Plan will be prepared designed to implement the audit strategy. The audit strategy and annual plans shall be prepared to support the audit opinion to the Accountable Officer on the risk management, internal control and governance arrangements within the organisation. Both the strategy and annual plans will be approved by the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee and reported to the Council.

## **8. REPORTING**

Internal Audit will report formally to the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee through the following:

An annual report will be presented to confirm completion of the audit plan and will include the Head of Internal Audit opinion provided for the Accountable Officer that will support the Annual Governance Statement. The Head of Internal Audit opinion will:

- a) State the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Trust's risk management, control and governance processes;
- b) Disclose any qualification to that opinion, together with the reasons for the qualification;
- c) Present a summary of the audit work undertaken to formulate the opinion, including reliance placed on work by other assurance bodies;
- d) Draw attention to any issues internal audit judge as being particularly relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement;
- e) Compare work actually undertaken with the work which was planned and summarise performance of the internal audit function against its performance measures criteria; and
- f) Comment where necessary on compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and internal quality assurance arrangements.

For each Finance, Audit and Performance Committee meeting a progress report will be presented to summarise progress against the plan. The findings arising from individual audit reviews will be reported in accordance with Finance, Audit and Performance Committee requirements. The Finance, Audit and Performance Committee members will be provided with copies of individual audit reports for each assignment undertaken unless the Head of Internal Audit is advised otherwise. The reports will include an action plan with target dates for completion.

Following the closure of fieldwork, Internal Audit will discuss findings with operational/local managers. Operational/Local management will receive draft reports which will include the action plans they have agreed following the discussion of findings. A copy of the draft report will also be provided to the relevant Executive Director. The draft report will give an "assurance" opinion on the area reviewed. The draft report will also indicate action ratings for individual report findings and recommendations.

Operational management will be required to respond to the draft report, stating their agreement or otherwise to the content of the report, identifying action, staff with responsibility for implementation and the dates by which action will be taken. Final reports inclusive of management comments will be issued by Internal Audit to the relevant Executive Director within 5 working days of management responses being received. The final report will be placed on the agenda for the next available Finance, Audit and Performance Committee.

Internal Audit will make provision to review the implementation of agreed action within the agreed timescales. However, where there are issues of particular concern provision may be made for follow up review within the same financial year. Issue and clearance of follow up reports shall be as for other assignments referred to above.

## **9. IRREGULARITIES, FRAUD AND CORRUPTION**

It is the responsibility of management to maintain systems that ensure organisation's resources are utilised in the manner and on activities intended. This includes the responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud and other illegal acts.

Internal Audit shall not be relied upon to detect fraud or other irregularities. However, Internal Audit will give due regard to the possibility of fraud and other irregularities in work undertaken. Additionally, Internal Audit shall seek to identify weaknesses in control that could permit fraud or irregularity.

If Internal Audit discovers suspicion or evidence of fraud or irregularity, this will immediately be reported to the organisation's Counter Fraud Specialist in accordance with the organisation's Counter Fraud Policy & Fraud Response Plan.

## **10. RELATIONSHIPS**

In order to maximise its contribution to the Council's overall framework of assurance, Internal Audit will work closely with the organisation's Section 151 Officer in planning its work programme. Co-operative relationships with line management enhance the ability of internal audit to achieve its objectives effectively. Audit work will be planned in conjunction with management as far as possible, particularly in respect of the timing of audit work.

Internal Audit will meet regularly with the external auditor to consult on audit plans, discuss matters of mutual interest, discuss common understanding of audit techniques, method and terminology, and to see opportunities for co-operation in the conduct of audit work. In particular, internal audit make available their working files to the external auditor for them to place reliance upon the work of Internal Audit where appropriate

The Head of Internal Audit will establish a means to gain an overview of other assurance providers' approaches and output as part of the establishment of an integrated assurance framework. In addition the Head of Internal Audit shall make provision to form an opinion where key systems are being operated by organisation's outside of the remit of the Accountable Officer, or through a shared or joint arrangement.

## **11. ACCESS**

Internal Audit shall have the authority to access all the organisation's information, documents, records, assets, personnel and premises that it considers necessary to fulfil its role. This shall extend to the resources of the third parties that provide services on behalf of the organisation. All information obtained during the course of a review will be regarded as strictly confidential to the organisation and shall not be divulged to any third party without the prior permission of the Accountable Officer. However, open access shall be granted to the organisation's external auditors. In any instances of conflict this will be referred for resolution to the Section 151 Officer, Chief Executive or Chair of Finance, Audit and Performance Committee as appropriate.

## **12. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The work of internal audit is controlled at each level of operation to ensure that a continuously effective level of performance, compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards is being achieved. The Head of Internal Audit will establish a quality assurance programme designed to give assurance through internal and external



review that the work of internal audit is compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and to achieve its objectives. A commentary on compliance against the Standards will be provided in the annual audit report to Finance, Audit and Performance Committee.

### **13. APPROVAL, REVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARTER**

This Internal Audit Charter shall be reviewed annually and approved by the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee\*.

\* The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require the Charter to be approved by the Board, however, for the Public Sector the following definition of Board is provided: *Audit Committee – the governance group charged with independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of financial reporting*