

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Accounts and Audit Committee
Date: 27 March 2018
Report for: Approval
Report of: Audit and Assurance Manager

Report Title

Audit and Assurance Service – Internal Audit Charter and Strategy

Summary

The Accounts and Audit Committee is provided with the Internal Audit Charter and Internal Audit Strategy documents for approval following their recent review. The Internal Audit Charter and Strategy documents were previously updated in March 2017 and have recently been reviewed and updated, in agreement with the Corporate Leadership Team. The updates to the Charter are proposed in order to be consistent with updates made in 2017/18 to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

Proposed amendments to be made to the Charter and Strategy are as follows with the relevant paragraphs highlighted in the report:

- Further detail added to the Internal Audit Charter (Para. 6.4) setting out arrangements for dealing with potential conflicts of interest in respect of “non-audit” duties.
- Para. 12.2 added to the Internal Audit Charter in relation to Consultancy work.
- In Para 4.4 of the Internal Audit Strategy, in addition to ICT systems, reference has been added that information governance processes are subject to adequate internal audit coverage.

Recommendation

The Accounts and Audit Committee is asked to approve the Internal Audit Charter and Strategy.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Mark Foster – Audit and Assurance Manager
Extension: 1323

Background Papers:

None



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Internal Audit Charter

Audit and Assurance Service (March 2018)

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AUDIT AND ASSURANCE SERVICE - INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires Councils to “make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs”. More specific requirements are detailed in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in that the relevant authority must “undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”
- 1.2 The Internal Audit Charter describes the purpose, authority and principal responsibilities of the Internal Audit function at Trafford which is provided by the Audit and Assurance Service.
- 1.3 The Audit and Assurance Service is required to operate in accordance with the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Standards are mandatory for all internal auditors working in the UK Public Sector.

2. Definitions

Internal Audit

- 2.1 “Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.” (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards).
- 2.2 CIPFA provide further details in their PSIAS Local Government Application Note : “Internal audit provides an independent and objective opinion to the organisation on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control. It may also undertake consulting services at the request of the organisation, subject to there being no impact on the core assurance work and the availability of skills and resources.

The “Board” and “Senior Management”

- 2.3 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require that the internal audit charter defines the terms ‘board’ and ‘senior management’ in relation to the work of internal audit. For the purposes of internal audit work, the ‘board’ refers to the Council’s Accounts and Audit Committee which has delegated responsibility for overseeing the work of internal audit. The term senior management will be defined on

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an individual basis according to individual context but will usually refer to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

3. Mission of Internal Audit and Core Principles for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing

3.1 The Mission of Internal Audit is to enhance and protect organisational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight. In order to achieve this, in accordance with the PSIAS, it should operate in accordance with the following core principles:

- Demonstrates integrity
- Demonstrates competence and due professional care
- Is objective and free from undue influence (independent)
- Aligns with the strategies, objectives and risks of the organisation
- Is appropriately positioned and adequately resourced
- Demonstrates quality and continuous improvement.
- Communicates effectively
- Provides risk-based assurance
- Is insightful, proactive, and future-focused.
- Promotes organisational improvement.

4. Status

4.1 The Audit and Assurance Service forms part of Finance Services within the Transformation and Resources Directorate.

4.2 Internal Audit's authority derives directly from its statutory responsibilities and the Procedure Rules established by the Council.

4.3 The responsibility for the production and execution of the internal audit plan and subsequent audit activity rests with the Audit and Assurance Manager. The Audit and Assurance Manager reports to the Chief Finance Officer but will report directly to the Chief Executive where required.

5. Reporting Lines

5.1 The work of the Audit and Assurance Service is reported directly to the Chief Executive; to members via the committee charged with responsibility for audit and governance (The Accounts and Audit Committee, defined by the term "Board" under PSIAS) and to Executive members. The work of the Accounts and Audit Committee is also reported annually to the Council.

5.2 Internal audit assignments are the subject of formal reports. These reports are sent to the relevant Corporate Director and Head of Service together with relevant managers. The Executive member with portfolio responsibility, Chief Executive, Corporate Director – Transformation and Resources, Chief Finance Officer and External Audit will receive

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copies of the internal audit reports. The Monitoring Officer will also receive copies of audit reports at the discretion of the Audit and Assurance Manager. Reports are issued initially as drafts and, following agreement as to contents and responsibility for implementing recommendations, a final report is issued. The Accounts and Audit Committee is provided with a listing on a quarterly basis of each audit report, summarising the findings and stating the audit opinion given.

6. Independence

- 6.1 The Audit and Assurance Service will be sufficiently independent of the activities being audited so that auditors are able to make impartial and effective professional judgements and recommendations.
- 6.2 Internal Audit will determine its priorities in consultation with the Accounts and Audit Committee.
- 6.3 The Audit and Assurance Manager will report impartially in his or her own name.
- 6.4 Where internal audit staff have a perceived or real conflict of interest in undertaking a particular piece of audit work (whether for personal reasons or through managing or undertaking any non-audit duties), this will be managed through the internal audit management and supervisory process. Work will be re-assigned where appropriate. Staff are required to declare any potential conflict of interest and a signed declaration from each member of staff is required on an annual basis. In the event that the Audit and Assurance Manager has responsibility for any activity relating to non-audit duties, to ensure independence is not impaired, the Audit and Assurance Manager would not be directly involved in the audit of this activity and arrangements would be agreed with the Section 151 Officer.
- 6.5 Adequate budgetary resources will be made available to enable the Internal Audit function to maintain its independence.

7. Responsibilities

- 7.1 The main objective of the Audit and Assurance Service is to provide the Council with an independent and objective opinion on the Council's control environment.
- 7.2 The Audit and Assurance Service should play a key role in shaping the ethics and standards of the Council and where appropriate, act as a catalyst for change and improvement.
- 7.3 The scope of internal audit work will cover all the Council's activities and encompass both the financial and non-financial aspects of the control environment. This includes activities undertaken in partnership

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with other organisations where assurance will be sought in accordance with agreed protocols including access rights.

- 7.4 Internal audit work comprises an independent and objective review of the control environment. The key elements of the control environment include:
- (a) Establishing and monitoring the achievement of the organisation's objectives
 - (b) The facilitation of policy and decision making ensuring compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations – including how risk management is embedded in the activity of the council, how leadership is given to the risk management process, and how staff are trained or equipped to manage risk in a way appropriate to their authority and duties
 - (c) Ensuring the economical, effective and efficient use of resources, and for securing continuous improvement in the way in which the council's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness
 - (d) The financial management of the Council and the reporting of financial management
 - (e) The performance management of the Council and the reporting of performance management.
- 7.5 The Council's assurance and performance management framework will be taken into consideration when determining the work of Internal Audit. The key elements of the assurance and performance management framework are:
- Risk management both at the strategic and operational levels
 - The monitoring of key Council objectives and targets by the Corporate Leadership Team
 - Business planning - the identification and monitoring of key business targets by individual services
 - Self-assessments by managers of the operation of controls for which they are responsible
 - Reviews by External Audit
 - Reviews by other external agencies
 - Scrutiny reviews
 - Previous work of Internal Audit and the Accounts and Audit Committee.
- 7.6 Particular attention will be devoted to any aspects of the control environment affected by significant changes within the organisation's risk environment.
- 7.7 The Audit and Assurance Manager will also make a provision, in the scope of Internal Audit's work, to form an opinion where key systems are operated by the Council on behalf of other bodies or other bodies are operating key systems on behalf of the Council.

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- 7.8 Where the Council works in partnership with other organisations, the role of Internal Audit will be defined on an individual basis.
- 7.9 The Audit and Assurance Manager will give an opinion on the operation of the Council's control environment, which encompasses internal control, risk management and governance. This is set out in the annual Head of Internal Audit report.
- 7.10 The Audit and Assurance Service will also take a lead role in supporting the work of the Accounts and Audit Committee. This will include co-ordinating the committee's work programme in agreement with committee members and supporting the committee to report on its work undertaken.

8. Fraud and Corruption

- 8.1 The Audit and Assurance Service works with other services including the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Team, Human Resources and Legal Services to maintain the Council's anti-fraud and corruption policy, strategy and supporting guidance. The Service also works with others to raise awareness of anti-fraud measures across the Council and fraud risks are considered as part of Internal Audit review work.
- 8.2 The Audit and Assurance Manager will be informed of suspected or detected fraud, corruption or impropriety, so that he or she can consider the adequacy of the relevant controls and evaluate the implications of fraud and corruption for his or her opinion on the internal control environment.

9. Access

- 9.1 The Audit and Assurance Service will have unrestricted direct access to all members, council personnel, records (whether manual or computerised), cash, stores, and other assets and may enter council property or land to obtain such information and explanations considered necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of an internal audit function. Such access shall be granted on demand and not be subject to prior notice and will also extend to partner bodies or external contractors working on behalf of the authority insofar as such access relates to work carried out or services provided on behalf of or in partnership with the authority. In respect of issues where clarity may be required in relation to access rights e.g. in relation to specific partnership arrangements, Audit and Assurance will seek advice, e.g. from relevant service areas such as Legal Services.

10. Limitations of Internal Audit Responsibilities

- 10.1 In seeking to discharge the responsibilities detailed above, and in line with the responsibilities of Internal Audit set out in section 7 above, it should be noted that the Internal Audit function is not responsible for:

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- Controlling the risks of the authority.
- Establishing and maintaining systems of internal control.
- Determining operational policies or procedures.

11. Resources

- 11.1 The Audit and Assurance Manager will hold a relevant professional qualification; have wide experience of audit and management and will be responsible for ensuring that the Audit and Assurance Service is appropriately staffed in terms of numbers, grades, qualification levels and experience.
- 11.2 The Audit and Assurance Manager will ensure that appropriate provision is made for maintaining and developing the competence of audit staff. All internal auditors will undertake a programme of continuing professional development to maintain and develop their skills. A record of training and development undertaken and planned will be maintained.
- 11.3 The Audit and Assurance Manager is responsible for ensuring that the resources of the Audit and Assurance Service are sufficient to meet its responsibilities and achieve its objectives. If a situation arose whereby it was concluded that resources were insufficient this will be formally reported to the Section 151 Officer, Chief Executive and, if the position is not resolved, to Members charged with responsibility for audit and governance (Accounts and Audit Committee).

12. Consultancy

- 12.1 Consultancy comprises the range of services, other than assurance services, provided by Internal Audit to assist management in meeting the objectives of the Council. This may include facilitation, process design, training, and advisory services. The Audit and Assurance Manager will be responsible for deciding what level of consultancy support Internal Audit can provide. The scope of any consultancy work will be agreed with management and will only be undertaken where resources permit without impacting on the planned annual assurance process.
- 12.2 In the event that the Service has previously performed consulting services, in planning the allocation and scoping of future assurance work, account will be taken of consultancy work performed in that area to ensure that independence and objectivity is not impaired.
- 12.3 Account will always be taken of the primary objective of Internal Audit to complete assurance work and approval would be sought from the Accounts and Audit Committee before any significant unplanned consultancy work is agreed which would impact on the Internal Audit Plan.

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13. **Review**

- 13.1 The Internal Audit Charter will be subject to regular review, the results of which will be reported for approval by the Corporate Leadership Team and the Accounts and Audit Committee.

**Mark Foster
Audit and Assurance Manager
March 2018**



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Internal Audit Strategy

Audit and Assurance Service (March 2018)

TRAFFORD COUNCIL AUDIT AND ASSURANCE SERVICE

INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Internal Audit Charter defines the objectives and scope of Internal Audit. The Internal Audit Strategy set out in this document details the arrangements in place to deliver internal audit so as to ensure that the objectives of the Audit and Assurance Service are met and the scope of it understood.
- 1.2 The Audit and Assurance Service is required to deliver a risk-based audit plan in a professional independent manner, to provide the Council with an opinion on the level of assurance it can place upon the internal control environment (which encompasses internal control, risk management and governance); and, where applicable, to make recommendations to improve it.
- 1.3 The Strategy Statement below sets out the key requirements for ensuring the Audit and Assurance Service fulfils its role effectively. The Statement sets out the overarching vision and aims of the Service. Details of how these requirements are to be met are set out in sections 3 to 8 of the Strategy.

2. Strategy Statement

- 2.1 The Mission and Core Principles for Internal Audit are defined in the Internal Audit Charter, in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Audit and Assurance should work to these in its planning and service delivery. (See Section 3.1 of the Internal Audit Charter).
- 2.2 The Audit and Assurance Service plays a key role in shaping the ethics, values and standards of the Council. The Service should be professional, challenging and innovative, acting as a catalyst for change and improvement by:
 - Ensuring its work adds value and maximises assurances to the Council about its positive impact on the achievement of corporate objectives and service delivery;
 - Having a sound knowledge of the organisation, being forward looking and aware of local, regional and national agendas and their impact on the Council;
 - Ensuring the service is flexible, works in partnership with managers, invests in good working relationships with all stakeholders and responds effectively to the changing needs of the Council;

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- Having sufficient resources to effectively deliver the vision and uphold professional standards, particularly officer resources with the number, skills mix, knowledge and experience to achieve this.

3. Service Provision

- 3.1 The Internal Audit function is provided by the Audit and Assurance Service, which is part of Finance Services within the Transformation and Resources Directorate. Day to day management is the responsibility of the Audit and Assurance Manager who reports to the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer). The Service maintains independence in its reporting as set out in its Charter and associated procedures.
- 3.2 Internal audit services to the Council are currently provided by in-house resources and are complemented by bought-in resources as follows:
- Specialist ICT audit resources are provided by Salford Internal Audit Services. This arrangement was originally agreed by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities as part of a review of joint working whereby Salford City Council provide specialist resources for use by all the Greater Manchester authorities. These specialist resources are used to complement in-house resources.
 - Internal audit resources will be bought-in if the Audit and Assurance Manager, in agreement with the Chief Finance Officer, considers this to be necessary to ensure completion of the internal audit plan, and if resources permit this approach. The engagement of bought-in internal audit resources will be reported to members charged with the responsibility for audit and governance. (Recognition will be given to potential conflicts of interest where bought in internal audit resources also provide non internal audit services to the Council).
- 3.3 The Audit and Assurance Manager is responsible for ensuring that all internal audit work complies with the Internal Audit Charter and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

4. Audit Planning

- 4.1 A risk based Audit and Assurance Service plan will be produced on an annual basis. This will be derived from the 'Audit Universe' which comprises all auditable areas in the control environment. Work will be planned to ensure adequate assurance is provided towards the completion of the Council's Annual Governance Statement.
- 4.2 Resources will be allocated taking into account assurance levels required, risks involved and the potential impact of the work. The planned programme of work will be informed by:
- assurance required to be provided as a Council

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- assurance gained from other sources other than internal audit work including external audit and other inspectorates, service self-assessments etc.
- knowledge and understanding of the organisation including future priorities and potential impacts
- detailed consultation with key stakeholders.

4.3 Factors to be taken into account when undertaking a risk assessment of auditable areas will take account of the council's assurance and performance management framework including:

- Risk management both at the strategic and operational levels
- Monitoring of key council objectives and targets by the Corporate Leadership Team
- Directorate and Service Business Planning arrangements
- Governance and control self-assessments by managers of the operation of controls for which they are responsible
- Reviews by External Audit and other external agencies
- Other internal reviews including scrutiny work
- Previous internal audit and Accounts and Audit Committee findings.

4.4 The Annual Internal Audit Plan lists the areas to be audited and the resources required. Audit reviews and other programmes of work will focus both on strategic and operational issues. To ensure adequate flexibility, audit work will involve a number of different methods of delivery i.e. traditional internal audit reviews; provision of guidance; awareness raising; advice to project / working groups etc. The plan will be prepared to ensure:

- Fundamental financial systems are reviewed on a cyclical basis.
- Adequate resources are set aside for anti-fraud and corruption work including investigating suspected cases and raising awareness across the Council.
- Adequate resources are included to enable reviews of the Council's corporate governance and risk management arrangements.
- The Council's ICT systems and information governance processes are subject to adequate internal audit coverage.
- Procurement and contracts arrangements across the council are reviewed.
- Internal Audit fulfils its role in auditing schools, supporting the process by which schools are required to meet the Schools Financial Value Standard.
- Adequate coverage of other key business risks including individual coverage of authority-wide issues, individual services, establishments, partnerships, programmes and projects.

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- 4.5 Provision is made to follow up work completed in previous periods. The plan also contains a contingency for unforeseen changes which may necessitate a change in priorities.
- 4.6 The Internal Audit Plan is flexible and will be kept under review and will be revised to take account of changes in the risk environment. Significant changes in the plan will be reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and to the Accounts and Audit Committee.

5. Service Delivery

- 5.1 There will be close working with management in agreeing the scope of individual audit assignments. The planning and scoping process takes into account any significant factors, developments and key risks to ensure the internal audit review of that area will add value for the Council.
- 5.2 The ongoing development of the Audit and Assurance Service's knowledge base will provide an effective source of information as part of the planning process. Knowledge will be developed by various means including ongoing liaison and discussion with managers and other key stakeholders.
- 5.3 Individual Audit and Assurance projects will have, within the overall project time allocation, planned time to allow the Audit and Assurance Officer(s) to research and build their knowledge of the area (proportionate to the nature/complexity of the review).
- 5.4 The Audit and Assurance Manager will ensure that there are documented protocols and procedures for planning and conducting audits, setting out the standards for the service. These will be set out in the Audit Manual. The Audit and Assurance Manager will monitor performance against the standards set out in the Audit Manual and other relevant documents.

6. Reporting

- 6.1 Reporting arrangements for the Audit and Assurance Service are set out in protocols which form an integral part of the Service's Audit Manual.
- 6.2 The approach to reporting, delivering opinions and supporting conclusions, and developing associated improvement actions will be flexible. This will be to ensure that officer resources are effectively utilised, the needs of recipient managers/stakeholders are met, the necessary assurance is provided and the form of reporting maximises ownership and impact of resulting improvement actions / organisational change being recommended.

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- 6.3 For individual audit assignments, where internal audit recommendations are made, these will be discussed with management prior to the issue of audit reports. The findings from the audit will be reported, clearly identifying and explaining the key risks and control weaknesses, with the relative priority of recommendations clearly communicated. Following each audit, the client manager will have the opportunity to provide feedback via the client satisfaction survey.
- 6.4 Progress against the annual internal audit plan will be monitored by the Audit and Assurance Manager and reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and to the Accounts and Audit Committee on a regular basis.
- 6.5 The Audit and Assurance Service will give an overall opinion each year on the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements to support the Annual Governance Statement. The Internal Audit opinion on the control environment will be given in the Annual Head of Internal Audit Report, which will be presented to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Accounts and Audit Committee.

7. Staffing / Resources

- 7.1 In order to deliver the Internal Audit Strategy and comply with professional standards, it is important that the Audit and Assurance Service comprises staff with the appropriate skills and experience.
- 7.2 Audit and Assurance officers are expected to undertake continuing professional development as appropriate and undertake training / development activities, both for personal development and to ensure there is an effective skills balance within the Service.
- 7.3 The Service operates personal development and review processes in line with the Council's policy as well as professional good practice. Ongoing training and development needs are identified as part of this process. In addition to internal training, such as through e-learning, shadowing the work of colleagues etc., available training provided by key providers such as CIPFA and IIA is considered and where appropriate included within the ongoing programme of training. Training and development needs are reviewed regularly.
- 7.4 The Service has a clearly defined code for staff encompassing ethics, conduct and values in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Staff are required to complete and sign a declaration statement in line with the PSIAS Code of Ethics.
- 7.5 If resources, including staffing, are insufficient for the Audit and Assurance Service to provide an opinion on the control environment, the Audit and Assurance Manager will report this to the Chief Finance Officer, Chief Executive and to the Accounts and Audit Committee.

8. Ongoing Development Actions

8.1 The Service reviews its procedures, systems and working methods on a regular basis. This includes a review, at least annually, against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards through either an internal or external assessment. Details are reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee within the Head of Internal Audit Annual Audit Report. The Service has a Quality Assurance Improvement Programme setting out its quality review processes in place which includes details in respect of both internal and external assessments.

8.2 There are a number of areas that are subject to ongoing or periodic review to ensure standards are maintained and where possible improvements made. The following will continue to be considered as part of ongoing service planning and monitoring of performance:

- Consider the ongoing appropriateness / application of audit procedures and protocols both in ensuring these continue to meet the organisation's requirements and remain in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
- Continue to consider and where appropriate, adopt, various approaches to audit reporting taking into account client feedback.
- Continue to consider training and development needs of staff to ensure there remains adequate knowledge and expertise in specific areas of audit activity.
- As part of ongoing audit planning, continue to consider the approach to gathering assurance including collaboration with other Internal Audit providers e.g. in respect of audit reviews of partnerships and other arrangements where there is collaboration between organisations.
- Continue to consider appropriate means of raising awareness of key governance and control issues. Ensure content on the Audit and Assurance Intranet site is regularly reviewed to ensure it is up to date and provides effective guidance.
- Ensure methods of working take into account any changes in the organisational structure, accommodation issues, technology, agile working protocols etc.

9. Review

9.1 The Internal Audit Strategy will be subject to regular review, the results of which will be reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee and the Corporate Leadership Team.

Mark Foster
Audit and Assurance Manager
March 2018



Quality Assurance Improvement Programme - Audit and Assurance Service

Audit and Assurance Service (March 2018)

TRAFFORD COUNCIL AUDIT AND ASSURANCE SERVICE

Quality Assurance Improvement Programme

1. Introduction

1.1 The Audit and Assurance Service Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) is in place to provide reasonable assurance to the various stakeholders of the Internal Audit activity that the Service:

- Performs its work in accordance with its Charter, which is consistent with The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards' (PSIAS) definition of Internal Auditing and Code of Ethics;
- Operates in an effective and efficient manner; and
- Is perceived by stakeholders as adding value and improving Internal Audit's operations.

1.2 The QAIP covers Internal Audit activity in accordance with the PSIAS Standard 1300 (Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme), including:

- Monitoring the Internal Audit activity to ensure it operates in an effective and efficient manner;
- Ensuring compliance with the PSIAS' Definition of Internal Auditing and Code of Ethics;
- Helping the Internal Audit activity add value and improve organisational operations;
- Undertaking both periodic and on-going internal assessments (Standard 1311); and
- Commissioning an external assessment at least once every five years, the results of which to be are communicated to the Accounts and Audit Committee (in accordance with Standard 1312 and 1320).

2. Internal Assessments

2.1 In accordance with PSIAS Standard 1311, internal assessments are undertaken through both on-going and periodic reviews.

On-going Reviews

2.2 Continual assessments are conducted through:

- Management supervision of each audit review;
- Audit policies and procedures used as set out in in the Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Manual for each assignment in order to comply with appropriate planning, fieldwork and reporting standards;
- Review and approval of all final reports including recommendations and levels of assurance by the Audit and Assurance Manager.
- Feedback from audit clients obtained through a client survey issued following each internal audit review. A summary analysis of

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responses received is included in the Annual Head of Internal Audit report.

- Monitoring of internal performance to feed into regular reporting to the Corporate Leadership Team and Accounts and Audit Committee.

Periodic Review

2.3 Periodic assessments/reviews are conducted through:

- Quarterly and Annual Reporting to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Accounts and Audit Committee on the work of Internal Audit.
- Annual self-assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards with a summary of the outcome of this exercise reported in the Annual Head of Internal Audit Report, including any key improvement actions planned.
- Performance review of individual audit staff through the Council's Performance Development Review (PDR) process.

3. External Assessments

3.1 External assessments will appraise and express an opinion about Internal Audit's conformance with the PSIAS' Definition of Internal Auditing and Code of Ethics and include recommendations for improvement, as appropriate.

Frequency of External Assessment

3.2 An external assessment will be conducted at least every five years, in accordance with the PSIAS. Appointment of the External Assessor and scope of the External Assessment will be agreed with the Section 151 Officer and Chair of the Accounts and Audit Committee.

Scope of External Assessment

3.3 The scope of the external assessment will consist of the following elements of Internal Audit activity:

- Conformance with the Standards, Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics, and Internal Audit's Charter, plans policies, procedures, practices, and any applicable legislative and regulatory requirements;
- Integration of the internal audit activity into the Council's governance and reporting framework;
- Processes undertaken by Internal Audit;
- The mix of knowledge, experiences, and disciplines within the staffing structure;

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- A determination whether Internal Audit adds value to governance, risk management and internal control within the Council.
- 3.4 Results of external assessments will be provided to the Accounts and Audit Committee. The external assessment report will be accompanied by a written action plan in response to recommendations identified. Any significant areas of non-compliance will be reported in the Annual Head of Internal Audit Report and where applicable, considered for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement.
- 4. Review of the QAIP**
- 4.1 This document will be appropriately updated following any changes to the PSIAS or Internal Audit's operating environment and will be reviewed on a regular basis.