

AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

March 2024

Title: Draft Internal Audit Charter, Strategy and Plan for 2024/25	
Open Report	For Discussion & Agreement
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
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Accountable Director: Jo Moore - Strategic Director, Resources	
Summary: The Internal Audit Charter defines the purpose, activity and responsibility of Internal Audit activity and is reviewed and presented annually for approval. It has been reviewed by the Head of Assurance and contains minor amendments as summarised below. The Internal Audit Strategy for 2024/25 onwards details how the Internal Audit service will be delivered and is reviewed and presented annually for approval. It has been reviewed by the Head of Assurance to ensure that it reflects current practice. The Internal Audit Plan 2024/25 has been developed in line with the Charter and Strategy. It has been fully funded to enable production of an effective annual Internal Audit opinion.	
Recommendations: The Audit and Standards Committee is asked to: (i) Approve the draft Internal Audit Charter (ii) Approve the draft Internal Audit Strategy 2024/25 (iii) Approve the draft Internal Audit Plan 2024/25	

1 Internal Audit Charter (“the Charter”)

- 1.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require the purpose, authority and responsibility of the Internal Audit activity to be formally defined in an Internal Audit Charter. The PSIAS require periodic review of the Charter by the Chief Audit Executive (Head of Assurance) and to be presented to senior management and the board for approval.
- 1.2 The Charter is reviewed at least annually by the Head of Assurance and presented for approval. The Charter was last presented to the Audit and Standards Committee in May 2023.

- 1.3 The Charter has been updated by the Head of Assurance to reflect current reporting lines and changes to responsibilities. Tracked changes have been highlighted as requested.
- 1.4 The Internal Audit Charter is set out at Appendix 1 of this report and is presented for approval.

2 Internal Audit Strategy (“the Strategy”) 2024/25

- 2.1 The Strategy details how the Internal Audit service will be delivered, in line with the Charter and includes:
 - Resources,
 - Approach to preparing and delivering the internal audit plan,
 - Quality assurance,
 - Reporting,
 - Follow-up,
 - Annual opinion, and
 - Performance monitoring.
- 2.2 It is presented at least annually for approval. The Strategy was last presented to the Audit and Standards Committee in May 2023 and has been updated by the Head of Assurance to reflect minor changes in working practice as a result of the recent external assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
- 2.3 As noted at Section 3 of the Strategy, the Internal Audit service is provided by a small in-house team supported by externally provided resources. The in-house team currently consists of the Head of Assurance whose remit amongst other related services includes Internal Audit. There is also a fully qualified Internal Audit Manager, a fully qualified Principal Auditor and two Audit Apprentices.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the existing arrangement to co-source external support from both Mazars and PwC via the appropriate framework contracts is continued into 2024/25.
- 2.5 As noted at section 4 of the Strategy, all London Borough of Barking and Dagenham’s activities (including those delivered by external providers) and legal entities are within the scope of Internal Audit. As a result, the Internal Audit plan includes risk-based audit activity in the Council’s companies. Internal Audit will not cover all activities of the companies, although they may request this at a cost.
- 2.6 The Strategy is set out at Appendix 2 and is presented for approval.

3 Internal Audit Plan (“the Plan”) 2024/25

- 3.1 The Plan has been developed in line with the Charter and Strategy. It details the planned use of Internal Audit resources for 2024/25, including draft audit titles and proposed audit objectives. It is compiled at least annually prior to the commencement of each financial year and reviewed periodically to reflect any relevant changes.

- 3.2 The plan includes the number of days allocated to each project for transparency, clarity and ease of planning. An increased number of days within the plan have been held back as contingency to reflect the fact that the environment within which the Council is operating is fast paced and many risks and challenges present themselves during the year and require an immediate response.
- 3.3 The Plan is set out at Appendix 3 and is presented for approval.

4 Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr Paul Feild, Senior Governance Solicitor

- 4.1 The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 section require that: a relevant authority must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which—facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives; ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.
- 4.2 Furthermore the Director of Finance has a statutory duty, under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 73 of the Local Government Act 1985, to ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to administer the Council's financial affairs.
- 4.3 The Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with the ability to investigate and prosecute offences committed against it. We will enhance our provision further by making best use of existing legislation, for example the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, to ensure that funds are recovered, where possible by the Council.

5 Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Nish Popat, Deputy S151 Officer

- 5.1 Internal Audit is fully funded as part of the Council's Finance Service. It is a key contribution to the overall management and control of the Council and its stewardship of public money. The recommendations and improvements as a result of its findings will be implemented from within existing resources. There are no further financial implications arising from this report.

6 Other Implications

- 6.1 **Risk Management** – The internal audit plan is risk-based and therefore supports effective risk management across the Council.
- 6.2 **Contractual issues** – As detailed above, delivery of the internal audit service will utilise two contracts, one with PwC and one with Mazars. Contracts for both organisations are in place following procurement processes undertaken by other London Boroughs.

6.3 **Staffing issues** – There is no impact on current staff.

6.4 **Corporate policy and customer impact** – The internal audit service is aligned to corporate objectives. No impact on race, gender, disability, sexuality, faith, age or community cohesion.

6.5 **No other implications to report**

7 **Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:** None

8 **List of appendices:**

Appendix 1: Internal Audit Charter

Appendix 2: Internal Audit Strategy 2024/25

Appendix 3: Internal Audit Plan 2024/25