

**Internal Audit Plan
2021/22
HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**



Head of Internal Audit: Rachel Ashley-Caunt

INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2021/22

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed work of Internal Audit at Harborough District Council for 2021/22 for review and approval by the Audit and Standards Committee.
- 1.2 Internal Audit provides independent assurance designed to add value and support the Council in achieving its priorities and objectives. To deliver this, Harborough District Council commissions 235 days for delivery of the Internal Audit service on an annual basis.
- 1.3 The provision of assurance services is the primary role for Internal Audit in the public sector. This role requires the Head of Internal Audit to provide an annual Internal Audit opinion based on an objective assessment of the framework of governance, risk management and control.
- 1.4 Internal Audit also provide consultancy services which are advisory in nature and are generally performed at the specific request of the organisation, with the aim of improving governance, risk management and control and contributing to the overall opinion. Any proposed consultancy work is clearly specified as such on the Audit Plan.
- 1.5 In setting the annual Audit Plan, the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require:
- The audit plan should be developed taking into account the organisation's risk management framework and based upon a risk assessment process undertaken with senior management and the Audit Committee;
 - The audit plan should be reviewed and approved by an effective and engaged Audit Committee to confirm that the plan addresses their assurance requirements for the year ahead; and
 - The Head of Internal Audit should consider accepting proposed consulting engagements based on the engagement's potential to improve management of risks, add value and improve the organisation's operations.

2. The Audit Plan

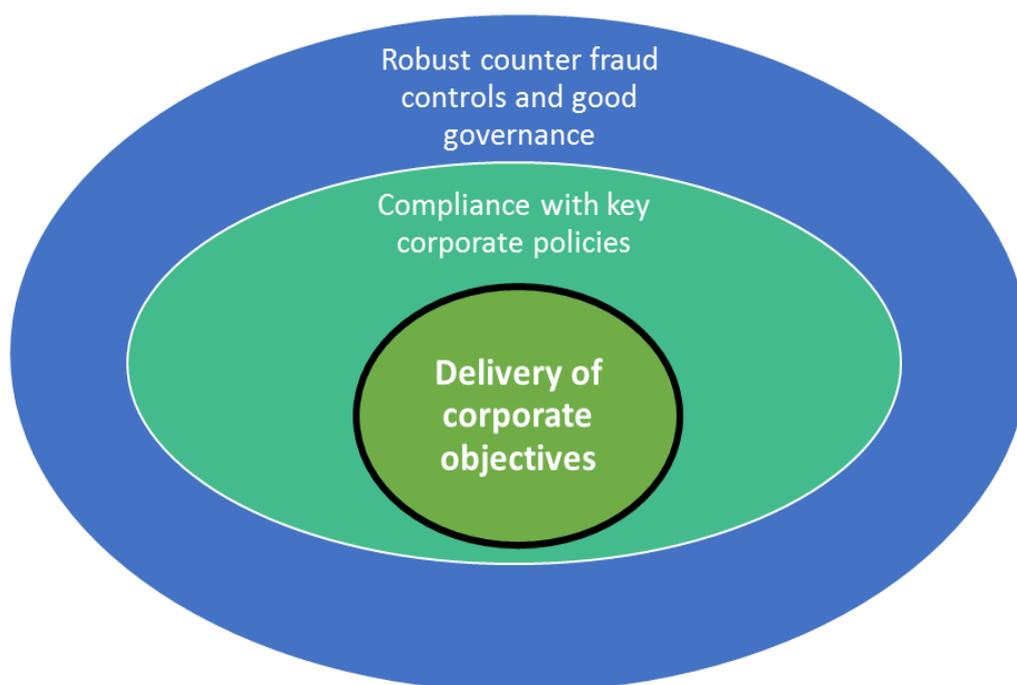
- 2.1 The Audit Plan covers the two key component roles of Internal Audit:
- The provision of an independent and objective opinion to the Section 151 Officer/ Head of Finance and Corporate Services and the Audit and Standards Committee on the degree to which risk management, control and governance support the achievement of Council objectives; and
 - The provision of an independent and objective consultancy service specifically to help line management improve the organisation's risk management, control and governance arrangements.
- 2.2 At the centre of the organisation, is the core delivery of the Council's objectives and corporate plan. The risk based audits are focused upon providing independent assurance over the controls in place to manage risks faced in achieving these objectives.
- 2.3 In order to protect the Council in delivering these objectives, it is essential that the Council's key corporate controls and policies are operating effectively to prevent the risk of financial loss, failure to comply with legislation, lack of accountability and reputational damage. These controls and policies range from key financial controls and systems to health and safety policies, from data management to

procurement rules. These policies and controls must be complied with by all service areas to secure the Council's standing.

2.4 Further protecting and underpinning the Council's ongoing delivery of its objectives are robust counter fraud controls and good governance. Without these, the Council would be exposed to the risk of fraud and corruption (both internally and externally), uninformed or non-transparent decision making, loss of accountability and direction, poor risk management and failure to embed and demonstrate ethical behaviours and values.

2.5 As such, the Audit Plan is designed to deliver independent, objective assurance on each of these areas – which are vital to the successful delivery of the Council's objectives and services. See Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1. Assurance areas



Value for money

2.6 In addition to assurance over governance, risk management and controls, the Audit Plan should also provide assurance over the Council's delivery of value for money. Assurance over value for money is embedded within each audit assignment.

2.7 The National Audit Office¹ refers to the following three key requirements in relation to value for money, which will form areas of assurance in the risk based audits proposed for 2021/22, as applicable to the risk area:

- **Informed decision making**
 - Acting in the public interest, through demonstrating and applying the principles and values of sound governance;
 - Understanding and using appropriate and reliable financial and performance information to support informed decision making and performance management;

¹ Auditor Guidance Note 3 Auditors' Work on Value for Money Arrangements (November 2015)

- Reliable and timely financial reporting that supports the delivery of strategic priorities; and
 - Managing risks effectively and maintaining a sound system of internal control.
- **Sustainable resource deployment**
 - Planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and maintain statutory functions;
 - Managing and utilising assets effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities; and
 - Planning, organising and developing the workforce effectively to deliver strategic priorities.
 - **Working with partners and other third parties**
 - Working with third parties effectively to deliver strategic priorities;
 - Commissioning services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities; and
 - Procuring supplies and services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities.

2.8 The proposed Audit Plan for 2021/22 will provide assurances over these key areas within the context of the assignments detailed.

2.9 Some of the corporate level audits will provide specific assurances in relation to the value for money requirements – the audit of Procurement will provide assurance over the effective procurement of supplies and services, including when working with third parties.

3. Planning process

3.1 In order to ensure that the Audit Plan for 2021/22 addresses the Council’s key risks and adds value, the Head of Internal Audit has identified and prioritised the areas for coverage by:

- Reviewing the Council’s Risk Registers and Corporate Plan;
- Undertaking an assurance mapping exercise against the risks identified to highlight any gaps in the assurance framework and identifying any other sources of assurance for each of the Council’s key risks, which may reduce the added value of an Internal Audit review and where work could be aligned with other assurance providers;
- Identifying any areas of the Audit Universe (a list of potential areas for audit review across the Council) which have not been subject to Internal Audit review during the last four years;
- Paper to the Governance and Audit Committee in December 2019 to agree the audit planning process and consult Members on any areas where assurance is sought;
- Completion of an annual fraud risk assessment undertaken by the Head of Internal Audit and Monitoring Officer; and
- Meeting with members of Corporate Management Team to discuss key risks and emerging risk areas for the year ahead and any areas where Internal Audit support would be beneficial either in an assurance or consultancy role.

3.2 The process has also incorporated consideration of potential audits which can be undertaken by drawing upon similar emerging themes from the Councils within the shared service client base.

3.3 Following this consultation and review, a draft Internal Audit Plan has been compiled and is provided in Table 1.

3.4 In order to ensure the Audit Plan addresses the Council's key risks and that the service is able to respond to any in year changes to the organisation's business, risks, operations, programs or systems, it is vital that the content of the Plan be subject to ongoing review throughout the financial year. To enable the service to be responsive and ensure all audit resources are used effectively and add maximum value, it is recommended that arrangements be agreed to allow changes to the Plan to be made between Audit and Standards Committee meetings, involving consultation between the Head of Internal Audit, the S151 Officer and Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee.

4 Resources

4.1 The audit assignments for all of the shared service clients are delivered by a team of audit staff including a mix of highly regarded professional qualifications (including CIPFA, ACCA and IIA) and extensive experience in the public and private sector. Absences and resource gaps/vacancies can be filled by the wider team, providing the resilience and stability of a shared service.

4.2 Efforts are constantly made to ensure all clients benefit from the shared service arrangement. This includes achieving efficiencies in delivering assignments, sharing of knowledge and experience and opportunities to deliver cross-cutting reviews.

4.3 On an annual basis, the Head of Internal Audit completes a self-assessment of the Internal Audit service against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. In doing so, the Head of Internal Audit must consider whether the resource base and mix is adequate and would highlight to the S151 officer and Members if there were any concerns that the resources in place could not provide the required coverage to inform the annual Assurance Opinion.

Table 1: Draft Internal Audit Plan 2021/22

Assurance Areas	Internal Audit Assignments (including assurances sought)	Audit days	Risk register ref / source	Initial timing
Corporate Governance and Counter Fraud	Counter fraud and governance arrangements (consultancy) To provide ongoing support on the Council's proactive counter fraud work and Code of Corporate Governance.	5	Fraud risk Assessment	TBA
	Risk management To provide assurance over the Council's risk management framework and effective embedding of risk management across the organisation. Last audit in 2017 – usually cover three yearly.	8	Internal Audit assurances	Q1
Key Corporate Controls and Policies	Key financial controls To provide assurance over the design and compliance with key controls within the Council's financial systems. Undertaken on an annual basis, with a cyclical approach to testing.	30	Internal Audit assurances	Q4
	Budgetary control To provide assurance over the Council's framework for setting, monitoring and managing budgets to support ongoing financial stability and delivery of savings.	10	CR25 CR15	Q3
	Procurement compliance To test compliance with Contract Procedure Rules and the Statement of Required Practice on the procurement of goods and services across the Council. To inform annual assurance opinion on value for money and counter fraud.	9	Fraud risk assessment	Q3
	Payroll system (consultancy) To provide consultancy support on the implementation of the new payroll system.	5	Senior Management request	Q1
The People: A healthy, inclusive and engaged community	Leisure services – Embedded Assurance review To engage with the project and issue reports at key stages – including assurance over the management of risks, consultation and communications, procurement, use of resources and plans and governance and decision making.	15	KA.04.03 Corporate delivery plan	Q1 – Q4
	Temporary accommodation To provide assurance that the Council's placing of individuals in temporary accommodation is in line with national requirements and local policy and that recoverable monies are secured.	12	CR37	Q2
The Place: An enterprising, vibrant place	Planning fee income To provide assurance over the recovery of monies due in relation to planning fees – including charging for all chargeable services, benchmarking to other authorities and informed projections in budget monitoring.	12	CR32	Q2

Assurance Areas	Internal Audit Assignments (including assurances sought)	Audit days	Risk register ref / source	Initial timing
	Community grants To provide assurance over the grant application and approval process, including counter fraud controls.	12	Internal Audit assurances	Q1
	Growth projections To provide assurance over the Council's effective use of data relating to growth in the district and its application in effective financial modelling such as business rates projections.	10	CR27 CR07	Q3
Your Council: innovative, proactive and efficient	Transformation programmes (BC25 / Smarter services) (consultancy) To provide consultancy support during the transformation of services and processes – to ensure key controls are considered in service redesign.	12	Senior Management request	TBC
	Covid-19 recovery To provide assurance over actions the Council is taking to move to business as usual and the project management supporting this, including review of the Council's response. To review changes in working practices/procedures and whether changes in key controls pose any additional risks to the organisation.	15	CV01 - 19	Q2
	Asset management To provide assurance over the safe and effective management of the Council's property assets and to confirm that controls are being effectively exercised in relation to leased properties (including Grow On Space).	15	CR25	Q3
	IT Governance IT is central to, and essential for, the business of the Council. It is, therefore, important that a suitable and robust IT strategy, a system of IT governance and all necessary IT policies are in place to support this.	10	CR29	Q3
Support to Harborough District Council	Including support and reporting to Audit and Standards Committee, management support and engagement, ad-hoc advice and assistance, annual Internal Audit report, follow ups on audit recommendations and partnership working with external auditors. Includes contingency days.	35		
Management & development of delegated Internal Audit service	Development and management of Internal Audit service in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, including annual standards assessment, continuous improvement, internal audit charter and manual, management, training and development of the team and performance reporting.	20		