

Royal Borough Windsor & Maidenhead

INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

The Terms of Reference for the provision of the Internal Audit Service within the Shared Audit and Investigation Service at Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead.

*(This document revises and updates the previous Audit Charter approved by the Audit and Performance Review Panel.
April 2016
(Reviewed annually)*

INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

Introduction

1. The purpose of this Audit Charter is to set out the Terms of Reference for the provision of the Internal Audit Service within the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. The Charter is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that current needs are met. The latest review was undertaken in April 2015 and demonstrates how the Internal Audit Service complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), which came into effect in April 2013.

Authority

2. The Local Government Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires every local authority to undertake 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.
3. Under S151 of the Local Government Finance Act 1972, the S151 Officer is responsible for ensuring that proper arrangements exist for the management of the Council's financial affairs. Reliance upon Internal Audit is fundamental to the fulfilment of that responsibility.

Definition of Internal Auditing

4. In accordance with the PSIAS Internal Audit 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.

Role, Purpose and Function

5. The Internal Audit Service is delivered by the Shared Audit and Investigation Service (SAIS) a shared service between Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) hosted by WBC. The SAIS provides Head of Internal Audit to the authority. This role is performed by the Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service
6. The Internal Audit Service provides:-
 - Senior Management and the Board (who is the highest level of governing body charged with the responsibility to direct and/or oversee the activities and management of the organisation with assurances on the adequacy of control within the Council's systems and activities and for RBWM is the Audit and Performance Review Panel).
 - the S151 Officer with the assurances required to discharge his statutory responsibilities.
 - a service to monitor the efficient and effective delivery of the Council's objectives.
 - evidence regarding compliance with the Council's Constitution, Corporate procedures and the Council's policies and objectives.
7. The existence of Internal Audit does not diminish the responsibility of management to establish systems of internal control to ensure that activities are conducted in a secure, efficient and well-ordered manner.

8. For the purposes of clarification, the Board for RBWM is the Audit and Performance Review Panel and Senior Management is defined as those posts that are within the organisation at Head of Service level and above.

Independence

9. The main determinant of the effectiveness of Internal Audit is that it is seen to be independent. To ensure this, Internal Audit operates within a framework that allows:-
- unrestricted access to the Head of Paid Service and Senior Management.
 - unrestricted access to Council Members reporting to Members.
 - reporting to Council Members
 - segregation from operations.
10. Every effort is made to preserve objectivity by ensuring that all audit members of staff are free from any conflicts of interest with regard to both audit and non audit activities.

Objectives of Internal Audit

11. As an independent appraisal function within the Council, the primary objective of Internal Audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal controls as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources. In addition, the other objectives of the function are to:
- Ensure compliance with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015.
 - Deliver an annual internal audit opinion on the strength of the Council's governance arrangements and control environment and contribute towards the production of the Annual Internal Audit Report and the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).
 - Support managers with the management of risk including: -
 - In the delivery of services
 - Protection of assets from loss
 - Maintaining the reputation of the Council
 - Protecting the organisation from litigation
 - Meeting statutory obligations
 - Meeting corporate objectives
 - Being aware of environmental implications
 - Being alert to the risk of fraud or irregularity
 - Contingency planning
 - Provide managers with support and advice to encourage consultation and the adoption of best practice.
 - Undertake projects to meet the current concerns of the Audit & Performance Review Panel, Head of Paid Service, Strategic Directors, Heads of Service, the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.
 - Undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal audit, required under the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service arranges this work and the outcomes are presented to the Audit & Performance Review Panel.
 - Assist management with the provision of consultancy work where appropriate, e.g. in the preparation for inspections, to implement best practice.

Scope of Internal Audit

12. The scope of Internal Audit allows for unrestricted coverage of the Council's activities and unrestricted access to all records (both electronic or otherwise), assets, personnel and premises and for obtaining such information and explanations it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. These rights of access also apply to the Council's partner organisations and contractors. This unrestricted access extends to any internal auditor carrying out an investigation on behalf of the Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service. (This is in here with regard to internal audit only and investigations need their own Protocol).
13. In addition, Internal Audit, has unrestricted access to Members, the Head of Paid Service, Strategic Directors, Heads of Service, all other council employees, External Audit, suppliers and contractors.
14. Internal Audit work covers all systems and activities in all directorates and locations throughout the Council.

Professional Standards and Ethics

15. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service has adopted the mandatory Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which applies the IIA International Standards to the UK Public Sector. The objectives of these Standards are to;
 - Define the nature of internal auditing within the UK public sector
 - Set basic principles for carrying out internal audit in the UK public sector
 - Establish a framework for providing internal audit services, which add value to the organisation, leading to improved organisational processes and operations, and
 - Establish the basis for the evaluation of internal audit performance and to drive improvement planning.
16. All Internal Auditors will conform to the IIA's Code of Ethics and rules of conduct and the requirements of any other professional bodies for which they are a member. Internal Auditors also have regard to the Committee on Standards of Public Life's *Seven Principles of Public Life* ("Nolan Principles").
17. Instances of non-conformance to the PSIAS will be reported to the Board (Audit & Performance Review Panel). More significant deviations for inclusion in the AGS
18. Any offers of gifts or hospitality will be reported to the Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service and an appropriate record made in accordance with the Council's gift and hospitality policy. Auditors must avoid the perception of any impairment to their objectivity and independence.

Responsibility

19. Internal Audit has no executive responsibility for the Council's systems of internal control other than an appraisal of their effectiveness with regard to Council objectives.

20. Internal Audit is not an extension of, or a substitute for, the functions of management. Responsibility for internal control rests fully with line managers, who should ensure that arrangements are appropriate and adequate. It is for management to address Internal Audit concerns or to accept the risk resulting from not taking action. However, it is the SAIS responsibility to consider taking matters to higher levels of management or to Council Members if it is felt that the risk should not (or need not) be borne.
21. The internal auditor should have regard to the possibility of such malpractice and should seek to identify serious defects in internal control, which might permit the occurrence of such an event.
22. An internal auditor who discovers evidence of, or suspects, malpractice should report, through the Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service, firm evidence, or reasonable suspicions, to the appropriate level of management. It is a management responsibility to determine what further action to take.
23. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service will use information from fraud activities to inform the annual audit opinion and the risk-based plan.
24. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service will manage any conflict of interest from non-audit activities and details of these will be provided to the Audit & Performance Review Panel. This includes any advisory and non-audit services that SAIS provides to management.

Audit Style and Content

25. The primary task of Internal Audit is to review the systems of internal control operating throughout the Council and in doing this will adopt a predominantly risk-based approach to audit, aligned to the Corporate Risk Register.
26. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service will be required to manage the provision of a complete internal audit service to the Council which will include risk based compliance, computer and contract audit and in discharging this duty, the Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation will:
 - prepare an annual risk-based audit plan in consultation with the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer, Strategic Directors, Heads of Service, client managers and External Audit for formal endorsement by the Audit & Performance Review Panel. This Plan will be regarded as flexible rather than as an immutable expression of audit policy.
 - ensure that current entries in the Corporate Risk Register are reflected and included in the Audit Plan on a rolling basis and any significant changes to the Audit Plan to be brought to the attention of the Board.
 - ensure a system of close supervision of audit work, and maintain a review of audit files through the supervisory structure and a standardisation of documentation, as there may occasionally be a requirement to provide working papers, where requested.
 - ensure a system of computer audit within the Council is implemented and maintained.

Audit Resources and Training

27. Internal Audit resource will be determined by Members in consultation with the S151 Officer in order to enable him to discharge his statutory duties and will reflect the corporate needs of the Council. Resources will also reflect requirements needed to allow the S151 Officer to discharge his obligations. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service must ensure that the internal audit function has appropriate resources in order to meet its objectives and to comply with the PSIAS.
28. The staffing structure of the Service will comprise of suitably qualified posts with a mix of professional specialisms and skills to reflect the varied functions of the Service and the need to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the complex range of processes undertaken by RBWM. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service will arrange, as and when necessary and/or if such specialisms cannot be provided in-house, for such expertise to be provided by external providers.
29. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service will carry out a continuous review of the development and training needs of all audit personnel and will arrange appropriate in-service training. Internal Auditors have a personal responsibility to undertake a programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain and develop their competence.
30. All Internal Audit staff will receive an annual appraisal.

Audit Reporting

31. The Service Manager, Shared Audit and Investigation Service shall have unrestricted access to the Head of Paid Service and/or the Chair of the Audit & Performance Review Panel on any matters of concern.
32. Timely reporting is a key part of Internal Audit and reporting takes place: -
 - a. To the responsible Strategic Director, Head of Service at/Service Manager/Head Teacher at the conclusion of each audit review setting out an overall opinion and the main concerns.
 - b. To the Audit & Performance Review Panel on a six monthly and on an annual basis and to the Audit Board on a regular basis, reporting progress against the Audit Plan, summarising the outcome of audit reviews, to highlight where management have not responded to audit concerns, to identify the progress made by management in implementing the treatment of concerns and to emphasise any other key issues.
 - c. The annual report to the Audit & Performance Review Panel will also include an overall opinion on the strength of the governance arrangements and control environment (which will also contribute towards the production of the AGS) and a review of the Effectiveness of the system of Internal Audit, as required by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015.