



INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

Purpose

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.

Authority

The requirement for an Internal Audit function for local authorities is implied by Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that authorities "make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs." The Accounts and Audit Regulations specifically require relevant bodies to "undertake an adequate and effective Internal Audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with the proper practices in relation to internal control." Proper Practices is defined as the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS – herein referred to as the Standards) along with the Application Note to the Standards produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA); as such compliance with these documents is mandatory.

The Standards set out requirements for the work of Internal Audit to be led by a Chief Audit Executive (CAE); at Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council this role is fulfilled by the Audit and Assurance Manager. The Standards also set out the responsibility for oversight of the work of Internal Audit as falling jointly to 'senior management' and 'the board'; at Tonbridge & Malling senior management is defined as the Council's Management Team and the board is defined as the Audit Committee.

The Internal Audit activity, with strict accountability for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information, is authorised full, free, and unrestricted access to any and all of the organisation's records, physical properties, and personnel pertinent to carrying out any engagement. All employees are requested to assist the Internal Audit activity in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities. The Internal Audit activity will also have free and unrestricted access to the Audit Committee.

Professionalism and Professional Standards

The Internal Audit activity will govern itself by adherence to the Standards along with the Application Note to the Standards produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA). This mandatory guidance constitutes the definition of Internal Audit, the Core Principles, the Code of Ethics and Standards for the professional practice of Internal Auditing and for evaluating the effectiveness of the Internal Audit activity's performance. The Internal Audit activity will also have regard to the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and to the Seven Principles of Public Life, and will adhere to the Council's policies and procedures and the Internal Audit Manual.

Organisational Relationships

The CAE will report functionally to the Council's Management Team and Audit Committee and therefore the appointment or termination of the CAE will be reported to Management Team and the Audit Committee.

The Chair of the Audit Committee will monitor the performance of the CAE and will be invited to provide feedback to the appraisal process for this officer.

The CAE will communicate and interact directly with the Audit Committee, inside and outside of the formal meetings of the Committee as appropriate.



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The CAE is responsible for the provision of the Internal Audit function, but may also be subject to Internal Audit for other services and functions under their responsibility. Where the CAE is the responsible manager for a service subject to Internal Audit, auditor and/or audit management responsibilities in relation to the assignment will be passed to an independent third party to ensure that Internal Auditors remain independent enabling them to carry out their work freely and objectively in accordance with the Standards.

Relationship with the Director – Finance & Transformation (Section 151 Officer)

The CAE has direct access to the Director – Finance & Transformation as Section 151 Officer.

Relationship with the Monitoring Officer

The CAE has direct access to the Director – Central Services as Monitoring Officer.

Relationship with the Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service

The CAE has direct access to the Chief Executive (also the Head of Paid Service).

Relationship with Management Team

The CAE is able to report in their own right to the Council's Management Team, which consists of the Chief Executive and four Directors including the Council's Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Relationship with the Audit Committee

The CAE has direct access to the Chair of the Audit Committee and is able to report in their own right to the Audit Committee. The role of the Committee includes monitoring of the performance of the Internal Audit function. This is primarily achieved through consideration of interim and annual Internal Audit reports. Additionally, the CAE will prepare and present an annual risk based audit plan to the Audit Committee for approval and give an annual opinion on governance, risk management and internal control.

Relationship with External Audit

The CAE will liaise with External Audit to:

- co-ordinate the overall audit effort;
- ensure appropriate sharing of information;
- reduce the incidence of duplication of effort;
- foster a co-operative and professional working relationship.

In particular the CAE shall:

- discuss the annual Internal Audit plan with the External Auditor to facilitate external audit planning;
- make all Internal Audit working papers and reports available to the External Auditor;
- receive copies of relevant External Auditor communications.



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Independence and Objectivity

The Internal Audit activity will remain free from interference by any element in the organisation, including matters of audit selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, or report content to permit maintenance of independence and objectivity.

Internal Auditors will have no direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities audited. Accordingly, they will not implement internal controls, develop procedures, install systems, prepare records, or engage in any other activity that may impair Internal Auditor's judgement.

Internal Auditors must exhibit the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information about the activity or process being examined. Where there is a training need identified by the CAE then appropriate training will be sought. All members of the Internal Audit team will be invited to attend the annual conference arranged by the Kent Audit Group.

Internal Auditors must make a balanced assessment of all the relevant circumstances and not be unduly influenced by their own interests or by others in forming judgements. Each member of the team will make a declaration of any interests or of 'no interest' on an annual basis and any interests will be taken into account when allocating audit work across the team. Where an audit is scheduled for a function for which the CAE is responsible, audit management responsibilities in relation to the assignment will be passed to an independent third party.

The CAE will confirm to the Audit Committee, at least annually, the organisational independence of the Internal Audit activity. This will include any arrangements to audit services that sit within the CAE's responsibility in line with the process described at Organisational Relationships above.

The conduct of an audit or the provision of advice by an Internal Auditor does not in any way diminish the responsibility of line management for the proper execution and control of their activities.

Responsibility

The scope of Internal Auditing encompasses, but is not limited to, the examination and evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's governance, risk management, and internal control processes in relation to the organisation's defined goals and objectives. Internal control objectives considered by Internal Audit include:

- Consistency of operations or programs with established objectives and goals and effective performance.
- Effectiveness and efficiency of operations and employment of resources.
- Compliance with significant policies, plans, procedures, laws, and regulations.
- Reliability and integrity of management and financial information processes, including the means to identify, measure, classify, and report such information.
- Safeguarding of assets.
- Internal Audit is responsible for evaluating all processes ('audit universe') of the entity including governance processes and risk management processes. It also assists the Audit Committee in evaluating the quality of performance of external auditors and maintains a proper degree of coordination with External Audit.

Internal Audit may perform consulting and advisory services related to governance, risk management and control as appropriate for the organisation. It may also evaluate specific operations at the request of the Audit Committee or management, as appropriate.

Based on its activity, Internal Audit is responsible for reporting significant risk exposures and control issues identified to the Audit Committee and to the Council's Management Team, including fraud risks, governance issues, and other matters needed or requested by the Audit



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Committee. The CAE is responsible for the Council's counter fraud activity including maintenance of the Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy which sets out arrangements for all suspected or detected fraud, corruption or impropriety to be reported to Internal Audit.

The work of Internal Audit extends to consider the entire control environment of the Council. This enables the CAE to fulfil the responsibility under the Accounts and Audit Regulations in providing an opinion on the Council's internal control environment, based on the work of Internal Audit. This opinion is then considered by the Council as part of the annual review of the Council's governance arrangements.

Partnership Working

The role of CAE is provided by way of a secondment agreement with Kent County Council under a partnership working arrangement. The objective of this partnership is to provide a high quality Internal Audit service with added resilience, share best practice and work to align working practices in order to provide a consistent high quality service across the two councils.

The Internal Audit team based at Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council consists of the CAE by way of a secondment agreement with Kent County Council, one part-time Senior Auditor and audit contractors as and when required to deliver the annual Plan. The partnership working arrangement with Kent County Council provides the opportunity for Internal Auditors at both councils to conduct audits at either council where it is practical and beneficial to do so. The Internal Auditor assigned to each audit review is selected by the CAE based on their knowledge, skills, experience and discipline to ensure that the audit is conducted properly.

Audit reviews may also be performed by any of the following on a case by case basis provided that they are suitably qualified:

- engaged agency staff;
- engaged consulting services.

In the case of the engagement of a person from another council or of a consultant, formal arrangements are to be set in place and agreed by the Director of Finance & Transformation in accordance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules after budget provision has been agreed.

Internal Audit Plan

At least annually, the CAE will submit to the Audit Committee an Internal Audit plan for review and approval, including risk assessment criteria. The Internal Audit plan will include timing as well as budget and resource requirements for the next financial year. The CAE will communicate the impact of resource limitations and significant interim changes to the Council's Management Team and the Audit Committee.

The Internal Audit plan will be developed based on a prioritisation of the audit universe using a risk-based methodology, including input of the Council's Management Team and the Audit Committee. Prior to submission to the Audit Committee for approval, the plan will be discussed with the Council's Management Team. Any significant deviation from the approved Internal Audit plan will be communicated through the periodic activity reporting process.

Reporting and Monitoring



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A written report will be prepared and issued following the conclusion of each Internal Audit engagement and will be distributed as appropriate. Internal Audit results will also be communicated to the Audit Committee.

The Internal Audit report may include management's response and corrective action taken or to be taken in regard to the specific findings and recommendations. Management's response, whether included within the original audit report or provided thereafter by management of the audited area should include a timetable for anticipated completion of action to be taken and an explanation for any corrective action that will not be implemented.

The Internal Audit activity will be responsible for appropriate follow-up on engagement findings and recommendations. All significant findings will remain in an open issues file until cleared.

Quality Assurance and Periodic Assessment

The CAE is responsible for providing periodically a self-assessment on the Internal Audit activity as regards its consistency with the Audit Charter (purpose, authority, and responsibility), compliance with the Standards and performance relative to its Plan.

In addition, the CAE will communicate to the Council's Management Team and the Audit Committee on the Internal Audit activity's Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme, including any non-conformance with the Standards, results of annual internal assessments of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit and external assessments conducted at least every five years.

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Lead'.

Chief Audit Executive (CAE)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivian Brown'.

Chair of the Audit Committee