



cw audit services

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council

Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2015 - 2017
March 2015

Getting value from your service

1. Introduction

General background

This document sets out a proposed strategic plan of Internal Audit coverage for the period April 2015 to March 2017. The plan of work has been driven by the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) released by HM Treasury in December 2012, which were applicable from 1st April 2013, the Accounts & Audit Regulations (2011) and guidance relating to the Annual Governance Statement, which the work of Internal Audit supports and informs. The proposed plan supports an opinion based on an assessment of the design and operation of the internal control environment and the adequacy and effectiveness of control noted from our risk based audits carried out during the year. It follows therefore that the focus of the audit plan is critical to ensuring the right level of assurance to the Council.

The aim of the plan is to:

- **Deliver a risk focused audit programme** - through a detailed risk assessment across the organisation and at component level
- **Be proactive and forward looking** - by looking at what risks the Council faces and trying to minimise these through our work.
- **Add value** – by providing practical, value-added recommendations, in areas of significant risk, by working where relevant with other functions (e.g. risk management and anti-fraud) and trying to save resources / enhance controls where possible.
- **Provide assurance to management and the ‘Audit’ Committee** - as key stakeholders, we will work closely with management and the Policy, Finance & Development Committee with regard to your assurance needs.

Internal Audit Charter and Standards

The PSIAS requires us to explicitly detail the purpose, authority and responsibility of our internal audit activity in a formally documented Internal Audit Charter, which is included as Appendix 2 to this document. **The PSIAS require the Charter to be approved by the Audit Committee (ie Policy, Finance & Development Committee), and accordingly this approval is sought alongside agreement of the proposed Internal Audit strategy.**

In conducting our work as your Internal Auditors we are required to adhere to a set of standards as outlined in the PSIAS. We consider that compliance with these standards is a key element of our Internal Audit service in accordance with our contract with you, and maintain quality procedures to ensure compliance.

We believe that we have established suitable arrangements to enable us to comply with the standards. We will, however, report any instances of non-compliance should they arise, as soon as we become aware of them.

2. Developing the plan

Our plan of work is designed to support the annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion. The required basis for forming this opinion is as follows:

- An assessment of the design and operation of the overall internal control environment, governance and risk management arrangements; and
- An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls, based upon the results of our risk based audit assignments that are reported during the course of year.

It follows that an effective risk based audit plan, focusing the resource into areas of principal risk is essential.

Risk Assessment

The plan has been prepared in consultation with the management team. It has been informed by:

- A review of the risks contained within the Council's Risk Register and Annual Governance Statement.
- Discussions with management team members to identify key auditable areas based on an assessment of current and future issues and risks.
- Our understanding of the challenges to the Council to deliver its objectives within the current economic environment and changes in local government legislation.

On the basis of this process we have identified a number of priority areas (see section 3) and these have been scheduled for attention in the

first year of the audit plan. The resulting Internal Audit Plan is detailed at Appendix One. We will, however, continue to review the audit plan on an ongoing basis in response to developments and initiatives. If additional risks arise or change in priority during the year the audit plan will be reconsidered with management and, subject to Committee approval, amended to ensure that audit resources remain focused on the key risk areas.

3. Linking our plan to your strategic risks

The following table sets out the proposed areas of work for the 2015/16 financial year linked through to your business objectives/risk and showing the supporting rationale for that work and a summary outline of the work to be undertaken.

Area	Rationale - Links to Objectives/Risks	Work outline
RESOURCES - FINANCE, PROCUREMENT & ICT		
Budgetary Control and Medium Term Financial Strategy	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Financial strategy and management key in time of financial challenge.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include budget setting, approval, adjustment and monitoring.
Main Accounting	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include control account reconciliations, journal entries and interfaces with other key systems.
Financial Systems (key controls)	Key financial systems to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements, provides important assurance on key controls.	Review of key controls as agreed with External Auditor.
Risk Management & Assurance	Management of risk of underpinning importance in ensuring delivery of Council objectives, complying with the law etc.	Review to assure that the Council has a fully embedded risk management system in place that identifies and treats risks to key strategic and operational objectives.
Strategic Procurement / Shared Services Value for Money	Delivery of value for money in key procurements and shared service arrangements is very important in supporting the delivery of Council objectives and ensuring best use of resources.	Review on a risk-assessed basis of key procurement exercises and key shared service arrangements, to consider value for money and effectiveness.
REGULATION & REGENERATION		
Building Control/Planning Control	Arrangements to ensure building regulation and planning applications are properly received and processed in compliance with planning law and policy; and all income due is received are important in ensuring delivery of national and local objectives around the built environment.	Review to provide updated assurance on the sound treatment of building regulation and/or planning applications and associated fees-follow-up on the outcomes of our work in previous years.
Environmental Health/Licensing/Land Charges	Important public-facing services supporting corporate objectives regarding public health/ welfare.	Risk-based review to focus on key areas to be agreed with management.
CORPORATE RESOURCES		
Payroll & Expenses	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor.
Human Resources	The establishment of, and compliance with, robust human resource policies is of vital importance in ensuring the effective delivery of services and employee relations in a time of continuing financial constraints.	Review to assure on the operation of effective key human resource policies.
Legal Services/corporate legal compliance arrangements	A multitude of legal requirements apply to the Council regarding the range of its functions and services, and risks related to this feature in the risk register.	To provide assurance on the Council's policies and processes to ensure sound and legally-compliant functions and services, particularly focussing on approach to new legislation.
Member services (incl	Arrangements to ensure member allowances are paid in accordance with approved	To provide assurance on the payment of member allowances and if

Area	Rationale - Links to Objectives/Risks	Work outline
allowances)	Scheme of Allowances and standards of member conduct are dealt with in accordance with Localism Act 2011 are very important in terms of maintaining the reputation of the Council.	required, arrangements regarding member standards of conduct.
CUSTOMER SERVICES		
Council Tax	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Increased risk of non-collection in a recession. Changes to Council Tax Benefit may also affect collection rates and debt levels.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor to include maintenance of property register, liability, reconciliations to valuation list, exemptions, discounts, benefits, billing and debt recovery and to highlight potential areas for improvement.
Business Rates	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Increased risk of non-collection in a recession.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include maintenance of property register, liability, reconciliation to valuation list, exemptions, discounts, benefits, billing and debt recovery and to highlight potential areas for improvement.
Benefits	Key financial system to be covered under Managed Audit arrangements. Challenges faced by ongoing amendments to the benefits system.	Review of key controls to be agreed with External Auditor, to include claims processing and payment, management checking, overpayment processes etc. Potential further assurance needed around the move to Universal Credit.
Benefit Fraud Investigation	Shared service led by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council. Increased risk of fraudulent activity in a time of financial challenge.	Review of shared fraud investigation arrangements to ensure effectiveness.
COMMUNITY		
Housing Repairs & Maintenance	The Housing Repairs service is of key importance to the Council's many housing tenants and supports objectives regarding the fitness and decency of Council properties.	Review of the systems and controls regarding the management and financial control of housing repairs, considering key risks to be agreed with management, including ongoing implementation of service improvements.
Safeguarding - Children & Young People	The Council has important legal obligations in relation to the safety and well-being of children and young people it deals with.	Review on arrangements to ensure the Council's legal obligations are met.
Voluntary Sector / Grant aid	The Council provides grant support to voluntary / outside bodies and needs to ensure this funding is robustly administered and effective in terms of the outcomes achieved. Recent case at a London Borough and Audit Commission guidance highlight this as a fraud and probity risk.	Review to assure on controls to ensure probity, fraud prevention and value for money of aid to outside bodies.
Housing – Landlord services	The Council is a major local landlord, and the operation of robust, efficient fair and transparent processes regarding allocations and tenancy management is a key part of the landlord role, with significant reputational impact for tenants and prospective tenants.	To assure on the effectiveness of allocations and tenancy management processes.
Community Safety/Anti-Social Behaviour	The Council has an important role with partners in community safety and addressing anti-social behaviour.	To assure on the robustness of governance and reporting arrangements and of the effectiveness of arrangements regarding community safety and anti-social behaviour.
OPERATIONS		
Greening the Borough	The Greening the Borough project is an important element of the work to deliver the Council's objectives regarding the local environment.	To provide assurance on the robustness of arrangements to manage the project and ensure delivery of planned outcomes.
Leisure Centres/Leisure	Delivery of valued, cost-effective leisure service is of importance to the residents	To provide assurance on key management and financial processes within

Area	Rationale - Links to Objectives/Risks	Work outline
Development	of the Borough and to meet objectives regarding health and well-being. The Council is investing in the facilities at Parklands Leisure Centre and Wigston Swimming Pool, both due to be completed in Autumn 2015.	the leisure service and, if required, the construction phase of the leisure facilities referred to.
ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT		
Health & Safety	The Council has a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of its employees, clients and service users of various types, and to assess and address relevant risks.	To provide assurance on the robustness of the Council's policies and procedures regarding health and safety and addressing related risks.
Transport/ vehicle repairs	Arrangements to ensure Council vehicle fleet is suitably managed and maintained are important in ensuring safe, efficient and well functioning services.	To assess the controls in place regarding vehicle fleet management and ordering and management of vehicle repairs.

4. Reporting and relationships

4.1 Reporting Lines

The Internal Audit Charter attached at Appendix 2 outlines the reporting lines and relationships for this engagement, essentially setting out the accountability of the Head of Internal Audit to the Chief Executive, but noting that operationally in practice this accountability is delegated to the Director of Services and Chief Finance Officer. The Chief Internal Auditor also has direct right of access to the Policy, Finance & Development Committee and the Chairman where required. This is also embodied in the Council's Financial Regulations.

Audit Reporting

Periodic and Assignment Reporting

Final reports relating to individual audit assignments will be reported to the relevant operational manager and Head of Service and be signed off by the management team prior to submission to the Policy, Finance & Development Committee (where relevant), which will also receive a progress update at each meeting detailing progress against the plan, a summary of assignment opinions issued to date and an update in relation to the implementation of audit recommendations.

Annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion

In line with the PSIAS and expected professional practice, we will issue a formal audit opinion taking account of:

- An assessment of the design and operation of the overall internal control environment, governance and risk management arrangements; and
- An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls, based upon the results of our risk based audit assignments that are reported during the course of year.

This opinion will be formally recorded in the Internal Audit Year End Report and presented to the Policy, Finance & Development Committee. In addition to this formal opinion we will also bring to the attention of the Chief Executive and the Policy, Finance & Development Committee any Significant Internal Control Issues that we feel should be declared in your Annual Governance Statement.

4.2 Third Party Audit Arrangements

As your Internal Auditors we are required to agree with you the arrangements for forming an appropriate opinion where either you operate key systems on behalf of other organisations, or key systems are being operated by other organisations on your behalf. We recognise that the Council operates within a number of different partnership arrangements and procures and contracts various services, and we will pay due regard to these arrangements in relation to any parties to whom the Council needs to provide assurance; and any key systems provided by third parties for which the Council must obtain appropriate audit assurance.

4.3 Relationships with external bodies

External Audit

We will agree a protocol of joint working arrangements supported by a regular programme of update meetings with External Audit. We will use these meetings to report on progress against our plan and as an opportunity to discuss any significant issues arising from our work.

Other Review Bodies

Where we intend to place formal reliance on the work of any other review body e.g. external auditor, we will undertake an appropriate audit or quality assurance exercise to ascertain the level of assurance that we can derive from that work.

Counter Fraud

You are required to carry out counter fraud activities, to ensure sound stewardship of public funds. We will liaise as necessary with your counter fraud officers, sharing relevant audit findings and identifying joint programmes of work where appropriate.

4.4 Additional Services/Ad-hoc Work

The PSIAS requires us to define the potential role that we may have in providing ad hoc consultancy work. In providing such a service we would seek to apply the professional skills of Internal Audit through a systematic and disciplined evaluation of the policies, procedures and operations that you have put in place to ensure the achievement of your objectives. We believe that our status as Internal Auditors ensures that we can deliver such work in an independent and objective manner.

5. Delivery and Fees

5.1 The Core Audit Team

The Audit Plan will be delivered by the following team:

Team Role	Team Member	Qual	Role
Chief Internal Auditor	Tim Ridout	CCAB	Tim will manage and oversee the audit team and plan
Principal Auditors	Anand Persaud Lynn Gouldthorp	CCAB CCAB	Principal Auditors will deliver complex reviews and supervise a team of experienced auditors in delivering the core plan.
IT Audit			IT audit work will be delivered by specialist, qualified staff.

5.2 Profiling Delivery

We will agree a programme of delivery for the audit plan with management team and Heads of Service and report on delivery against this profile through our regular progress reports to Policy, Finance and Development Committee.

Tim Ridout
Chief Internal Auditor

Strategic Internal Audit Plan – 2015/2017

Area	Audit Assignment	2015/16	2016/17
Resources – Finance, Procurement & ICT	Budgetary Control/Medium Term Financial Strategy	8	8
	Main Accounting	8	8
	Creditors	-	8
	Debtors	-	8
	Treasury Management	-	6
	Income Management & Cash Receipting	-	7
	Financial Systems – key controls review	20	
	Anti Fraud & Corruption-targeted fraud prevention/detection work	-	15
	Risk Management and assurance	8	-
	Strategic Procurement / Shared Services / Service Review - VFM	10	10
	Income Generation/fees and charges	-	12
	Sub-total	54	82
Regulation & Regeneration	Building Control / Planning Control	8	-
	Environmental Health/Licensing/Land Charges	8	-
	Planning Policy	-	8
	Sub-total	16	8
Corporate Resources	Payroll & Expenses	8	8
	Corporate Governance – Counter- Fraud policies and awareness	-	8
	Equalities	-	8
	Human Resources	8	-
	Legal Services/corporate legal compliance arrangements	8	-
	Member services (incl allowances)	8	-
	Sub-total	32	24

Area	Audit Assignment	2015/16	2016/17
Customer Services	Council Tax	8	8
	Business Rates	8	8
	Benefits	10	10
	Benefit Fraud Investigation	8	-
	Bailiff services	-	-
	Sub-total	34	26
Community	Housing Rents	-	10
	Housing Repairs & Maintenance	12	-
	Safeguarding - Children & Young People	8	-
	Voluntary Sector / Grant aid	8	-
	Housing Landlord services	10	-
	Void Property Management	-	12
	Private Sector Housing/Disabled Facilities Grants	-	8
	Community Safety/Anti-Social Behaviour	8	-
Sub-total	46	30	
Operations	Refuse & Recycling collection	-	8
	Street Cleansing	-	8
	Grounds Maintenance	-	8
	Greening the Borough	8	-
	Leisure Centres/Leisure Development	10	10
	Sub-total	18	34
Environmental Development	Health & Safety	8	-
	Capital Projects	-	8
	Transport / vehicle repairs	6	-
	Assets / facilities management	-	8
	Sub-total	14	16

Area	Audit Assignment	2015/16	2016/17
Follow Up	Recommendation Tracking	5	5
	Follow Up Reviews	10	10
	Sub-total	15	15
Management & Advice	Audit Needs Assessment, Planning & Annual Report	5	5
	Policy, Finance & Development Committee/External Audit/Senior Team meetings	10	10
	Contract Management & ad hoc advice	10	10
	Sub-total	25	25
Totals		254	260

INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

1. DEFINITION

Internal Audit is an independent and objective appraisal service within the organisation:

- Internal Audit primarily provides an independent and objective opinion to the Accountable Officer (Chief Executive), the Council and the Policy, Finance & Development Committee on the degree to which risk management, internal control and governance arrangements support the achievement of the organisation's agreed objectives. In addition, Internal Audit's findings and recommendations are beneficial to line management in the audited areas. Risk management, internal control and governance comprise the policies, procedures and operations established to ensure the achievement of objectives, the appropriate assessment of risk, the reliability of internal and external reporting and accountability processes, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and compliance with the behavioural and ethical standards set for the organisation.
- Internal Audit also provides an independent and objective consultancy service specifically to help line management improve the organisation's risk management, control and governance arrangements. The service applies the professional skills of Internal Audit through a systematic and disciplined evaluation of the policies, procedures and operations that management have put in place to ensure the achievement of the organisation's objectives, and through recommendations for improvement. Such consultancy work contributes to the opinion, which Internal Audit provides on risk management, control and governance. Approval for any significant additional consulting services not already included in the audit plan will be sought from the Policy, Finance & Development Committee prior to accepting the engagement.

2. STANDARDS AND ETHICS

Internal Audit acknowledges the mandatory nature of the Definition of Internal Audit, the Code of Ethics and the Standards contained in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal Audit shall also work in accordance with any performance measures agreed with the Audit Committee.

3. INDEPENDENCE, OBJECTIVITY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All internal audit activities shall remain free of influence by any element in the organisation, including matters of audit selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, or report content to permit maintenance of an independent and objective mental attitude necessary in rendering reports. Internal Auditors shall have no executive or direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities they review.

Individual auditors will have an impartial, unbiased attitude, characterised by integrity and an objective approach to work, and should avoid conflicts of interest. Individual auditors must declare any conflict of interest to the Head of Internal Audit. Any conflicts of interest encountered by the Head of Internal Audit must be declared to the Section 151 Officer. Internal Auditors will have regard to the Committee on Standards of Public Life's Seven Principles of Public Life.

4. AUTHORITY and ACCOUNTABILITY

Internal Audit derives its authority from the Council, the Accountable Officer and Policy, Finance & Development Committee. The Head of Internal Audit reports on a functional basis to the Council via the Policy, Finance & Development Committee. For administrative purposes, the Head of Internal Audit reports to the Section

151 Officer and Director of Services. The Head of Internal Audit has a direct right of access to the Chair of the Policy, Finance & Development Committee and the Chair of the organisation if deemed necessary. The Policy, Finance & Development Committee shall have regular private meetings with the Head of Internal Audit. The Policy, Finance & Development Committee approves all Internal Audit plans and may review any aspect of its work.

5. INTERNAL AUDIT TEAM

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for ensuring the team is adequately staffed and that there is access to the full range of knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience to deliver the Internal Audit Plan in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The team will undertake regular assessments of professional competence through an on-going appraisal and development programme (i.e. Personal Development Plans and Continuing Professional Development) with training provided where necessary. Auditors also have responsibilities for applying due professional care when performing their duties. The Head of Internal Audit must hold a professional qualification.

If the Head of Internal Audit, Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer or the Policy, Finance & Development Committee consider that the level of Internal Audit resources or the terms of reference in any way limit the scope of Internal Audit, or prejudice the ability of Internal Audit to deliver a service consistent with the definition of internal auditing, they should advise the Council accordingly.

6. SCOPE

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for developing and maintaining an Internal Audit Strategy for providing the Chief Executive, economically and efficiently, with objective evaluation of, and opinions on, the effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, control and governance arrangements. The Head of Internal Audit's opinion is a key element of the framework of assurance the Chief Executive needs to inform the completion of the Annual Governance Statement. This strategy will be realised through the delivery of considered and approved annual plans. These will systematically review and evaluate risk management, control and governance which comprises the policies, procedures and operations in place to:

- Establish, and monitor the achievement of, the organisations objectives.
- Identify, assess and manage the risks to achieving the organisations objectives.
- Ensure the economical, effective and efficient use of resources.
- Ensure compliance with established policies (including behavioural and ethical expectations), procedures, laws and regulations.
- Safeguard the organisation's assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity or corruption.
- Ensure the integrity and reliability of information, accounts and data, including internal and external reporting and accountability processes.

Internal Audit's planning will embrace risk management, control and governance processes of the organisation including all its operations, resources, services and responsibilities for other bodies.

7. APPROACH

To ensure delivery of its objectives, Internal Audit will develop and implement an Audit Strategy. This will be prepared each year and will describe arrangements for the delivery of the internal audit service based upon knowledge of the organisation's objectives, risk assessment, and appropriate management consultation. The allocation of resources between assurance and consultative work will be set out. A detailed Annual Operational Plan will be prepared designed to implement the audit strategy. The audit strategy and annual plans shall be prepared to support the audit opinion to the Accountable Officer on the risk management, internal

control and governance arrangements within the organisation. Both the strategy and annual plans will be approved by the Policy, Finance & Development Committee and reported to the Council.

8. REPORTING

Internal Audit will report formally to the Policy, Finance & Development Committee through the following:

An annual report will be presented to confirm completion of the audit plan and will include the Head of Internal Audit opinion provided for the Accountable Officer that will support the Annual Governance Statement. The Head of Internal Audit opinion will:

- a) State the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Trust's risk management, control and governance processes;
- b) Disclose any qualification to that opinion, together with the reasons for the qualification;
- c) Present a summary of the audit work undertaken to formulate the opinion, including reliance placed on work by other assurance bodies;
- d) Draw attention to any issues internal audit judge as being particularly relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement;
- e) Compare work actually undertaken with the work which was planned and summarise performance of the internal audit function against its performance measures criteria; and
- f) Comment where necessary on compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and internal quality assurance arrangements.

For each Policy, Finance & Development Committee meeting a progress report will be presented to summarise progress against the plan. The findings arising from individual audit reviews will be reported in accordance with the Committee's requirements. The Committee members will be provided with copies of individual audit reports for each assignment undertaken unless the Head of Internal Audit is or has been advised otherwise. The reports will include an action plan with target dates for completion.

Following the closure of fieldwork, Internal Audit will discuss findings with operational/local managers. Operational/Local management will receive draft reports which will include the action plans they have agreed following the discussion of findings. A copy of the draft report will also be provided to the relevant Executive Director. The draft report will give an "assurance" opinion on the area reviewed. The draft report will also indicate action ratings for individual report findings and recommendations.

Operational management will be required to respond to the draft report, stating their agreement or otherwise to the content of the report, identifying action, staff with responsibility for implementation and the dates by which action will be taken. Final reports inclusive of management comments will be issued by Internal Audit to the relevant Executive Director within 5 working days of management responses being received. The final report will be placed on the agenda for the next available Policy, Finance & Development Committee, if this is required by the Committee.

Internal Audit will make provision to review the implementation of agreed action within the agreed timescales. However, where there are issues of particular concern provision maybe made for follow up review within the same financial year. Issue and clearance of follow up reports shall be as for other assignments referred to above.

9. IRREGULARITIES, FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

It is the responsibility of management to maintain systems that ensure organisation's resources are utilised in the manner and on activities intended. This includes the responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud and other illegal acts.

Internal Audit shall not be relied upon to detect fraud or other irregularities. However, Internal Audit will give due regard to the possibility of fraud and other irregularities in work undertaken. Additionally, Internal Audit shall seek to identify weaknesses in control that could permit fraud or irregularity.

If Internal Audit discovers suspicion or evidence of fraud or irregularity, this will immediately be reported to the organisation's Counter Fraud Specialist in accordance with the organisation's Counter Fraud Policy & Fraud Response Plan.

10. RELATIONSHIPS

In order to maximise its contribution to the Council's overall framework of assurance, Internal Audit will work closely with the organisation's Director of Services and the Section 151 Officer in planning its work programme. Co-operative relationships with line management enhance the ability of internal audit to achieve its objectives effectively. Audit work will be planned in conjunction with management as far as possible, particularly in respect of the timing of audit work.

Internal Audit will meet regularly with the external auditor to consult on audit plans, discuss matters of mutual interest, discuss common understanding of audit techniques, method and terminology, and to see opportunities for co-operation in the conduct of audit work. In particular, internal audit make available their working files to the external auditor for them to place reliance upon the work of Internal Audit where appropriate

The Head of Internal Audit will establish a means to gain an overview of other assurance providers' approaches and output as part of the establishment of an integrated assurance framework. In addition the Head of Internal Audit shall make provision to form an opinion where key systems are being operated by organisation's outside of the remit of the Accountable Officer, or through a shared or joint arrangement.

11. ACCESS

Internal Audit shall have the authority to access all the organisation's information, documents, records, assets, personnel and premises that it considers necessary to fulfil its role. This shall extend to the resources of the third parties that provide services on behalf of the organisation. All information obtained during the course of a review will be regarded as strictly confidential to the organisation and shall not be divulged to any third party without the prior permission of the Accountable Officer. However, open access shall be granted to the organisation's external auditors. In any instances of conflict this will be referred for resolution to the Section 151 Officer, Chief Executive or Chair of Policy, Finance & Development Committee as appropriate.

12. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The work of internal audit is controlled at each level of operation to ensure that a continuously effective level of performance, compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards is being achieved. The Head of Internal Audit will establish a quality assurance programme designed to give assurance through internal and external review that the work of internal audit is compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and to achieve its objectives. A commentary on compliance against the Standards will be provided in the annual audit report to Audit Committee.

13. APPROVAL, REVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARTER

This Internal Audit Charter shall be reviewed annually and approved by the Audit Committee*.

* The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require the Charter to be approved by the Board, however, for the Public Sector the following definition of Board is provided: *Audit Committee – the governance group charged with independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of financial reporting*