

PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL
INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

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KEY CONTACTS	
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March 2024

Next Review: By March 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Internal Audit in the UK public sector is governed by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (the PSIAS). They provide a structured and consistent approach to promoting further improvement in the professionalism, quality, consistency, transparency and effectiveness of Internal Audit across the whole of the public sector.
- 1.2 PSIAS was introduced in April 2013 and revised in 2017, and are based on the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) Standards and International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF). The IIA have drafted new Global Internal Audit Standards in 2024 which come into effect in early 2025. Peterborough City Council Internal Audit will comply with the 2017 version of PSIAS during 2024 -25 and will review any actions required to bring it in line with new global standards.
- 1.2 The PSIAS require that all aspects of Internal Audit operations are acknowledged within an Audit Charter that defines the purpose, mission, authority and responsibilities of the service provision. The Charter therefore establishes the position of the service within Peterborough City Council (PCC); its authority to access records, personnel and physical properties relevant to the performance of engagements; in addition to defining the scope of Internal Audit activities. There is also an obligation under the PSIAS for the Charter to be periodically reviewed and presented to the Audit Committee, the Section 151 Officer and senior management. This Charter will therefore be revisited annually to confirm its ongoing validity and completeness, and be circulated in accordance with the requirements specified above.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 In accordance with the PSIAS, Internal Auditing is defined as:

"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."

- 2.2 However, it should be appreciated that the existence of Internal Audit does not diminish the responsibility of senior management to establish appropriate and adequate systems of internal control and risk management. Internal Audit is not a substitute for the functions of senior management, who should ensure that Council activities are conducted in a secure, efficient and well-ordered manner with arrangements sufficient to address the risks which might adversely impact on the delivery of corporate priorities and objectives.

3. MISSION AND AIM

- 3.1 “To provide an independent risk based and objective assurance service which is responsive to the needs of Councillors and management, ensuring assurance, advice and insight enhances the values and vision of Peterborough City Council.”
- 3.2 In doing so, the internal audit service will demonstrate effective adherence to and operation of the Core Principles for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. This encompasses demonstrating integrity; competence and due professional care; being objective and free from undue influence; aligning with the strategic objectives and risks of the organisation; being appropriately positioned and resourced; quality and continuous improvement; effective communication; provides risk based assurance; is insightful, proactive and future focussed and promotes organisational improvement.

4. MANDATE

- 4.1 The requirement for an Internal Audit Service is outlined within the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (section 5), which state that “*a relevant authority must undertake an 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*”.
- 4.2 This statutory requirement for continuous Internal Audit has been formally recognised and endorsed within PCC’s Constitution, making Internal Audit primarily responsible for carrying out an examination of the accounting, financial and other operations of the Council, under the independent control and direction of the Section 151 Officer. The role of Section 151 Officer at PCC is fulfilled by the Executive Director of Corporate Services and s.151 Officer.
- 4.3 Further, there are other requirements placed upon the Chief Audit Executive (see Section 5: Organisation and Relationships), to fulfil all aspects of CIPFA’s Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Sector Organisations (2019 edition).
- 4.4 The internal audit activity, with strict accountability for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information, is authorised to have full, free, and unrestricted access to any and all of the organisation’s:
- Records, documents and correspondence (manual and electronic) relating to any financial and other transactions;
 - Physical properties, i.e. premises and land, plus cash, stores or any other Council property; and
 - Personnel – requiring and receiving such explanations as are necessary concerning any matter under examination and generally assisting the Internal Audit activity in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities.

The above rights also include access to organisations and partners where PCC data is processed as part of contractual protocols and where an open book/audit access arrangement is in place, or where an organisation is a wholly or partly owned subsidiary.

4.5 Such access shall be granted on demand and shall not be subject to prior notice, although in principle, the provision of prior notice will be given wherever possible and appropriate, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

5. ORGANISATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

5.1 Within the PSIAS, the terms 'Chief Audit Executive,' 'Board' and 'Senior Management' are used to describe key elements of the organisation's governance, and the ways in which they interact with Internal Audit. The PSIAS require that the terms are defined in the context of the governance arrangements in each public sector organisation, in order to safeguard the independence and objectivity of Internal Audit. At PCC, the following interpretations are applied, to ensure the continuation of the current relationships between Internal Audit and other key bodies at the Council. The following terms are explained:

- Chief Audit Executive
- Board
- Senior Management
- External Audit
- Other Internal Audit Service Providers
- Other External Review and Inspection Bodies

5.2 Chief Audit Executive

At PCC, the Chief Audit Executive is the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA). The CIA has a direct line of reporting to the Executive Director of Resources and s.151 Officer who would approve all decisions regarding performance evaluation, appointment or removal of the CIA in consultation with senior management. In response to requirements laid down within the PSIAS, it is further confirmed that the CIA has a direct reporting line and free and unfettered access to the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer should it be required.

5.3 Board

5.3.1 In the context of overseeing the work of Internal Audit, the 'Board' will be the Audit Committee of the Council, which has been established as part of the corporate governance arrangements at the Council. The Committee is responsible for the following with reference to Internal Audit:

- Internal Audit Plans;
- Progress and performance against approved plans;
- Annual Audit Opinion; and
- Compliance with standards.

5.3.2 Internal Audit will work closely with the committee to facilitate and support its activities. Moreover, the CIA also has a direct reporting line, and free and unfettered access to the Chair should it be needed.

5.4 Senior Management

In the context of ensuring effective liaison between Internal Audit and senior officers, Internal Audit has regular access to Directors and Heads of Service. 'Senior Management' for the purposes of this Charter are the Corporate Leadership Team of which the Section 151 Officer is a key member. The Chief Audit Executive also has asked to all senior management / officers through the Extended Corporate Leadership Team meetings.

5.5 External Audit

Internal Audit interact with the Council's External Auditors – Ernst and Young – in order to minimise any potential duplication of work and determine the assurance that can be placed on the respective work of the two parties.

5.6 Other Internal Audit Service Providers

Internal Audit will also liaise with other Council's Internal Audit Service providers, where PCC operates a shared service arrangements with another Council. A joint protocol was developed with Cambridgeshire County Council and, although the number of shared services has diminished significantly, it will continue to operate while services are shared. The aim is to enable information to be shared, the potential to place reliance on each other's work or for each team to take the lead in some audit areas to avoid duplication and over auditing of service areas. The protocol is attached as an appendix to the charter (see Appendix 1). Where assurance is being provided to the authority from another internal audit provider, this will be included within reports to the Audit Committee where it is utilised in providing assurance as part of the annual audit opinion.

5.7 Other External Review and Inspection Bodies

The Internal Audit Section confirms it will likewise co-operate with all external review and inspection bodies that are authorised to assess and evaluate the activities of the Council, to determine compliance with regulations, standards or targets. Internal Audit will, wherever possible, utilise third party assurances arising from this work.

6. **OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE**

6.1 The provision of assurance services is the primary role of Internal Audit and there is a duty of care on the Chief Audit Executive to give an annual internal audit opinion based on an objective assessment of the framework of governance, risk management and control. This responsibility to evaluate the governance framework far exceeds examination of controls applying to the Council's core financial systems.

Instead, Internal Audit is required to scrutinise the whole system of risk management, internal control and governance processes established by management.

- 6.2 Internal Audit also has a secondary role, whereby it will provide consultancy services which are advisory in nature and generally performed at the request of the Council to facilitate improved governance, risk management and control, and potentially contribute to the annual audit opinion. This may include participation within working parties such as information governance and risk management.
- 6.3 A risk-based Audit Plan will be developed each year to determine an appropriate level of audit coverage to generate an annual audit opinion, which can then be used to assist with the formulation of the PCC's Annual Governance Statement. Moreover, audit work performed will seek to enhance the Council's overall internal control environment. In the event of deficiencies in arrangements being identified during audit assignments, Internal Audit will put forward recommendations aimed at improving existing arrangements and restoring systems of internal control to a satisfactory level, where relevant.
- 6.4 In accordance with the PSIAS, the Internal Audit Service will evaluate and contribute to the improvement of:
- The design, implementation and effectiveness of the organisation's ethics related objectives, programmes and activities.
 - The effectiveness of the Council's processes for performance management and accountability.
 - The Council's IT governance provisions in supporting the organisation's corporate priorities, objectives and strategies.
 - The Council's risk management processes in terms of significant risks being identified and assessed; appropriate risk responses being made that align with the organisation's risk appetite, the capturing and communicating of risk information in a timely manner, and its use by staff, senior management and members to carry out their responsibilities and inform decision making generally.
 - The provisions developed to support achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives and goals.
 - The systems formulated to secure an effective internal control environment.
 - The completeness, reliability, integrity and timeliness of management and financial information.
 - The systems established to ensure compliance with legislation, regulations, policies, plans, procedures and contracts, encompassing those set by the Council and those determined externally.
 - The systems designed to safeguard Council assets and employees.
 - The economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are used in operations and programmes at the Council.
- 6.5 In addition to the areas recorded above, where Internal Audit will give input to their continuing enhancement; the Service will also provide support to the Director in the discharge of their duties as the Section 151 Officer with responsibility for the probity and effectiveness of the Authority's financial arrangements and internal control systems.
- 6.6 **Managing the risk of fraud and corruption is the responsibility of management.** However, as part of the scope of Internal Audit, it will be alert in all its work to the risks and exposures that could allow fraud or corruption to occur and will monitor the extent and adequacy of risk controls built into systems by management, sharing this information with External Audit and other corporate investigators.

- 6.7 In the course of delivering services encompassing all the elements stated above, should any significant risk exposures and control issues subsequently be identified, Internal Audit will report these matters to senior management, propose action to resolve or mitigate these, and appraise the Audit Committee of such situations.
- 6.8 PCC's Anti-Fraud and Corruption arrangements are managed by the CIA, who is responsible for the associated corporate policies. The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and the Whistleblowing Policy both refer to the requirement to notify the CIA of all suspected or detected fraud, corruption or impropriety.
- 6.9 The CIA will produce an annual investigations report for the Audit Committee which encompasses the work undertaken during the year by the investigations team including any joint reviews with the internal audit team.

7. INDEPENDENCE

- 7.1 The Internal Audit Section operates within an organisational framework that preserves the independence and objectivity of the assurance function and ensures that Internal Audit activity is free from interference in determining the scope of internal auditing, performing work and communicating results. The framework allows the CIA direct access to and the freedom to report unedited, as deemed appropriate, to the Audit Committee, the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, External Audit and the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 7.2 The CIA has line management responsibility for the Insurance function and the Corporate Investigations team as well as the Internal Audit function. The CIA is also an authoriser for payments from the Councils bank accounts. Other officers within Financial Services also have this responsibility, and the CIA is used as the approver of last resort if others are absent. The CIA is a Director on the board of Peterborough Ltd, a wholly owned company of the council. Prior to undertaking any additional management responsibility, the CIA will consider and discuss with senior management any potential conflicts that may be evident and the appropriateness of undertaking the additional roles. Any reviews within these activity areas will either be reviewed independently from the CIA (in such circumstances the Group Auditor will report directly to the Executive Director of Resources and s.151 Officer), or will be conducted by an external supplier of Internal Audit Services.
- 7.3 The remaining Internal Auditors have no operational responsibilities or authority over any of the activities that they are required to review. As a consequence, they do not develop procedures, install systems, prepare records, or engage in any other activity, which would impair their judgement. In addition, Internal Auditors will not assess specific operations for which they were previously responsible, and objectivity is presumed to be impaired if an Internal Auditor provides assurance services for an activity for which they had responsibility within the previous 12 months. Internal Auditors may however provide consulting services relating to operations over which they had previous responsibility.
- 7.4 The CIA will confirm to the Audit Committee, at least annually, the organisational independence of the Internal Audit activity. The Internal Audit Team complete an annual declaration of interests that highlights any potential conflicts which may affect the ability to undertake an

individual assignment. Additionally, the internal audit brief requires a declaration to be made prior to the start of an assignment. Where conflicts are evident an alternative team member will be assigned the audit review.

- 7.5 Where internal audit services are provided to external organisations on a commercial basis the nature of the work undertaken, and resultant outputs, will not be shared with PCC.

8. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- 8.1 PCC's Internal Auditors operate and comply in accordance with the revised PSIAS, 2017 and will continue to do so during 2024. A review of the new Global Internal Audit Standards, which come into effect in early 2025, will be conducted during 2024 to identify any gaps that need to be addressed to ensure compliance with new standards, and to produce an action plan.

- 8.2 The Internal Auditors are also governed by the policies, procedures, rules and regulations established by PCC. These include, but are not limited to Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders, Data Protection Policy, the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and the Code of Conduct. Similarly, the Council's Internal Auditors will be aware of external bodies' requirements (e.g. as identified by CIPFA) and all legislation affecting the Council's activities.

- 8.3 The Council's Internal Auditors will additionally adhere to the Code of Ethics as contained within the PSIAS. Internal Auditors will also demonstrate due professional care in the course of their work and consider the use of technology-based audit and other data analysis techniques, wherever feasible and considered beneficial to the Council. They will similarly not be unduly influenced by their own interests or by others in informing judgements. All working arrangements and methodologies followed by PCC's Internal Auditors are set out in the Audit Manual.

9. AUDIT RESOURCES

- 9.1 The CIA will be professionally qualified (CMIIA, CCAB or equivalent) and have wide internal audit management experience, to enable them to deliver the responsibilities of the role.

- 9.2 The CIA will ensure that there are appropriate resources to deliver an annual evidenced-based audit opinion. As stated in the CIPFA Application Note, "No formula exists that can be applied to determine internal audit coverage needs. However, as a guide, the minimum level of coverage is that required to give an annual evidence-based opinion. Local factors within each organisation will determine this minimum level of coverage."

- 9.3 The Internal Audit Service has access to staff that have a suitable range of knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience to deliver requisite audit assignments. The type of reviews that will be provided in year include risk based and systems reviews, contract audits,

grant certification work, consultancy input to new / modified systems, compliance and special / fraud investigations. In the event of special investigations being required, this will be pursued in conjunction with the Corporate Investigations team if considered appropriate.

- 9.4 If it is identified that there is a shortfall in a particular or specialist/technical skill the CIA will not agree to undertake the audit assignment which could impact on effectiveness or quality of output. In such circumstances external resources may be procured as appropriate until the in-house team gains the required skills.
- 9.5 As previously determined Internal Audit may undertake consultancy activity (additional activity requested by management) where it has the necessary skills and resources to do this. This will be determined by the CIA on an assignment basis in conjunction with the Executive Director of Corporate Services and s.151 Officer where there is likely to be an impact on the delivery of the audit plan.

10. AUDIT PLANNING

- 10.1 The CIA will develop an annual audit strategy, together with annual audit plans and a summary of annual audit coverage using a risk-based methodology and an assessment tool. The key factors used in the assessment are:
- Materiality: The size of a system or process in terms of financial value or numbers of transactions or number of people affected.
 - Corporate Importance: The extent to which the Council depends on the system to meet statutory or regulatory requirements or corporate priorities.
 - Stability: The degree of change within the process.
 - Vulnerability: Extent to which the system is liable to breakdown, loss, error or fraud.
 - Specific concerns: Arising from management's assessment of risk as well as audit intelligence.

It will consider documented corporate and operational risks, as well as any risks or concerns subsequently notified to Internal Audit by senior management. This will be submitted to Senior Management for their approval prior to being taken forward to the Audit Committee for final endorsement, in advance of the new financial year to which they relate.

- 10.2 Resources and required skills are identified as part of the annual planning process. As identified in 9.4 any shortfall in technical skills and/or differences in the resources available to meet the requirements of the audit plan will be highlighted to management and the Audit Committee as part of the planning methodology within the audit strategy along with the continuous review of the Internal Audit Training Strategy. It will outline the assignments to be carried out and the broad resources and skills required to deliver the plan. It will provide sufficient information for the Council to understand the areas to be covered and for it to be satisfied that sufficient resources and skills are available to deliver the plan. Areas included in the audit plan are highlighted in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1: AUDIT ACTIVITIES

- Core system assurance work
- Governance, Risk Management and Assurance Framework
- ICT governance and risk
- Corporate / Cross Cutting audits (including value for money reviews)
- Contracts and projects
- Departmental specific reviews
- Compliance activity
- Grant claim certification work
- Fraud and irregularities
- Follow up activity
- Internal consultancy / advice on risks, controls and procedures
- Fee paying audit work
- Member support

10.3 The audit plan will be kept under review to identify any amendment needed to reflect changing priorities and emerging risks based on planning assessment methodology. It will be flexible but will only contain a small element of contingency to accommodate fraud assignments which could not have been readily foreseen. However, in accordance with the internal audit assessment process, specific audit requests may take precedence over the original audit plan. If a request for additional work arises where the assessment criteria does not identify the review as high priority, Internal Audit will reserve the right to make a charge for any additional work that is still deemed required by the business. This will be done in consultation with the Executive Director of Resources and s.151 Officer and reported to the Audit Committee as appropriate. Resources, such as specialist or additional auditors may be required to supplement this.

11. REPORTING

- 11.1 The process followed for completing each audit is set out in **Table 2**. Upon completion of each audit assignment, an Internal Audit report will be prepared that:
- Provides an opinion on the risks and controls of the area reviewed, and this will contribute to the annual opinion on the internal control environment, which, in turn, informs the Annual Governance Statement; and
 - Provides a formal record of points arising from the audit and management responses to issues raised, to include agreed actions with implementation timescales;
 - Prompts management to implement agreed actions within targeted dates; and
 - Is quality checked by senior officers within Internal Audit prior to circulation.
- 11.2 Exit meetings are held enabling management to discuss issued Draft Audit Reports. Accountability for responses to Internal Audit recommendations lies with the Chief Executive, Directors, and Heads of Service, as appropriate, who can either, accept and implement guidance given or formally reject it. However, if audit proposals to strengthen the internal control environment are disregarded and there are no compensating controls justifying this course of action, an audit comment will be made in the Final Audit Report, reiterating the nature of the risk that remains and recognising that management has chosen to accept this risk. Similarly, if following exit meeting discussions findings, recommendations or audit conclusions are disputed by the client every effort will be made to resolve any situations arising with the relevant directorate. In both instances, depending on the severity of the situation and risk, the matter may be escalated upwards to the Chief Executive and drawn to the attention of the Audit Committee.

TABLE 2: WORKING ARRANGEMENTS DURING AUDITS

Audit Brief	Where possible 10 days' notice will be given prior to the commencement of a review, although audits can commence earlier subject to mutual agreement, or where the nature of the work necessitates an immediate start. A brief is produced and agreed with manager(s) prior to the commencement of the review.
Fieldwork	Assignment undertaking including interviews, testing etc.
Exit Meeting	Held at conclusion of fieldwork, or once draft report has been produced (see below), to discuss issues found (if not already provided during course of fieldwork).
Draft report	A draft report will be produced after audit field work completion. A draft report meeting will be arranged with the Head of Service / Line Manager within 10 days of the report issue to discuss and formally obtain management responses. This will incorporate acceptance (or not) of actions together with timescales for implementation.
Final Report	Internal Audit incorporates management comments within the report along with agreed timescales to implement any agreed actions. The report will be re-issued as a final within 5 days of receiving the response. The report will be distributed in accordance with agreed protocols (see Table 4).
Follow-up Review	Audit activities are normally followed up within 6 months of report finalisation, but this can vary depending on target dates for implementation. Management is required to provide details of recommendation implementation which may

	be subject to further detailed review by internal audit. It is planned to review the follow up process during 2023/24 and the charter will be updated at this point to reflect any operational change.
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11.3 Recommendations are rated and an overall opinion given on the service area reviewed (see **Table 3**). Final Audit Reports will be issued in line with agreed working protocols to the relevant nominated officers and subject to follow up work as necessary. Where there are no responses received from managers despite formally chasing, a report will be deemed as final and issued.

TABLE 3: AUDIT ASSURANCE	
Opinion / Assurance	Description
SUBSTANTIAL	The internal control system is well designed to meet objectives and address relevant risks, and key controls are consistently applied. There is some scope to improve the design of, or compliance with, the control framework in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
REASONABLE	The internal control system is generally sound but there are some weaknesses in the design of controls and / or the inconsistent application of controls. Opportunities exist to strengthen the control framework and mitigate further against potential risks.
LIMITED	The internal control system is poorly designed and / or there is significant non-compliance with controls, which can put the system objectives at risk. Therefore, there is a need to introduce additional controls and improve compliance with existing ones to reduce the risk exposure for the Authority.
NO	There are significant weaknesses in the design of the internal control system, and there is consistent non-compliance with those controls that exist. Failure to improve controls will expose the Authority to significant risk, which could lead to major financial loss, embarrassment or failure to achieve key service objectives.
RECOMMENDATION GRADES	
Grade	Description
Critical	Fundamental control weakness that jeopardises the complete operation of the service. TO BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY.
High	Major control weakness which significantly increases the risk / scope for error, fraud, or loss of efficiency. To be implemented as a matter of priority.
Medium	Moderate control weakness which reduces the effectiveness of procedures designed to protect assets and revenue of the Authority. To be implemented at the first opportunity.

Low	Minor control weakness, which, if corrected, will enhance control procedures that are already relatively robust. To be implemented as soon as reasonably practical.

11.4 Following the end of the year, an annual report will be produced setting out Internal Audit’s opinion on the state of the internal controls and governance across the Council. This will comment upon:

- The scope including the time period to which the opinions pertains;
- Any scope limitations;
- Consideration of all related projects including the reliance on other assurance providers;
- The risk or control framework or other criteria used as a basis for the overall opinion;
- The overall opinion, providing reasons where an unfavourable overall opinion is given; and
- A statement on conformance (or non-conformance) with the PSIAS and the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme.

11.5 Significant issues identified will be referred through to senior management for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement.

11.6 All reports produced are set out in **Table 4**.

TABLE 4: PLANNING AND REPORTING FREQUENCY			
Report Produced	For	Reason	Content
Audit Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Manager • Director • Chief Executive • S151 officer • Monitoring Officer • Leader of the Council • Cabinet Member Finance and Corporate Governance • Chair of Audit Committee • Relevant Cabinet Member for portfolio area 	The end of each audit assignment as the main recipient and those charged with implementing the issues identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Summary • Audit Opinion • Detailed risk issues • Agreed improvement plan

Progress Reports (based around the committee cycle)	Audit Committee	To provide the Council with progress at delivering the audit service and any key governance issues arising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress against annual plan • Any amendments to current annual plan • Details of significant risk issues • Details of non-responses or non-implementation of actions
Annual Opinion and Performance Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Committee • External Audit • S151 officer • Monitoring Officer 	The end of each year in accordance with PSIAS. An evaluation of the works undertaken, and the level of assurance established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual assurance report giving CIA's opinion on the control environment • Achievement of the annual plan and performance data. • Effectiveness of Internal Audit
Annual Audit Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Committee • S.151 Officer • External Audit 	Beginning of year. Details of the service delivered and the future plans to provide assurance across the Council in accordance with PSIAS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Plan and days to be delivered • Audit Charter • Code of Ethics • Performance indicators to monitor service delivery and quality

12. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES PROVIDED TO EXTERNAL CUSTOMERS

- 12.1 Audit activities undertaken on behalf of other organisations follow similar protocols to that of PCC in terms of compliance with PSIAS. Internal audit plans are developed on a risk-based methodology in providing assurance and delivering an evidence based Annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion. Reporting and progress monitoring is produced in accordance with the respective audit committee and senior management team and terms of reference detailed within service level agreements.

13. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- 13.1 The PSIAS require that the Internal Audit develops and maintains a quality assurance and improvement programme (QAIP) that covers all aspects of the Internal Audit activity. The QAIP is informed by both internal and external assessments, any changes to the PSIAS themselves, best practice guidance and research, and continued improvements in the use of the audit system, Pentana. The results of the quality assurance programme together with progress made against the improvement plan will be reported to senior management and the Audit Committee.

13.2 Internal Assessments

13.2.1 Internal Assessments include on-going monitoring of the performance of the internal audit activity. The Service operates in accordance with a number of key performance indicators.

13.2.2 The PSIAS additionally require periodic self-assessments or assessments by other persons within the organisation with sufficient knowledge of Internal Audit practices. This obligation is satisfied by the CIA performing an annual self-assessment of the effectiveness of Internal Audit, before the results are submitted to the Audit Committee. Presenting this information to the Audit Committee enables members to be assured that the Internal Audit Service is operating in a satisfactory manner such that reliance can be placed on the subsequent annual audit opinion provided by the CIA.

13.3 External Assessments

13.3.1 External assessments must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. External assessments can be in the form of a full external assessment, or a self-assessment with independent external verification. PCC was subject to an external review in 2018 and was found to be fully compliant. A review is planned for 2024.



INTERNAL AUDIT: JOINT WORKING PROTOCOL

Vision

Two authorities with a shared vision to work in collaboration for the benefit of providing a better service to its stakeholders.

The overarching ethos is for each organisation to share information to improve service delivery and resident outcomes where there is an overlap of coverage.

Aims and Objectives

Internal Audit teams at PCC and CCC will use the principles contained within this joint working protocol to achieve the outlined vision.

A number of service areas are already jointly managed between the two organisations which offers the potential to have common governance arrangements. Internal Audit teams will explore ways where work can be aligned to ensure effective and efficient assurances are given in those areas where common governance arrangements are in place.

This joint working protocol will facilitate proportionate, consistent and best practice auditing and in turn result in a continually improving the audit service to both Councils.

Successfully implementing joint working arrangements between the two audit teams will include:

- Agreeing areas for shared audit Plans.
- The potential to place increased assurance on work completed by the other team. However, subject to the results, additional compliance works may be required on their own user data;
- Reducing audit work duplication.
- A shared record for action tracking recommendations in joint areas

- Setting standards to follow to ensure improved service outcomes for users;
- Sharing best practice; and
- Exploring the possibilities for workforce development or secondment.

Data Sharing

Data to be shared is restricted to (unless authorised by both Heads of Internal Audit):

- Annual Audit Plans and Annual Audit Opinions committee reports. These are already in the public domain through committee papers.
- Audit documentation for a specific audit which can be used to provide assurance (or otherwise) to the other authority on an area of service which is jointly managed. This can be the test programme identifying the key risks and controls, the tests undertaken alongside the evaluation reached. The final audit report will be made available for information.
- Implementation status of recommended actions in shared areas.

Excluded from the specification are the specific audit transactional data schedules.

Review of Protocol and Release of Information

The Protocol will be agreed by each Council's respective Head of Internal Audit and s.151 Director. It will be referred to each authority's Audit Committee as part of the annual audit planning process (usually in March each year). It will link in with each team's Audit Charter and will ensure that it meets Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

The responsibility of the Protocol will remain with each Head of Internal Audit. Regular meetings, as a minimum every 2 months, will monitor its delivery with focus on the joint activities, data shared etc.

Sharing of data can be between all Team members. Requests do not need to be channelled through each Head of Internal Audit for approval but they should be made aware of requests etc. (CC in emails can be used). Where final reports are shared, each s.151 Director and the appropriate Executive Director should be advised as courtesy.

Reports / data from one organisation must not be referred to by the other in any public reporting unless specific approvals obtained from the S151 Officer and relevant Director.

Steve Crabtree Peterborough City Council	Mairead Claydon Cambridgeshire City Council
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