

Internal Audit Charter for Kettering Borough Council



cw audit
internal audit services

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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 (Managing Director) and the Monitoring and Audit (M&A) 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 senior management in the audited areas. Senior management is defined as any manager with responsibility for the system under review by Internal Audit. 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 senior 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 M&A 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 M&A 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. CW Audit does not accept any roles that involve executive or direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities it reviews. The internal audit activity may provide assurance services where it had previously performed consulting services, provided the nature of the consulting does not impair objectivity and provided individual objectivity is managed when assigning resources to the engagement.

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 Head of Resources. Internal Auditors will have regard to the Committee on Standards of Public Life's Seven Principles of Public Life.

4. Authority & Accountability

Internal Audit derives its authority from the Accountable Officer (s151 Officer) and M&A Committee. The Head of Internal Audit reports on a functional basis to the M&A Committee. For administrative purposes, the Head of Internal Audit reports to the Head of Resources. The Head of Internal Audit has a direct right of access to the Chair of the M&A Committee and the Chair of the organisation if deemed necessary. The M&A Committee can request regular private meetings with the Head of Internal Audit as and when required. The M&A 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 PSIAS. 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, Managing Director or Head of Resources 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 M&A Committee accordingly.

6. Scope

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for developing and maintaining an Internal Audit Strategy for providing the Managing Director, 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 Managing Director needs to inform the completion of the Annual Governance Statement. This strategy will be realised through the delivery of a considered and approved annual risk based plan. To develop the risk based plan, the Head of Internal Audit consults with senior management and the M&A Committee and obtains an understanding of the organisation's strategies, key business objectives, associated risks and risk management processes. The Head of Internal Audit reviews and adjusts the plan as necessary, in response to changes in the organisation's business, risks, operations, programmes, systems, and controls.

The audit plan will systematically review 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.

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 M&A Committee.

8. Reporting

Internal Audit will report formally to the M&A 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 opinion must take into account the strategies, objectives and risks of the organisation and the expectations of senior management, the M&A Committee and other stakeholders. The Head of Internal Audit opinion will:

- a) State the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council'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 M&A 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 M&A Committee requirements. The M&A Committee members can be provided with copies of individual audit reports for each assignment undertaken on request. 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. A summary of the audit reports will be placed on the agenda for the next available M&A 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 organisation's overall framework of assurance, Internal Audit will work closely with the organisation's Head of Resources in planning its work programme. Co-operative relationships with senior and 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 take the work of Internal Audit into account 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 has the authority to access all the organisation's information, documents, records, assets, personnel and premises that it considers necessary to fulfil its role. This extends 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 Head of Resources, Managing Director or Chair of M&A 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 PSIAS and to achieve its objectives. A commentary on compliance against the Standards will be provided in the annual audit report to M&A Committee.

13. Approval, Review and Interpretation of the Charter

This Internal Audit Charter shall be reviewed annually and approved by the M&A 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."*