

Audit Plan 2023 / 2024

(To be considered by the Joint Audit and Standards Committee
on the 21st March 2023)

“Providing assurance on the management of risks”



Audit Plan

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This document sets out the internal audit plan for 2023 / 2024 for the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner and West Mercia Police. These services are provided by the Internal Audit Service of Warwickshire County Council. This document complements the Audit Charter, the organisation’s Risk Management Policy and the service level agreement. In accordance with current best practice the role of the audit committee is to review and approve the internal audit plan.

Services

All organisations face risks in every aspect of their work: policy making, decision taking, action and implementation, regulation and spending, and making the most of their opportunities. The different types of risk are varied and commonly include financial risks, IT risks, supply chain failure, physical risks to people, and damage to the organisation’s reputation.

The key to each organisation’s success is to manage these risks effectively. The role of the internal audit provider is to help the organisation to do this by providing a high quality, comprehensive and cost effective service that complies fully with all relevant professional and regulatory requirements.

Risk management is the continuous process of planning, organising, leading and overseeing the activities of the Organisation to effectively manage the potential opportunities and threats that flow from uncertainty. It is an integral part of good management and is therefore at the heart of what all managers do. It is essential to the organisation’s ability to deliver good quality, cost effective services. The management of risks is the responsibility of every manager – the role of the internal audit service is to support managers by providing the following services:



Assurance

We develop and then deliver a programme of internal audits to provide independent risk based and objective **assurance** to the Commissioner, Chief Constable, senior management, the audit committee and ultimately the taxpayers of the area that significant risks are being addressed. To do this, the service will evaluate the quality of risk management processes, systems of financial and management control and governance processes and report this directly and independently to the most senior level of management and the Joint Audit and Standards Committee. In accordance with regulatory requirements most individual assurance assignments are undertaken using the risk based audit approach and are not usually designed to identify potential frauds.

We give an opinion on how much assurance systems give that significant risks are addressed. We use four categories of opinion: Full, Substantial, Moderate and Limited assurance.

A report, incorporating an agreed action plan, will usually be issued for every audit. The results of audits are also reported to the organisation's Audit Committee. To assist managers in addressing areas for improvement, recommendations are ranked in order of importance.



Advice

The organisation will face major changes in systems and procedures over the coming years and we are able to provide advice on the risk, governance and control implications of these changes. The audit service will act as a critical friend, challenging the design of processes to reduce the risk of project failure.

Our knowledge of the management of risk enables us to **challenge** current practice, **champion** best practice and be a **catalyst** for improvement, and provide objective **insight** so that the PCC and Force achieve their strategic objectives.

Challenge

Champion

Catalyst for improvement

Insight

So, for example if a manager is concerned about a particular area of his/her responsibility, working with us could help to identify improvements. Or perhaps a major new project is being undertaken - we can help to ensure that controls are put in place to manage them.

It is more constructive for us to advise on design of processes during the currency of a change project rather than identify problems after the event when often it is too late to make a difference - timely advice adds more value than untimely criticism.

Irregularities

As they are publicly funded the organisations must be able to demonstrate the proper use of public funds. They have the responsibility to have systems in place to prevent and detect irregularities. However, if an irregularity is identified or suspected managers will need professional support to investigate the matter. Normally the Professional Standards Department will lead on investigations with support where necessary from Internal Audit. Close liaison is maintained between the two services and Internal Audit will make recommendations as appropriate to minimise the risk of a similar irregularity arising in the future.

Context

Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables have a statutory responsibility to have in place arrangements for managing risks; The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the PCC and Chief Constable to have a sound system of internal control which:

- facilitates the effective exercise of their functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives
- ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and
- includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.

The Regulations require accounting systems to include measures to ensure that risk is appropriately managed. Furthermore, the CIPFA/SOLACE governance framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government” outlines the need for risk management to be embedded into the culture of the organisation, with members and officers recognising that risk management is part of their jobs.

The requirement for an internal audit function is also contained in the 2015 Regulations which require each Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable to: “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”.

The Revised Financial Management Code of Practice published by the Home Office (July 2018) recommends that PCCs and Chief Constables have a shared internal audit service covering both bodies. It also adds to the role of Internal Audit, stating that in addition to enabling the PCC and the Chief Constable to fulfil their requirements in relation to the relevant Accounts and Audit Regulations, internal audit is needed:

- to help the PCC and the Chief Constable satisfy themselves that effective internal control systems are in place; and
- to provide assurance that financial systems and internal controls are effective and that the Police Fund is managed so as to secure value for money.

The audit plan is to provide assurance to the West Mercia PCC and Force and the new committee. A shared audit service has been agreed covering the PCC and the Force. This service is provided by staff from the Internal Audit Service of Warwickshire County Council. Warwickshire County Council’s Internal Audit Manager is the designated Head of Audit for both policing bodies.

Definition of Internal Auditing

“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.”

The key word in the definition is assurance, the role of audit is not to identify or investigate alleged irregularities it is to primarily provide reasonable assurance to each organisation (including the Chief Constable, PCC, Directors and the Joint Audit and Standards Committee) and ultimately the taxpayers that the organisation maintains an effective control environment that enables it to manage its significant business risks. We do this by providing risk based and objective assurance, advice and insight. The assurance work culminates in an annual opinion on the adequacy of an organisation's control environment which feeds into the Annual Governance Statement.

Vision, purpose and values

As a modern effective internal audit service our aspirations are to:

- Act as a catalyst for improvement and provide insight on governance, control and risk management
- Influence and promote the ethics, behaviour and standards of the organisation
- Provide an independent and objective opinion on the adequacy of each customers' arrangements to manage risk
- Develop a risk aware culture that enables customers to make informed decisions
- Be forward thinking
- Continually improve the quality of our services

A key driver of this strategy is the need to meet all our customers' needs. Our customers will continue to be affected by a variety of local and national issues:

- Ever increasing use of technology to deliver services;
- Flexible working arrangements to make more effective use of accommodation;
- The introduction of new ways for customers and the public to access services; and
- Pressure to reduce costs while improving quality / effectiveness.

To deliver on our vision we will:

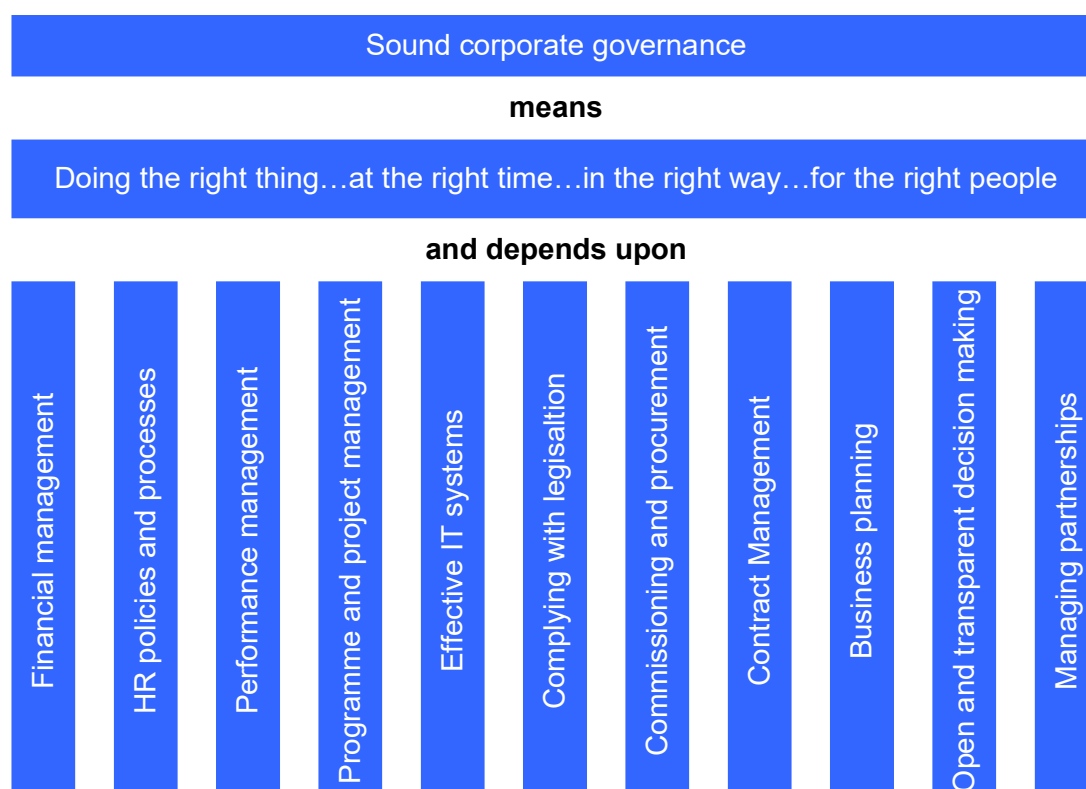
- Continue to develop our staff to ensure we are fully equipped to respond to our customer's demands.
- Continue to invest in modern technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- Add value and make best use of our resources by focussing on key risks facing our customers.
- Increasingly work in partnership with clients to improve controls and performance generally. We must add value and help deliver innovations in service delivery.
- Continue to buy in specialist help where necessary.

By embracing these challenges, we will be a vital component of the organisation's success.

General approach

The focus of our work is primarily on the high risk areas as contained in the PCC's and Force strategic risk registers and key corporate processes underpinning the control and governance of the policing bodies. Corporate audits of this nature are a more effective use of limited resources and are key to providing the appropriate assurance to the organisation.

Figure 1: Key corporate processes



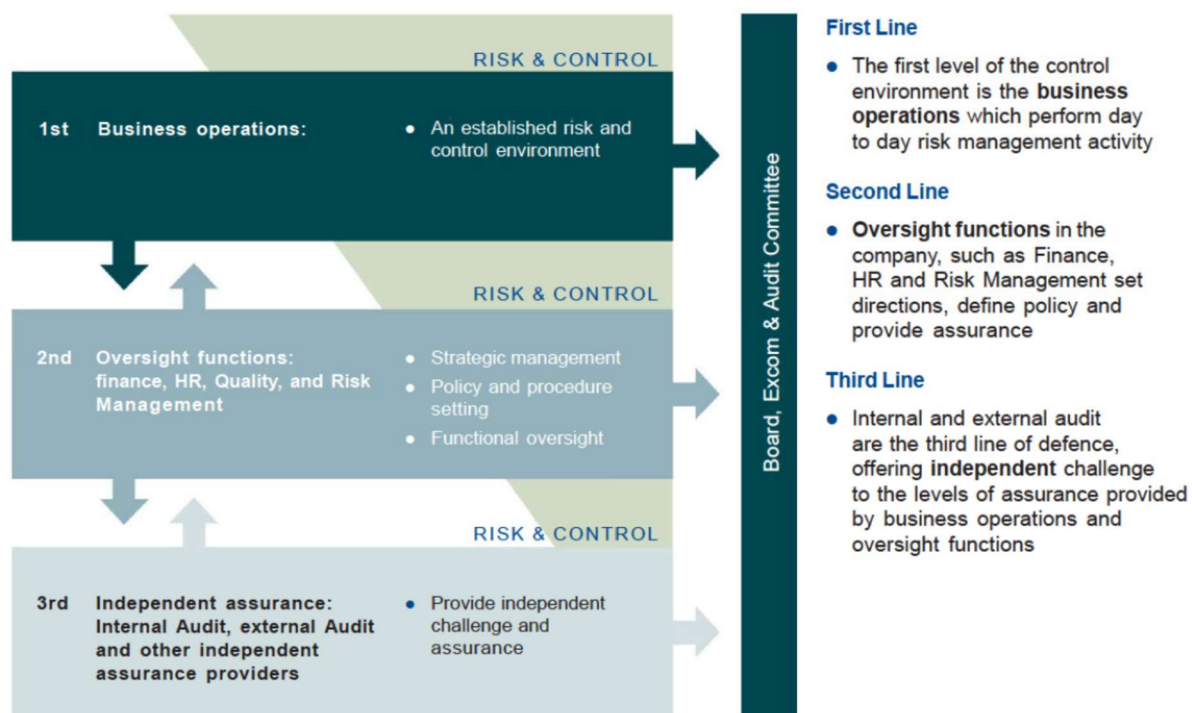
To ensure the best use of limited audit resources audit work needs to be carefully planned. The plan is developed in consultation with senior managers. We liaise extensively with the PCC, their Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Constable and senior staff and senior management of the Force in assessing priorities for audit work. Prioritisation takes account of the organisation's aims, strategies, key objectives, associated risks, and risk management processes. It also takes into account those topics which have not recently been audited or which feature in the PCC / Force risk register or which when last audited received a low opinion. In addition, auditors regularly attend various professional networking meetings which highlight wider the issues affecting public sector internal audit which need to be reflected in the programme of work.

In line with the organisation's objectives auditors will pay particular attention to identifying opportunities to reduce over-control and streamline processes.

To minimise duplication and make the best use of limited resources we aim to rely on work undertaken by other assurance providers rather than undertake our own detailed checks.

This is particularly relevant for operational areas where the Force has a significant range of internal reviews and compliance checks. The internal audit service therefore builds upon the work of other assurance providers, oversight functions and day to day management controls. The Institute of Internal Auditors uses a “three lines of defence” model to explain internal audit’s unique role in providing assurance about the controls in place to manage risk as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Layers of assurance



Although our roles and responsibilities are different the service liaises closely with the organisation’s external auditors and the Forces’ Head of Audit, Risk and Compliance and Professional Standards department. The key difference between internal audit and the work undertaken by Audit, Risk and Compliance (ARC) is that ARC performs detailed compliance checks for example on data quality and are a second line of defence function which means that the commissioning of ARC work rests with management of the forces.

The majority of the audit plan will be provided by the Internal Audit Service of Warwickshire County Council but external parties may be employed to provide support in specialist areas, for example IT Audit, and to cope with peaks in demand.

Our approach for 2023 / 2024

We have reviewed the risk registers for the PCC and the Force and held consultation meetings with senior management to identify areas where the need for assurance is greatest and also where there is the greatest opportunity to add value through the independent audit assurance process.

Following this consultation, we identified a draft plan of work which would provide coverage across both the PCC and the Force and this is set out in Annex1.

As in 2022/23 it will not be possible to audit all potential topics especially as the focus for 2023/24 has to be on ensuring that basic governance, risk management processes remain sound in a climate of significant change. The Committee is able to accept a plan on this basis, provided this matches its “risk appetite” for independent assurance, also recognising that management have the prime accountability for managing processes and risks (and therefore assurances can be obtained directly from them where necessary).

Annex 1 summarises the proposed audit work for 2023/24. Annex 2 gives an indication of those topics that will not feature in the 2023/24 Plan.

The usual regular reports will update the Committee on progress and will propose updates to the plan.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

The PSIAS require the Internal Audit Manager to develop and maintain a quality assurance and improvement programme (QAIP) covering all aspects of the internal audit activity.

The QAIP includes internal assessments, periodic self-assessments and external assessments and is not only designed to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of Internal Audits, but also to enable an evaluation of the internal audit activity’s conformance with the definition of Internal Auditing and the PSIAS and an evaluation of whether internal auditors apply the Code of Ethics. As part of this we have an Audit Manual based on accepted professional practice which as well as being compliant with PSIAS builds quality into every stage of the audit process. A summary of the QAIP is shown in Annex 3.

Paul Clarke
Internal Audit Manager
(Head of Internal Audit)

March 2023

Workplan 2023/2024

Topic	Indicative days	Notes
<u>Assurances for the Police and Crime Commissioner</u>		
Grants including Victim Support	20	Review application and approval processes, procedures and monitoring arrangements.
Risk Management	10	Review processes, procedures, monitoring and governance arrangements.
<u>Assurances for the Chief Constable</u>		
Absence Management	15	Review of policies, procedures and monitoring arrangements.
Asset Management - Advisory	15	Focus on ICT assets.
Business Continuity	15	Ensure processes and procedures processes are operating efficiently and effectively.
Risk Management	10	Review processes, procedures, monitoring and governance arrangements.
Information Governance (Annual)	12	Annual review in line with ICO recommendations.
Integrated Offender Management - MOSOVO	20	Review of policies, procedures and monitoring arrangements.

Topic	Indicative days	Notes
Budget Setting/MTFP	15	Review processes and procedures and the links between financial and business planning eg Plan on a page.
Payroll including Overtime	20	Review processes and procedures.
Performance Management	20	Review accuracy of the data and monitoring arrangements.
Vetting	15	Ensure appropriate controls are in place and operating effectively for new and existing employees.
Workplace Adjustments	15	Review of assessment processes and monitoring arrangements
Management and Planning	30	
TOTAL	232	

Illustration of auditable topics not planned for 2023/2024

The PSIAS requires the strategy to be open about those audit areas not covered in 2023-2024. Based upon the planning discussions with senior management, our professional judgement, the results of previous audits and the potential impact of collaborative arrangements. The following topics (not exhaustive) are not planned for 2023/24. Only opinions for audits completed in the last 4 years are shown.

Topic	Priority	Previous Audits
Accounts Payable - Creditors	H	Substantial 2020/21
Freedom of Information & Subject Access Requests	H	Moderate 2020/21
IT Programme and Project Management	H	Substantial 2020/21
Police Seized Property	H	Substantial 2020/21
Treasury Management	H	Substantial 2020/21
Capital Programme	M	
Complaints	M	
Contract Management	M	Moderate 2021/22
Fixed Penalty Notices	M	
Forensics	M	
General Ledger incl. journals, cost centre management	M	
Information Management	M	
Learning, development & training	M	Substantial 2020/21
MASH	M	
Partnerships	M	
Use of Technology, body worn video etc.	M	
Compliance with HMI recommendations - SOCU	L	
Crime data integrity	L	
Insurance	L	
Legal services	L	
Pensions	L	
Performance management	L	
Protecting the most vulnerable - Outcome 16	L	
ROCU	L	
Safer Roads Partnership	L	
Travelling and subsistence and allowances	L	
VAT	L	
Vehicle Recovery Scheme	L	
Youth Offending Service	L	

QAIP

Warwickshire County Council – Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

