

**Agenda item:**

**West Mercia Joint Audit and Standards Committee Report Summary**

**Meeting Date: 21 March 2023**

**Subject: Internal Audit Plan 2023/24**

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**Purpose of the Report:**

**This report summarises the proposed audit strategy for 2023/24.**

**Recommendation:**

**The Committee is requested to**

- a. approve the proposed plan;**
- b. approve the Audit Charter;**
- c. approve the Service Level Agreement.**

1. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Chief Constables have a duty to undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of their risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account relevant auditing standards.
2. The role of internal audit is primarily to provide reasonable assurance to the organisation (including managers, the Chief Constable, the PCC and the Joint Audit and Standards Committee) and ultimately the taxpayers that the two policing bodies maintain an effective control environment that enables them to manage its significant business risks. Internal Audit does this **by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight**. In addition to providing assurance the audit service also undertakes consultancy and advisory work designed to add value and offer insights that will improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes e.g. acting as a critical friend when process changes are being developed.
3. To ensure the best use of limited audit resources audit work needs to be carefully planned. In accordance with best practice the audit committee's role is to review and approve the annual internal audit work plan. The plan is developed in consultation with senior managers and takes account of the organisation's aims, strategies, key objectives, associated risks, and risk management processes (as required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards). It also takes into account those topics which have not recently been audited or which feature in the PCC / Alliance risk register or which when last audited received a low opinion. This year consultation has continued to be extensive with the dominant issue being the ending of the Alliance arrangements between Warwickshire and West Mercia.
4. The plan attached (**Appendix 1**) incorporates a description and diagram of the sources of assurance. The list of potential topics arising from the planning process, was considered by Force and PCC management. The aim is to give a high-level overview of audit areas noting that the detailed scope of some audits will need to be refined during the year. The Committee will also note that as usual it will not be possible to audit each possible topic and some topics in the proposed plan will not be covered comprehensively. 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).
5. Good practice requires us to recognise that the plan should be responsive to changes in risks during the year which is particularly relevant for the coming year. I anticipate working with senior management to develop revisions to the plan during the year to respond to unfolding events and to bring these to the committee for consideration throughout the year.
6. As explained at previous meetings an Audit Charter is a requirement of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and sets out the purpose, authority and responsibility of internal audit. It has to be formally agreed and approved by the organisation and periodically reviewed. The Charter establishes the internal audit activity's position within the organisation, including the nature of the service's functional reporting relationship; authorises access to records, personnel and physical properties relevant to the performance of engagements and defines the scope of internal audit activities. In accordance with best practice the existing Audit Charter has been reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate and no changes are proposed at this time. The existing document is attached for reference (**Appendix 2**).

7. The Internal Audit service is provided through a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The existing document with amendments to reflect the 2023/24 budget is attached. **(Appendix 3).**

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