

Internal Audit Service - Terms of Reference

Internal Audit Objectives and Responsibilities

The primary objective of Internal Audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council using a systems-based approach.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with particular reference to:

- The effectiveness of operations
- The economic and efficient use of resources
- Compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
- The safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, and corruption
- The integrity and reliability of information, accounts, and data

Accordingly, in the conduct of planned audits Internal Audit may:

- Carry out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year to be able to complete Section 4 (Annual Internal Audit Report) of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- Review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- Review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- Appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- Review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws, and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council is in compliance
- Review operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being carried out as planned

The Scope of Internal Audit Activity

There are no limitations on Internal Audit's scope of activities. The scope of Internal Audit allows for unrestricted coverage of the council's activities, including both financial and non-financial systems of internal control.

Independence

The main determinant of the effectiveness of Internal Audit is that it is seen to be independent in its planning and operation. To ensure this, Internal Audit will operate within a framework that allows:

- Unrestricted access to the officers of the council
- Reporting in its own name
- Segregation from the day-to-day operations of the council

Every effort will be made to preserve objectivity by ensuring that all Internal Auditors are free from any conflicts of interest and do not undertake any non-audit duties on behalf of the council.

Rights of Access

Audit visits may take place remotely or at a mutually agreed location. There are no limitations on Internal Audit's access to records. Internal Auditors shall have the authority to:

- Access council premises at reasonable times agreed in advance
- Access all assets, records, documents, correspondence, and control systems
- Receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration
- Require any employee of the council to account for cash, stores, or any other council asset under his/her control
- Access records belonging to third parties, such as contractors, when required

The Council's Responsibilities

The Responsible Financial Officer and Proper Officer have clearly defined responsibilities for Risk Management, Internal Control, Internal Audit and preventing Fraud and Corruption.

The existence of Internal Audit does not diminish the responsibility of the council to establish systems of internal control to ensure that activities are conducted in a secure and well-ordered manner.

Bullying & Respect

The Internal Auditor must respect the officers and members of the council, who in turn must respect the Internal Auditor. Members and officers must not bully, intimidate, or coerce the Internal Auditor. Bullying of the Internal Auditor will not be tolerated, and such behaviour may lead to the service being halted and suspended temporarily or withdrawn permanently.

Reporting

The Internal Auditor will formally report the results of audits and the recommendations made to council and will follow up at subsequent Internal Audits to make sure that corrective actions are taken.