

**Internal Audit and Assurance Plan 2023/24**

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Final Decision-Maker</b>           | Audit, Governance and Standards Committee               |
| <b>Lead Head of Service</b>           | Katherine Woodward – Head of Mid Kent Audit Partnership |
| <b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b> | Katherine Woodward – Head of Mid Kent Audit Partnership |
| <b>Classification</b>                 | Public  |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                 | All   |

**Executive Summary**

The report summarises the risk assessment and consultation process undertaken by Internal Audit to compile the programme of work that will lead up to the 2023/24 Head of Internal Audit Opinion.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the Internal Audit & Assurance Plan for 2023/24 at Appendix 1 to this report be approved. This includes delegating to the Head of Audit Partnership to keep the plan current for in-year emerging risks.
2. That the Head of Audit Partnership's view that internal audit currently has sufficient resources to deliver the plan and a robust Head of Audit Opinion be noted.
3. That the Head of Audit Partnership's assurance that the plan is compiled independently and without inappropriate influence from management be noted.

**Timetable**

| <b>Meeting</b>                            | <b>Date</b>   |
|---|---------------|
| Audit, Governance and Standards Committee | 13 March 2023 |

# Internal Audit and Assurance Plan 2023/24

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue                                 | Implications   | Sign-off  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b> | We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities or cross cutting objectives. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of its aims by contributing to effective corporate governance.   | Katherine Woodward – Head of Mid Kent Audit Partnership |
| <b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>       |  |   |
| <b>Risk Management</b>                |  |   |
| <b>Financial</b>                      |  |   |
| <b>Staffing</b>                       |  |   |
| <b>Legal</b>                          | The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 contain provisions on internal audit. The Regulations require that the Council undertakes an effective internal audit taking into account public sector internal auditing standards. The Standards require that the Head of Audit Partnership provides an annual opinion based on objective assessment of the framework of governance, risk management and control.<br>Therefore, the Council is required to consider and approve an Internal Audit & Assurance Plan for 2023/24 to maintain regulatory conformance. | Legal Team  |
| <b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>    | Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.  | Policy and Information Team                             |
| <b>Equalities</b>                     | There are no direct equalities implications associated with this report.   | Policy & Information Manager                            |
| <b>Public Health</b>                  | There are no direct public health implications associated with this report.  | Public Health Officer                                   |

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|--|---|---|
| <b>Crime and Disorder</b>              | There are no direct crime and disorder implications associated with this report.              | Katherine Woodward – Head of Mid Kent Audit Partnership |
| <b>Procurement</b>                     | There are no direct procurement implications associated with this report.                     | Mark Green – Director of Finance & Business Improvement |
| <b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b> | There are no direct biodiversity and climate change implications associated with this report. | Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer                 |

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (the “Standards”) require the audit Partnership to produce and publish a risk based plan, at least annually, to determine the priorities for the year. The plan must consider input from senior management and Members and be aligned to the objectives and risks of the Council.
- 2.2 The purpose of this report is to set out the annual assurance plan 2023/24 to Members. The report details how the plan is devised, the resources available through the Partnership and the specific audit activities and engagement delivered over the course of the year.
- 2.3 The Committee needs to obtain assurance on the effectiveness of the control environment, governance and risk management arrangements. The principal source of this assurance is derived from the annual assurance plan.
- 2.4 Standards explicitly support that the plan is flexible and responsive to emerging and changing risks across the year. Therefore the 2023/24 plan includes audit reviews that are high priority and those that are medium priority. By taking this approach we are able to achieve flexibility within the plan and ensure that the plan remains relevant throughout the year.

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## **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 There is a statutory requirement for the Council to have an internal audit of its governance, risk and control processes. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, more specifically require that the audit takes into account the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Council could decide that it does not want a programme of work for the audit service, however, this would go against professional Standards.
- 3.2 The appendix sets out the proposed plan for 2023/24, including background details on how we compiled the plan and how we propose to

manage its delivery. The proposal is for the Committee to consider and approve the plan.

- 3.3 We confirm to Members that, although the plan has undergone broad consultation with management, it is compiled independently and without being subject to inappropriate influence.
- 3.4 The Committee as part of its terms of reference must retain oversight of the internal audit service and its activities. This includes the Committee's role to formally consider and approve the plan.
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#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 We recommend Members approve the attached audit and assurance plan. The plan has been created through a process conforming with appropriate Standards and Regulations and in consultation with a broad range of officers. The Head of Audit Partnership believes this is the appropriate plan of work to support his opinion at year end.
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#### **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 We consult with Managers, Heads of Service and Directors throughout the year as we undertake our work, but also specifically as part of the audit planning process. The plan attached represents the collective views of management and the audit service.
- 5.1 The overall resource allocation between the partners is consistent with the collaboration agreement and discussed with the Shared Service Board.
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#### **6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 On approval we will begin work towards delivering the approved plan immediately. We will report to Members on progress in the autumn and raise any urgent matters as set out in the audit charter.
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#### **7 REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Internal Audit and Assurance Plan 2023/24
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#### **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None