

Report of the Head of Internal Audit Shared Service

Internal Audit Draft Audit Plan 2023/24

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Draft Audit Plan for 2023/24.
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Recommendation

The Treasurer recommends that the 2023/24 Draft Internal Audit Plan is approved.

Introduction and Background

2. The Authority is responsible for maintaining or procuring an adequate and effective internal audit of the activities of the Authority under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2018. This includes considering, where appropriate, the need for controls to prevent and detect fraudulent activity. These should also be reviewed to ensure that they are effective. This duty has been delegated to the Treasurer. Internal Audit is provided by Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) in which Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority is a Partner. Management is responsible for the system of internal control and should set in place policies and procedures to ensure that systems function correctly.

Objectives of Internal Audit

3. The CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom defines internal audit as: “an assurance function that primarily provides an independent and objective opinion to the organisation on the control environment comprising risk management, control and governance by evaluating its effectiveness to achieving the organisation’s objectives. It objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic and effective use of resource”. WIASS is committed to satisfying/achieving the requirement of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit and conforms to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Aims of Internal Audit

4. The objectives of WIASS are to:

- Examine, evaluate and report on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control and risk management across the Fire Service and recommend arrangements to address weaknesses as appropriate;
 - Examine, evaluate and report on arrangements to ensure compliance with legislation and the Fire Service's objectives, policies and procedures;
 - Examine, evaluate and report on procedures that the Fire Service's assets and interests are adequately protected and effectively managed;
 - Undertake independent investigations into allegations of fraud and irregularity in accordance with Fire Service's policies and procedures and relevant legislation; and,
 - Advise upon the control and risk implications of new systems or other organisational changes.
5. Internal audit will work with external audit to avoid duplication of effort, provide adequate coverage for the 2023/24 financial year so that an internal audit opinion can be reached, and support External Audit by carrying out reviews in support of the accounts opinion work.

Audit Planning

6. To provide audit coverage for 2023/24 an audit operational programme to be delivered by WIASS was discussed and agreed with the Treasurer and the Senior Leadership Board on the 13th December 2022 and will be shared with External Audit. The audit programme provides a total audit provision of 111 audit days; 100 operational and 11 management days. As the audits and follow up reviews are completed summary update reports will be brought before Committee along with an extract of the 'high' priority recommendations. Full reports will be provided to the Chairperson of the Committee for perusal on request.
7. WIASS operates an Internal Audit Charter which sets out the standards to which it operates for this Authority. The Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24, which is included at Appendix 1, is a risk-based plan which considers the adequacy of the Authority's risk management, performance management, challenges, other assurance processes as well as organisational strategic objectives and priorities. It has been based upon the risk priorities per the strategic risk register and emerging risks identified by the Senior Leadership Board. Large spend budget areas have also been considered, and direct association has been made to the Community Risk Management Plan 2021 - 2025. It has been formulated with the aim to ensure Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service meets its strategic purposes and delivers the Community Risk Management Plan and has directly linked the various aspects to identify the 'golden thread' regarding the Plan and risk identification to Service delivery. It is brought before the Audit and Standards Committee in draft format as the involvement of the Committee is considered an important facet of good corporate governance and contributing to the internal control assurance given in the Annual Governance Statement.

8. The Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 has been based upon a resource allocation of 111 productive audit delivery days, a resource allocation which has been agreed with the Authority's Treasurer and section 151 Officer. A detailed plan provision has been included within the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 at Appendix 1. Those areas that are considered to have a 'higher' priority have been discussed with the Senior Leadership Board. Other areas which are identified as 'medium' priority have been considered and an assessment has been made whether to include in the plan based on the overall risk and governance profile. Full audits were undertaken on the financial systems in 2020/21 so a full system review is planned for 2023/24. As part of good governance assurance is to be given to show embedded process, control and anti-fraud measures remain in place. A combination of full audit reviews and light touch reviews will continue in the future. Operational support days are included to give a little flexibility and contingency in the plan e.g. consultancy. They are also necessary to support the delivery of the plan.
9. Due to the continuing changing environment the plan must be a framework for Internal Audit work for the forthcoming year. There is a need for improved flexibility in the plan due to a changing risk profile and emerging risks. To ensure flexibility there is the possibility that the plan will be updated during the year to address such challenges and to complement national initiatives.
10. We recognise there are other review functions providing other sources of assurance, both internally and externally, (e.g. ICT, Public Service Network, Cyber Essentials assurance testing) over aspects of the Authority's operations. Where possible WIASS will seek to place reliance on such work thus increasing the internal audit coverage. System security will also be considered as part of the reviews.
11. To try to reduce duplication of effort we understand the importance of working with the External Auditors. The audit plan is shared with the external auditors for information.
12. Appendix 1 provides the Committee with a breakdown of the draft 2023/24 internal audit plan.
13. Appendix 2 provides the Committee with an overview and comparison of the audits delivered during previous years.

Conclusion/Summary

14. Operational progress against the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 will be closely monitored and the Head of Internal Audit Shared Service will report the position to the Audit and Standards Committee along with any exceptions identified during follow up work. For information, all 'high' priority recommendations will be reported.

Corporate Considerations

<p>Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>There are financial implications that require consideration as the Authority is a partner in the Internal Audit Shared Service however these are not fully detailed in this report as the Treasurer is appraised of the position on a regular basis during the Partner Board meetings.</p>
<p>Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).</p>	<p>None.</p> <p>There are legal issues e.g. Collaborative Agreement that require consideration but are not fully detailed in this report as they are contained within the Agreement. The outline plan is formulated to link to potential risks associated with the Community Risk Management Plan 2021 – 2025.</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).</p>	<p>The whole report is associated with potential risk.</p>
<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>N/A – no policy change is recommended</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - 2023/24 Draft Internal Audit Plan

Appendix 2 - Summary overview of audit coverage

**FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
DRAFT INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2023/24**

Audit Area	Source	Planned days 2023/24	Service	Comment/Outline Scoping	Strategy link	Indicative Quarter
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**Accountancy & Finance
Systems**

Main Ledger (inc. Budgetary Control & Bank Rec)	Fundamental to HWFRS CRMP delivery	7	Finance	Full Audit	Resourcing for the Future	Q3
Creditors (a/c's payable)	Fundamental to HWFRS CRMP delivery	8	Finance	Full Audit	Resourcing for the Future	Q3
Debtors (a/c's receivable)	Fundamental to HWFRS CRMP	5	Finance	Full Audit	Resourcing for the Future	Q3

	delivery						
Payroll & Pensions inc. GARTAN	Fundament al to HWFRS CRMP delivery	12		Service Support	Full Audit	Resourcin g for the Future	Q3
SUB TOTAL							
		32					
Corporate Governance							
New training system - LEO	Fundament al to HWFRS CRMP delivery	7		Preventio n	Implementatio n of recommenda tions of the 2022/23 audit -hybrid review	Fire & Rescue Authority	Q2 / 3
Business Continuity Plans	Fundament al to HWFRS CRMP	11		Service Support	Linked to those relevant areas of the risk register (including	Fire & Rescue Authority	Q2

	delivery				emerging industrial action)		
SUB TOTAL		18					

System / Management Arrangements

Performance and Information Plan	Fundamental to HWFRS CRMP delivery	9		Service Support	Progress against the aims and objectives	Fire & Rescue Authority	Critical Friend Q1
His Majesty Inspectorate - Plan	Fundamental to HWFRS CRMP delivery	11		Protection	Areas of improvement	Fire & Rescue Authority	Q4
Declaration of Interests & Hospitality	Good governance	9		Service Support	Process and registration transparency	Fire & Rescue Authority	Q1
Procurement	Fundamental to HWFRS CRMP delivery	9		Service Support	Contract Management to ensure value for Money	Fire & Rescue Authority	Q4
Follow up Reviews	Good governance	7					Q1 to Q4

SUB TOTAL		45				
Advice, Guidance, Consultation, Investigations	Support	5				Q1 to Q4
Audit Cttee support, reports and meetings	Support	11				Q1 to Q4
SUB TOTAL		16				
TOTAL CHARGEABLE		111				

Appendix 2

Summary of audit coverage since 2011/12:

Audit Review		Year Undertaken											
	Handover year from County	Contractual delivery to H&WFRS by WIASS						WIASS Partnership Delivery					
Payroll & Pensions	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
Debtors	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
Creditors	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
Petty Cash Imprest / Floats		2012/13			2015/16								
Main Ledger incl. Budgets & Budgetary Control	2011/12 (Not Main Ledger)	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	

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Property & Asset Management		2012/ 13				2016/ 17 (Client Side)				2020/ 21		2022/ 23 OPC C
Capital Programme			2013/ 14				2017/ 18			2020/ 21		
Follow up	2011/1 2	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23
Risk Management Arrangements		2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15	2015/ 16		2017/ 18	2018/ 19				
Business Continuity & Resilience		2012/ 13					2017/ 18		2019/ 20		2021/ 22	
Corporate Management (different areas each year)		2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19 (GDP R & KPIs)	2019/ 20			
Procurement / Contracts		2012/ 13					2017/ 18				2021/ 22	
Members Allowances (incl. in Payroll)		2012/ 13										
Computer Audit		2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	(2019 /20)	2019/ 20			2022/ 23

Community Safety			2013/ 14					2018/ 19				
Urban Search and Rescue			2013/ 14					2018/ 19				
Operational Logistics incl. Fleet			2013/ 14				2017/ 18	2018/ 19				2022/ 23
Stores					2015/ 16							2022/ 23
Transformational Planning (20/20 Plan)				2014/ 15			2017/ 18					
Building Maintenance				2014/ 15								
Equality and Diversity				2014/ 15				(2019 /20)	2019/ 20			
Operations				2014/ 15								
Human Resources					2015/ 16				2019/ 20			
Training Centre (Droitwich)						2016/ 17	2017/ 18					2022/ 23
Technical Fire Safety						2016/ 17						
Fees and Charges						2016/ 17						

