

Appendix Four

Northampton Borough
Council

Internal audit charter

2010/11

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1. Mission and scope of work

The mission of internal audit is to provide independent, objective assurance and consulting services designed to add value and improve the Council's operations. It helps the Council accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

The scope of work of internal audit is to determine whether the Council's network of risk management, control, and governance processes, as designed and represented by management, is adequate and functioning in a manner to ensure:

- Risks are appropriately identified and managed.
- Interaction with the various governance groups occurs as needed.
- Significant financial, managerial, and operating information is accurate, reliable, and timely.
- Employees' actions are in compliance with policies, standards, procedures, and applicable laws and regulations.
- Resources are acquired economically, used efficiently, and adequately protected.
- Programs, plans, and objectives are achieved.
- Quality and continuous improvement are fostered in the Council's control process.
- Significant legislative or regulatory issues impacting the Council are recognised and addressed appropriately.
- Opportunities for improving management control, profitability and the Council's image may be identified during audits. They will be communicated to the appropriate level of management.

2. Accountability

The Head of Internal Audit, in the discharge of his duties, shall be accountable to management and the audit committee to:

Provide annually an assessment on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's processes for controlling its activities and managing its risks in the areas set forth under the mission and scope of work.

Report significant issues related to the processes for controlling the activities of the Council and its affiliates, including potential improvements to those processes, and provide information concerning such issues through resolution.

Periodically provide information on the status and results of the annual audit plan and the sufficiency of resources.

Coordinate with and provide oversight of other control and monitoring functions (risk management, compliance, security, legal, ethics, environmental, external audit).

Whilst the annual internal audit report is a key element of the assurance framework required to inform the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), there are also a number of other sources from which those charged with governance should gain assurance. The level of assurance required from internal audit will be agreed with the Audit Committee at the beginning of the year and presented in the annual internal audit plan (and subsequent agreed amendments). As such, the annual internal audit opinion does not supplant responsibility of those charged with governance from forming their own overall opinion on internal controls, governance arrangements, and risk management activities

3. Independence

To provide for the independence of internal audit, its personnel report to the head of internal audit, who reports functionally to the audit committee and administratively to the Director of Finance (or Head of Finance) in a manner outlined in the above section on Accountability. It will include as part of its reports to the Audit Committee a regular report on internal audit progress against the internal audit plan. Internal Audit may provide consultancy work to the Council within the scope of the audit plan. The scope of any consultancy work will be set out in a terms of reference. All additional calls for consultancy work will be assessed in line with the PwC Independence Policies.

4. Responsibility

The Head of Internal Audit and staff of the internal audit team have responsibility to:

- Develop a flexible annual audit plan using an appropriate risk-based methodology, including any risks or control concerns identified by management, and submit that plan to the audit committee for review and approval as well as periodic updates.
- Implement the annual audit plan, as approved, including as appropriate any special tasks or projects requested by management and the audit committee.
- Maintain a professional audit staff with sufficient knowledge, skills, experience, and professional certifications to meet the requirements of this Charter.
- Evaluate and assess significant merging/consolidating functions and new or changing services, processes, operations, and control processes coincident with their development, implementation, and/or expansion.
- Issue periodic reports to the audit committee and management summarising results of audit activities.
- Keep the audit committee informed of emerging trends and successful practices in internal auditing.
- Provide a list of significant measurement goals and results to the audit committee.
- Assist in the investigation of significant suspected fraudulent activities within the Council in accordance with its anti fraud and corruption procedures and notify management and the audit committee of the results.
- Consider the scope of work of the external auditors and regulators, as appropriate, for the purpose of providing optimal audit coverage to the Council at a reasonable overall cost.

5. Authority

The Head of Internal Audit and internal audit staff are authorised to:

- Have unrestricted access to all functions, records, property, and personnel.
- Have full and free access to the audit committee.
- Allocate resources, set frequencies, select subjects, determine scopes of work, and apply the techniques required to accomplish audit objectives.
- Obtain the necessary assistance of personnel in units of the Council where they perform audits, as well as other specialised services from within or outside the Council.

The Head of Internal Audit and internal audit staff are not authorised to:

- Perform any operational duties for the Council or its affiliates.
- Initiate or approve accounting transactions.
- Direct the activities of any Council employee, except to the extent such employees have been appropriately assigned to auditing teams or to otherwise assist the internal auditors.

6. Relationships

The Head of Internal Audit and internal audit staff are involved in a wide range of relationships and the quality of those relationships impact on the quality of the audit function and the effective delivery of that function.

- **Relationships With Management**

The Head of Internal Audit and internal audit staff will maintain effective relationships with managers of the Authority. Regular meetings will be held with key stakeholders and management will be consulted with in the audit planning process. Timing of audit work will be in conjunction with management.

- **Relationships With Other Internal Auditors**

Where it is necessary for the Head of Internal Audit and internal audit staff to work with the internal auditors of another organisation, the roles and responsibilities of each party will be agreed. Appropriate safeguards will be put in place to ensure that third party responsibilities are clearly defined understood by all concerned.

- **Relationships With External Auditors**

Internal audit and the Audit Commission have established a working relationship where internal and external audit can rely on each other's work, subject to the limits determined by their responsibilities, enabling them to evaluate, review and only re-perform where necessary. Regular meetings are held and plans and reports are shared. External audit are consulted as part of the internal audit planning process.

- **Relationships With Other Regulators And Inspectors**

The Council has been subject to a number of inspections. The Head of Internal Audit and his staff will take account of the results and reports from these inspections when planning and undertaking internal audit work. Where appropriate, the Head of Internal Audit will establish a dialogue with representatives of the appropriate inspection agencies.

- **Relationships With Elected Members**

The Head of Internal Audit has established good working relationships with members, in particular with members of the Audit Committee. The Head of Internal Audit has the opportunity to meet with the Chair of the Audit Committee if desired.

7. Standards of audit practice

Internal audit will meet or exceed the *Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* of The Institute of Internal Auditors, The Government Internal Audit Standards (“GIAS”) and the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK 2006

Chris Dickens – Head of Internal Audit

Presented to Audit Committee

October 2010