

Internal Audit Progress Report

Audit Committee (April 2024)

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

1 Introduction

2 Key Messages for Audit Committee Attention

Appendix A: Contract Performance

Appendix B: Performance Indicators

Appendix C: Assurance Definitions and Risk Classifications

Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

Our work was completed in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and conforms with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update to the Audit Committee in respect of the progress made in against the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 and brings to your attention matters relevant to your responsibilities as members of the Audit Committee.

This progress report provides a summary of Internal Audit activity and complies with the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

This progress report covers the period January to March 2024.

3 Executive Summary

Since the last meeting of the Audit Committee, there has been the focus on the following areas:

2023/24 Audit Reviews

The following reviews have been finalised:

- Key Financial Transactional Processing Controls (**Substantial Assurance**)
 - The objective of the review was to provide assurance that the most significant key controls were appropriately designed and operating effectively in practice. Overall, the review identified there was a good system of internal control designed to meet the system objectives.
- Risk Management Core Controls (**Not Applicable**)
 - This review focused on core risk management controls only with an emphasis on control design. Overall, there was an adequate system of internal control in place in relation to the risk management process.

The IT Asset Management review is at draft report stage.

Follow Ups

A follow up position was reported to the Audit Committee in January 2024. Due to the majority of the remaining recommendations having a due date of 31st March 2024 or later, a formal follow up position will be reported in July 2024.

Added Value

Briefings

Our latest briefings/blogs are:

- [23/24 Through the Audit Committee Lens Series - Data Quality - Board Reporting](#)
- [TIAN News - Winter 2024](#)

Events

- [Outlook for the Public Sector 2024 \(18th Apr 2024\)](#): Hear from our panel of experts on their analysis of the current economic challenges, share analysis of system pressures over the past 12 months and explore opportunities and possibilities ahead.

Appendix A: Contract Performance

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) state that ‘The chief audit executive must deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its governance statement.’

Below sets out the overview of delivery for your Head of Internal Audit Opinion for 23/24:

HOIA Opinion Area	TOR Agreed	Status	Assurance Level	Audit Committee Reporting
Core/ Mandated Assurances				
Key Financial Transactional Processing Controls	✓	Complete	Substantial	April 2024
Risk Management Core Controls	✓	Complete	N/A	April 2024
National Fraud Initiative	N/A	Complete	N/A	January 2024
Risk Based Assurances				
HR Payroll Review	✓	Complete	High	September 2023
Whistleblowing and Implementation of HMICFRS Values and Culture Recommendations	✓	Complete	Moderate	November 2023
I.T Asset Management	✓	Draft Report		July 2024

HOIA Opinion Area	TOR Agreed	Status	Assurance Level	Audit Committee Reporting
Follow Up				
Qtr 1/2	N/A	Complete	N/A	January 2024
Qtr 3/4	N/A	Deferred to Q1 2024/2025	N/A	July 2024
Added Value / Support & Guidance				
Audit Committee member training	N/A	Completed July 2023	N/A	N/A

If due to circumstances beyond our control we are unable to achieve sufficient depth or coverage, we may need to caveat opinions and explain the impact of this and what will be done to retrieve the position in future.

Appendix B: Performance Indicators

The primary measure of your internal auditor's performance is the outputs deriving from work undertaken. The following provides performance indicator information to support the Committee in assessing the performance of Internal Audit.

Element	Reporting Regularity	Status	Summary
Delivery of the Head of Internal Audit Opinion (Progress against Plan)	Each Audit Committee	Green	There is ongoing engagement and communications regarding delivery of key reviews to support the Head of Internal Audit Opinion.
Issue a Client Satisfaction Questionnaire following completion of every audit.	Every Final report includes a questionnaire for client feedback	Green	
Percentage of recommendations raised which are agreed	Each Audit Committee	Green	
Percentage of recommendations which are implemented	Follow Up will be reported twice per year	Green	
Qualified Staff	Annual	Green	MIAA have a highly qualified and diverse workforce which includes 75% qualified staff.
Quality	Annual	Green	MIAA operate systems to ISO Quality Standards. The External Quality Assessment, undertaken by CIPFA, provides assurance of MIAA's compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. MIAA conforms with the Public Sector Internal Audit Code of Ethics.

Appendix C: Assurance Definitions and Risk Classifications

Level of Assurance	Description
High	There is a strong system of internal control which has been effectively designed to meet the system objectives, and that controls are consistently applied in all areas reviewed.
Substantial	There is a good system of internal control designed to meet the system objectives, and that controls are generally being applied consistently.
Moderate	There is an adequate system of internal control, however, in some areas weaknesses in design and/or inconsistent application of controls puts the achievement of some aspects of the system objectives at risk.
Limited	There is a compromised system of internal control as weaknesses in the design and/or inconsistent application of controls puts the achievement of the system objectives at risk.
No	There is an inadequate system of internal control as weaknesses in control, and/or consistent non-compliance with controls could/has resulted in failure to achieve the system objectives.

Risk Rating	Assessment Rationale
Critical	Control weakness that could have a significant impact upon, not only the system, function or process objectives but also the achievement of the organisation's objectives in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the efficient and effective use of resources the safeguarding of assets the preparation of reliable financial and operational information compliance with laws and regulations.
High	Control weakness that has or is likely to have a significant impact upon the achievement of key system, function or process objectives. This weakness, whilst high impact for the system, function or process does not have a significant impact on the achievement of the overall organisation objectives.
Medium	Control weakness that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a low impact on the achievement of the key system, function or process objectives; has exposed the system, function or process to a key risk, however the likelihood of this risk occurring is low.
Low	Control weakness that does not impact upon the achievement of key system, function or process objectives; however implementation of the recommendation would improve overall control.

Limitations

The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during our internal audit work and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required. Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the information in this report is as accurate as possible, based on the information provided and documentation reviewed, no complete guarantee or warranty can be given with regards to the advice and information contained herein. Our work does not provide absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.

Responsibility for a sound system of internal controls and the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities rests with management and work performed by internal audit should not be relied upon to identify all strengths and weaknesses in internal controls, nor relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud or irregularity. Effective and timely implementation of our recommendations by management is important for the maintenance of a reliable internal control system.

Reports prepared by MIAA are prepared for your sole use and no responsibility is taken by MIAA or the auditors to any director or officer in their individual capacity. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared for, and is not intended for, any other purpose and a person who is not a party to the agreement for the provision of Internal Audit and shall not have any rights under the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999.

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