



## AUDIT COMMITTEE

### 17 04 2025

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| <b>Subject Heading:</b>                   | Draft Internal Audit Plan 2025/26  |
| <b>ELT Lead:</b>                          | Kathy Freeman, Strategic Director<br>Resources   |
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| <b>Policy context:</b>                    | This report presents the 2025/26 Draft<br>Internal Audit Plan to note and for<br>comment.  |
| <b>Financial summary:</b>                 | There are no financial implications arising<br>from approving the audit plan/strategy. It<br>is expected that the costs of implementing<br>both will be contained within the revenue<br>budget for internal audit. |

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| People making Havering    | [X] |
| Places making Havering    | [X] |
| Resources making Havering | [X] |

### SUMMARY

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards refer to the need to produce a riskbased Internal Audit Plan. This should take into account the requirement to produce an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by each Council to inform the Annual Governance Statement. The annual internal audit opinion must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control. To support this, the risk-based plan needs to include an appropriate and comprehensive range of work. The report provides the updated and reviewed Internal Audit Charter and sets out the approach to producing the draft Internal Audit plan, inviting comment from Members.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To comment on the draft 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan.
2. To raise any issues of concern and ask specific questions of officers, where required.

## **REPORT DETAIL**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the Council to undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards (PSIAS) and other guidance.

1.2 Internal audit is a key component of corporate governance within the Council. The three lines of defence model, as detailed below, provides a straightforward framework for understanding the role of Internal Audit in the overall risk management and internal control processes of an organisation:

- First line – operational management controls
- Second line – monitoring controls, e.g. the policy or system owner/sponsor
- Third line – independent assurance

The Council's third line of defence includes Internal Audit, who should provide independent assurance to senior management and the Audit Committee on how effectively the first and second lines of defence have been operating.

1.3 An independent Internal Audit function will, through its risk-based approach to work, provide assurance to the Council's Audit Committee and senior management on the higher risk and more complex areas of the Council's business, allowing management to focus on providing coverage of routine operations.

1.4 The work of Internal Audit is critical to the evaluation of the Council's overall assessment of its governance, risk management and internal control systems, and forms the basis of the annual opinion provided by the Head of Assurance which contributes to the Annual Governance Statement. It can also perform a consultancy role to assist in identifying improvements to the organisation's practices.

## **2. Internal Audit Plan**

- 2.1 To develop the 2025/26 audit plan, and to ensure that this reflects the Council's strategic risks, officers within the Assurance Service have been involved in discussions with the Section 151 Officer, Directors and senior management to review risks in their areas.
- 2.2 The draft plan has been developed using the Council's Vision and objectives for 2025/26. It is proposed that the 2025/26 plan is continuous and flexible to allow for changes in the risk and operational environment in which the Council operates.
- 2.3 The Draft Internal Audit Plan 2025/26 is included as Appendix 1. The Plan is exclusive of Counter Fraud investigations but there is a provision for Internal Audit staff to support Counter Fraud work on system related work.

## **3. Internal Audit Charter**

- 3.1 The Internal Audit Charter has been reviewed and updated to reflect the Global Internal Audit Standards and is included as Appendix 2.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft Internal Audit Plan 2025/26

Appendix 2: Internal Audit Charter 2025

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

There are no financial implications arising from approving the plan. The financial implications arising from implementation of the plan are predominantly staffing costs and associated resources. It is expected that costs will be contained within the budget for internal audit and any variance will be reported and addressed through budget monitoring processes. By maintaining an adequate audit service to serve the Council, management are supported in the effective identification and efficient management of risks and ultimately good governance. Failure to maximise the performance of the service may lead to losses caused by insufficient or ineffective controls or even failure to achieve objectives where risks are not mitigated.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

There are no apparent risks in noting the content of the report. Failure to effectively manage risks is likely to have legal consequences.

### **Climate Change implications and risks:**

None arising directly from this report. Risks around this are reflected in the Strategic Risk Register and incorporated into the scope of audits where relevant.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

None arising directly from this report.

**Equalities implications and risks:**

None arising directly from this report.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to: (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and; (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not. Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.