

Public Document Pack

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Room 10 & 11, Town Hall, Romford
17 April 2025 (7.00 - 7.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS:

Conservative Group Keith Prince and David Taylor

Residents' Group Julie Wilkes, Jacqueline Williams (Vice-Chair) and
Christine Smith (In place of John Crowder)

Residents Association Philip Ruck
Independent Group

Apologies were received for Councillor John Crowder.

Through the Chairman, announcements were made regarding emergency evacuation arrangements and the decision making process followed by the Committee.

18 MINUTES OF THE MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 January 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19 DRAFT INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Committee received the Draft Internal Audit Plan Report for 2025/26, presented by Jeremy Welburn.

The Committee:

1. **Approved** the 2025/26 audit plan, ensuring that this reflects the Council's strategic risks, with officers within the Assurance Service involved in discussions with the Section 151 Officer, Directors and senior management to review risks in their areas.
2. **Approved** the draft plan has been developed using the Council's Vision and objectives for 2025/26. The plan is continuous and flexible to allow for changes in the risk and operational environment in which the Council operates.
3. **Approved** the draft Internal Audit Plan 2025/26, 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.
4. **Approved** the Internal Audit Charter, which has been reviewed and updated to reflect the Global Internal Audit Standards and is included as Appendix 2.

20 **ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY**

The Committee received the Anti-fraud & Corruption Strategy Report, presented by Jeremy Welburn.

Members noted the contents of the report and were given the chance to raise any issues of concern and ask specific questions of officers where required.

Members asked how the delivery of the strategy will be monitored. Members noted that a progress report is made public quarterly.

Members then asked for confirmation that the report was achievable given the financial situation of the council. Members appreciated that a proactive approach to Tenancy Fraud was ongoing. They were also reminded of the rapid increase in Right to Buy applicants over recent months, due to changes to discounts. An overall proactive not reactive approach was emphasised. This proactive approach continually aims to become embedded in the organisation's culture.

Flexibility and internal adjustment of resources across the entire Anti-fraud & Corruption Strategy plan is supported.

Members noted that there were no significant changes at this 4-year review of the strategy. The Committee noted that the report would be put on the Intranet once approved.

21 **DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Committee received the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 Report, presented by Jeremy Welburn.

Members noted and discussed the report.

Members were informed that Newham is slightly behind Havering in the OneSource split, with Havering on track to separate by 31 December. Any delays will be reported. If Havering meets the deadline, Newham will bear costs for remaining in the shared tenancy.

Members noted that Newham is currently slightly behind Havering's timeline in the OneSource shared split. Members were informed that Havering is on track for a 31 December separation. An update will be given if a delay is expected. If Havering's end-of-December separation is successful, Newham will pick up any costs associated with keeping their service if they haven't left the shared service arrangement.

Chairman