

### Audit Committee - suggested new Terms of Reference

#### Audit Committee

There will be an Audit Committee consisting of eight members. Seven of the members will be Non-Executive Councillors and reflect the political balance overall. One member shall be an independent person who is not a Councillor or Officer of the Council.

#### Role

- To fulfil the role of an Audit Committee in respect of the work of the Council.
  - The Audit Committee is a key component of Lincolnshire County Council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
  - The purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance to the members of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of Lincolnshire County Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

#### Functions:

##### *Internal Audit*

- approve the internal audit charter
- To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations
- To consider the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and opinion.
  - a) The statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that supports the statement – these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.

- b) The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion – these will assist the committee in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.
- To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
- To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.
- To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the head of internal audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
- To consider reports from the head of internal audit on internal audit's performance during the year. These will include:-
  - a) Updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work
  - b) Regular reports on the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.
  - c) Reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the Annual Governance Statement.
- To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports of significance or as requested
- To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.
- To support the development of effective communication with the head of internal audit.

### *External Audit*

- To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.
- To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor
- To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
- To liaise with the appropriate body over the appointment of the Council's external auditor.
- To commission work from internal and external audit.
- To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.

### *Regulatory Framework – Governance, Risk and Control*

- To maintain an overview of the Council's Constitution
- To review any issues referred to it by the Chief Executive, Director or any Council body.
- To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance in the Council.
- To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the committee.
- To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.
- To monitor the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.
- To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.
- To review the council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances.

- To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.
- To consider the council's compliance with its own and other published standards and controls.
- To report to full council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.

### *Accounts*

- To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are any concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.
- To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.
- Duty to approve the authority's statement of accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet.

### *Standards*

- Promoting and maintaining high ethical standards by Councillors and non-elected members;
- Assisting the Councillors and added members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and added members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- Determining complaints of breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members referred for hearing by the Monitoring Officer.