

## **Internal Audit Strategy**

**This Strategy sets out how the Council's Internal Audit service will be developed and delivered in accordance with the Internal Audit Charter.**

**The Strategy will be reviewed annually and presented to the General Purposes & Audit Committee for approval.**

### **Internal Audit Objectives**

Internal Audit will provide independent and objective assurance to the organisation, its Members, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and in particular to the Chief Financial Officer to support him in discharging his responsibilities under S151 of the Local Government Act 1972, relating to the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

It is the Council's intention to provide a best practice, cost effective internal audit service.

### **Internal Audit's Remit**

The internal audit service is an assurance function that primarily provides an independent and objective opinion on the degree to which the internal control environment supports and promotes the achievement of the council's objectives.

Under the direction of a suitably qualified and experienced Head of Internal Audit (the Head of Governance), Internal Audit will:

- Provide management and Members with an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve the Council's operations.
- Assist the General Purposes & Audit Committee to reinforce the importance of effective corporate governance and ensure internal control improvements are delivered;
- Drive organisational change to improve processes and service performance;
- Work with other internal stakeholders and customers to review and recommend improvements to internal control and governance arrangements in accordance with regulatory and statutory requirements;
- Work closely with other assurance providers to share information and provide a value for money assurance service and;
- Participate in local and national bodies and working groups to influence agendas and developments within the profession.

Internal Audit must ensure that it is not involved in the design, installation and operation of controls so as to compromise its independence and objectivity. Internal Audit will however offer advice on the design of new internal controls in accordance with best practice.

## **Service Delivery**

The Service will be delivered by the Council's strategic internal audit partner (currently Mazars Public Sector Internal Audit Ltd) under the direction of the Council's Head of Internal Audit and supported by an in-house Governance Team. This provides flexibility of resource and mitigates many of the risks associated with delivering a professional internal audit service.

To ensure that the benefits of the Internal Audit service are maximised and shared as best practice, Croydon has established the London Audit & Anti-Fraud Partnership to work with other local authorities. This includes appropriate: resource provision, joint working, audit management & strategy and a range of value added services.

## **Internal Audit Planning**

Audit planning will be undertaken on an annual basis and audit coverage will be based on the following:

- Discussions with the Council's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and management
- The Council's Risk Register
- Outputs from other assurance providers (eg Ofstead or the External Auditor)
- Requirements as agreed in the joint working protocol with External Audit
- Local and national issues and risks

The Internal Audit Plan 2016-17 is composed of the following:

- **Risk Based Systems Audit:** Audits of systems, processes or tasks where the internal controls are identified, evaluated and confirmed through risk assessment process. The internal controls depending on the risk assessment are tested to confirm that they operating correctly. The selection of work in this category is driven by Departments' own risk processes and will increasingly include work in areas where the Council services are delivered in partnership with other organisations.

Internal Audit planning is already significantly based on the Council's risk register, resulting in more than 40% of the audit plan being based upon risks identified by management. Internal audit will continue to have a significant role in risk management with audit planning being focused by risk and the results of audit work feeding back into the risk management process to form a 'virtuous circle'.

- **Key Financial Systems:** Audits of the Council's key financial systems where External Audit require annual assurance as part of their external audit work programme.

- **Probity Audit (schools & other establishments):** Audit of a discrete unit. Compliance with legislation, regulation, policies, procedures or best practice are confirmed. For schools this includes assessment against the Schools Financial Value Standard.
- **Computer Audit:** The review of ICT infrastructure and associated systems, software and hardware.
- **Contract Audit:** Audits of the Council's procedures and processes for the letting and monitoring of contracts, including reviews of completed and current contracts.
- **Fraud and Ad Hoc Work:** A contingency of audit days are set aside to cover any fraud and irregularity investigations arising during the year and additional work due to changes or issues arising in-year.

### **Follow-up**

Internal Audit will evaluate the Council's progress in implementing audit recommendations against set targets for implementation. Progress will be reported to management and to the General Purposes & Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

Where progress is unsatisfactory or management fail to provide a satisfactory response to follow up requests, Internal Audit will implement the escalation procedure as agreed with management.

### **Reporting**

Internal audit reports the findings of its work in detail to local management at the conclusion of each piece of audit work and in summary to departmental and corporate management on a quarterly basis. Summary reports are also provided to the General Purposes & Audit Committee four times per year. This includes the Head of Internal Audit's annual report which contributes to the assurances underpinning the Annual Governance Statement of the Council.