



Title of report: Internal Audit Plan 2025/26

Meeting: Audit and Governance Committee

Meeting date: Thursday 25 September 2025

Report by: Director of Finance

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To present the updated Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 for approval by Committee.

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- a) **Approves the updated Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative recommendations; it is a function of the committee to consider these matters in fulfilling its assurance role.

Key considerations

2. The council's Internal Audit services are provided by South West Audit Partnership Internal Audit Services (SWAP).
3. The Internal Audit Plan sets out how Internal Audit resources will be utilised and deployed in 2025/26. It is underpinned by the Internal Audit Charter, approved by this Committee in March 2025, which defines the purpose, role, mission, responsibility and position of the Internal Audit function.
4. The 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan, included at Appendix A, has been developed using a risk-based, assurance mapping approach, which is aligned to the council's corporate objectives and priorities and the key risks which may prevent them from being achieved. The Plan has

been informed by a variety of sources including the Council Plan 2024-2028, Delivery Plan 2025/26, Corporate Risk Register, Risk Management Strategy, other sources of assurance including peer review and professional body inspections, engagement with Directorate Leadership Teams, benchmarking against audit plans of other local authorities and intelligence from previous audit and counter-fraud work.

5. The Plan reflects the requirement to produce an annual Internal Audit opinion to summarise the overall adequacy and effectiveness of internal control arrangements operating during the year.
6. The Plan will remain flexible and includes an element of contingency in order to be able to respond to new and emerging risks as and when they are identified.

Community impact

7. The council's code of corporate governance commits the council to managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management and to implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability. By ensuring robust management responses to identified risks, the council will be better able to meet priorities outlined in the Council Plan 2024-2028.

Environmental Impact

8. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
9. Whilst this is a report for information and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

10. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
11. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this project/decision/activity and it has been found to have no impact for equality.

Resource implications

12. There are no specific resource implications from the report itself.

Legal implications

13. In accordance with Section 5 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, the council must 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 or guidance.
14. The council is under a duty to make adequate arrangements for its internal audit function and has chosen to appoint an external partner to assist with the discharge of this function.

Risk management

15. There is a risk that the level of work required to give an opinion on the council's systems of internal control is not achieved. This is mitigated by the regular active management and monitoring of the programme of internal audit work, and subsequent coverage assessments.
16. Risks identified by internal audit are mitigated by actions proposed by management in response. Progress on implementation of agreed actions is now reported to this committee as part of the internal audit progress reports.

Consultees

17. None.

Appendices

Appendix A SWAP Revised Internal Audit Plan 2025/26

Background papers

None identified.