



Title of report: Internal Audit Opinion 2025/26

Meeting: Audit and Governance Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 9 June 2026

Report by: Director of Finance/Head of Internal Audit

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To present a summary of the work undertaken by Internal Audit during 2025/26 and to give an overall opinion on levels of assurance resulting from this work.

Due to the information contained in The Internal Audit Annual Opinion (Appendix A), it is deemed unnecessary to submit a separate quarterly monitoring report. Instead, we have produced a condensed version of the usual report which contains a summary of the work concluded since the last meeting of this Committee.

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- a) **Considers the reports and comments as necessary**

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 Annual Opinion Report 2025/26, Appendix A, provides the Head of Internal Audit's (SWAP Assistant Director) opinion, on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control within Herefordshire Council. The opinion is based on the adequacy of control, noted from a selection of risk-based audits carried out during the year, and other advice work on control systems

including the proactive work of the service as it supports the control arrangements within change projects. The results of any external inspections also inform the opinion.

3. Throughout the year the Internal Audit service have measured the degree of control assurance within the systems, or elements of systems, audited or supported by way of control advice. Overall, the opinion is that a 'Reasonable' assurance level can be given for the controls in place, within the areas where audit activity has taken place, to safeguard these systems which in turn support the delivery of the Council's overall business objectives.
4. Where operational control issues were raised, the risks associated with the control issues raised, in the audit reports, are being actively managed by Management.
5. The purpose of the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion is to contribute to the assurances available to the Head of Paid Service and the Council which underpin the Council's own assessment of the effectiveness of the authority's system of internal control. This opinion is one component that the Council must take into account when completing its Annual Governance Statement.
6. Officers from SWAP will be in attendance at the Committee meeting and will be available to address Members' questions.
7. The Internal Audit Charter and Mandate is attached at Appendix A.

Community impact

8. 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 Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028.

Environmental Impact

9. 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.
10. 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

11. 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.
12. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this activity and it has been found to have no impact for equality.

Resource implications

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

Legal implications

14. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report itself.

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 Internal Audit Opinion 2025/26

Appendix B SWAP Summary of Audit Work completed since the last meeting of this Committee

Appendix C SWAP Open Agreed Actions May 2026

Background papers

None identified.