

RAPC 554/25

Appendix A

Internal Audit Progress Report 2024-25

February 2025

New Forest National Park Authority



**Southern Internal
Audit Partnership**

Assurance through excellence
and innovation

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1. Role of Internal Audit

The requirement for an internal audit function in local government is detailed within the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which states that a relevant body must:

'Undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.'

The standards for 'proper practices' are laid down in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards [the Standards – updated 2017].

The role of internal audit is best summarised through its definition within the Standards, as an:

'Independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisations' operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes'.

The Authority is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate risk management processes, control systems, accounting records and governance arrangements. Internal audit plays a vital role in advising the Authority that these arrangements are in place and operating effectively.

The Authority's response to internal audit activity should lead to the strengthening of the control environment and, therefore, contribute to the achievement of the organisation's objectives.

2. Purpose of report

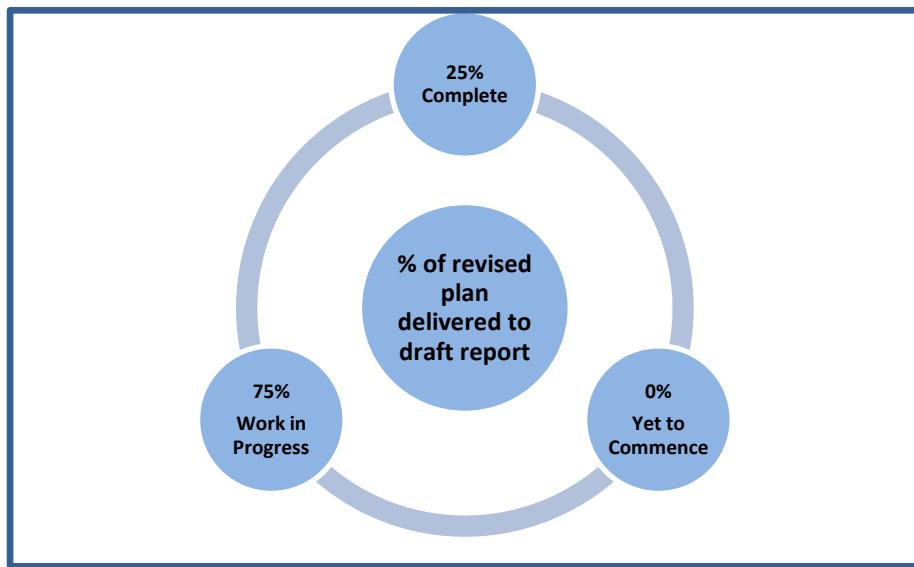
In accordance with proper internal audit practices (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards), and the Internal Audit Charter the Chief Internal Auditor is required to provide a written status report to ‘Senior Management’ and ‘the Board’, summarising:

- The status of ‘live’ internal audit reports;
- an update on progress against the annual audit plan;
- a summary of internal audit performance, planning and resourcing issues; and
- a summary of significant issues that impact on the Chief Internal Auditor’s annual opinion.

Internal audit reviews culminate in an opinion on the assurance that can be placed on the effectiveness of the framework of risk management, control and governance designed to support the achievement of management objectives of the service area under review. The assurance opinions are categorised as follows:

Substantial	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Reasonable	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Limited	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
No	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

3. Performance dashboard



Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

An External Quality Assessment of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership was undertaken by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) in September 2020. The report concluded:

'The mandatory elements of the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) include the Definition of Internal Auditing, Code of Ethics, Core Principles and International Standards. There are 64 fundamental principles to achieve with 118 points of recommended practice. We assess against the principles.'

'It is our view that the Southern Internal Audit Partnership conforms to all 64 of these principles.'

'We have also reviewed SIAP conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and Local Government Application Note (LGAN).'

'We are pleased to report that SIAP conform with all relevant, associated elements.'

4. Analysis of 'Live' audit reviews

Audit Review	Report Date	Audit Sponsor	Assurance Opinion	Total Management Action(s)	Not Accepted	Not Yet Due	Complete	Overdue		
								L	M	H
Income Collection and Banking	May 21	CFO	Reasonable	1	0	0	0		1	
ICT Policies and Procedures	Feb 23	CFO	Limited	12	0	0	6		6	
Information Governance – Records Management and Information Requests	May 23	CFO	Reasonable	3	0	0	2		1	
Treasury Management, Income Collection and Banking*	Jul 23	CFO	Reasonable	3	0	0	3			
Accounts Payable	Jun 24	CFO	Reasonable	4	0	1	3			
Grants Awarded	Feb 25	CFO	Substantial	1	0	1	0			
Total								0	8	0

* Denotes where all actions have been completed since the last progress report.

Management update on the overdue actions

Income Collection and Banking – The overdue action is to complete the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) Self-Assessment Questionnaire, which is in progress with a planned completion date by the end of March 2025.

ICT Policies and Procedures. The majority of the outstanding actions are dependent upon the update and approval of a new overarching ICT Policy. We will assess the progress being made within the IT Disaster Recovery, Business Continuity and Cyber Response Plans audit which is currently underway.

Information Governance – Records Management and Information Requests. Two actions have been confirmed as completed. The original (overdue) action was to draft procedure notes to support the process to be followed when responding to FOI requests, EIR request and Subject Access Requests. This action is being reconsidered in light of team structure changes and whether it is better to have more people aware of, and trained on, the process to respond to requests in order to increase resilience rather than formally document the procedures, with a revised implementation date of Autumn 2025.

5. Executive Summaries of reports published concluding a ‘Limited’ or ‘No’ assurance opinion

I am pleased to report that, to date, no 2024-25 audits have concluded with a ‘Limited’ or ‘No’ Assurance opinion.

6. Planning, resourcing and rolling work programme

The Internal Audit Plan for 2024-25 was discussed by the Executive Leadership Team and approved by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee on 4 March 2024. Progress against the plan is detailed below.

Audit Review	Scoping	Audit Outline	Fieldwork	Draft Report	Final Report	Assurance Opinion	Comment
Human Resources - Policies	✓	✓					Fieldwork starts W/C 17.02.25
Payroll	✓	✓	✓				Fieldwork complete. Close of audit meeting 17.02.25
Grants Awarded	✓	✓	✓	Jan 25	Feb 25	Substantial	
IT Disaster Recovery, Business Continuity and Cyber Response Plans	✓	✓	✓				