



**Southern Internal
Audit Partnership**

Assurance through excellence
and innovation

**Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Internal Audit Plan 2026-27**

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Introduction

The mandate for internal audit in local government is specified within the Accounts and Audit [England] Regulations 2015, which states:

'5. (1) A relevant authority 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 scope of internal audit includes both assurance and advisory services covering the entire breadth of the Council, including all activities, assets, and personnel of the organisation.

The role of internal audit is that of an:

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

The Council 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 Council that these arrangements are in place and operating effectively.

The Council'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.

The aim of internal audit's work programme is to provide independent and objective assurance to management, the Senior Leadership Team and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the business activities; systems and processes under review that:

- the framework of internal control, risk management and governance is appropriate and operating effectively; and
- risks to the achievement of the Council's objectives are identified, assessed and managed to a defined acceptable level.

Conformance with internal auditing standards

From 1 April 2025, the 'standards or guidance' in relation to internal audit are those laid down in the Global Internal Audit Standards, Application Note: Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector and the Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government. The collective requirements shall be referred to as the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector.

Standard 8.4 [External Quality Assessment] requires internal audit providers to undergo an external quality assessment every five years. In September 2025 JC Training Ltd were commissioned to complete an external quality assessment of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership against the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector.

In considering all sources of evidence the external assessor concluded:

'SIAP has achieved an excellent result of 'generally achieves' in this EQA in relation to the GIAS and Application Note. The IIA use the term 'general achievement' or 'general conformance' to indicate that "internal audit activities were performed in general conformance with the Global Standards."

I include a summary of SIAP's conformance to the GIAS, below. Overall, I believe that the team has achieved an excellent performance given its size, together with the breadth and depth of the benchmark established by the new GIAS.

I am delighted to confirm that SIAP fully achieves 46 of the 52 Standards and generally achieves the remaining six Standards. There are no partial conformances, or areas where the team do not conform with any Standards.

I have undertaken ten reviews of diverse internal audit functions using the (new) GIAS to date and **this result puts SIAP firmly within the top quartile and represents the highest level of achievement and conformance with the new GIAS that I have seen to date.'**

Summary of IIA Conformance	Standards	Does not Conform	Partially Conforms/Achieves	Generally Conforms/Achieves	Fully Conforms/Achieves	Total
Purpose of Internal Auditing	N/A					N/A
Ethics and Professionalism	13				13	13
Governing the Internal Audit Function	9			3	6	9
Managing the Internal Audit Function	16			1	15	16
Performing Internal Audit Services	14			2	12	14
	52	0	0	6	46	52

Developing the internal audit plan 2026-27

In accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector there is a requirement that internal audit must create a risk-based internal audit plan that supports the achievement of the organisation's objectives. The internal audit plan provides the mechanism through which the Chief Internal Auditor can ensure most appropriate use of internal audit resources to fulfil the audit mandate and delivery of the internal audit strategy.

This is a unique year for the Council taking them through to vesting day (1 April 2027). We have worked with management to ensure the audit plan is positioned to add optimum value to the organisation during what will be a challenging period of significant change and uncertainty.

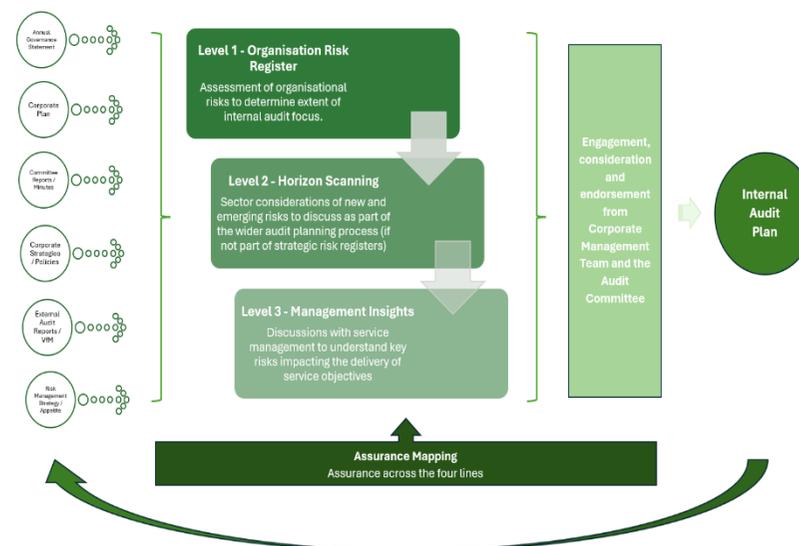
Whilst planning has maintained its usual robust approach, we have incorporated a contingency to provide reactive assurance and advisory resource to the organisation during 2026-27.

The risk-based internal audit plan is prepared based on a range of inputs (see diagram).

The plan will remain fluid and subject to on-going review and amendment, in consultation with the relevant audit sponsors, the Senior Leadership Team, and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, to ensure internal audit are able to react to new and emerging risks and the changing needs of the Council.

Amendments to the plan and use of contingency will be identified through the Chief Internal Auditor's continued contact and liaison with those responsible for the governance of the Council and reported to the Senior Leadership Team, and Audit and Scrutiny Committee through regular progress reports.

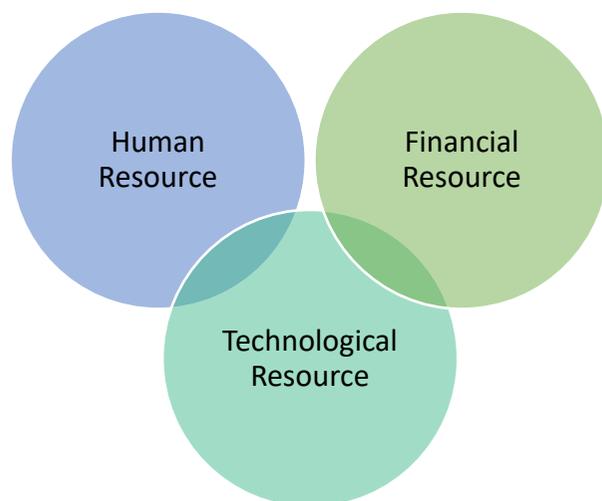
The Council are reminded that internal audit is only one source of assurance and through the delivery of our plan we will not, and do not seek to cover all risks and processes within the organisation. We will however continue to work closely with other assurance providers to ensure that duplication is minimised, and a suitable breadth of assurance is obtained.



Internal audit resources

On development of the 2026-27 internal audit plan as Chief Internal Auditor, I am of the opinion that there is a sufficient level of resource available, supported by an appropriate range of knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience to deliver the internal audit plan in the fulfilment of the audit mandate and delivery of the internal audit strategy.

The Head of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership has a resource strategy in place to optimise internal audit resources to efficiently and effectively deliver the internal audit plan.



Human Resource - the internal audit service has access to an appropriate range of knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience required to deliver the internal audit strategy and operational risk-based audit plan.

If the Chief Internal Auditor, Senior Leadership Team or the Audit and Scrutiny Committee consider that the scope or coverage of internal audit is limited in any way, or the ability of internal audit to deliver a service consistent with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector is prejudiced, they will advise the Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), accordingly.

Financial Resource - the Head of Southern Internal Audit Partnership will manage the internal audit budget to enable the successful implementation of the internal audit mandate and achievement of the plan. The budget includes the resources necessary for the function's operation, including training and relevant technologies and tools.

Technological Resource - the internal audit function has the technology to support the internal audit process and regularly evaluates technological resources in pursuit of opportunities to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

The internal audit plan is tailored to support the organisation through to vesting day, however, it is recognised that a significant level of organisational capacity / resource will be necessarily focused on LGR readiness in addition to delivering business-as-usual operations potentially impacting capacity to support internal audit delivery. Should we feel the delivery of the plan is compromised in any way we will report this to Senior Management and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee through our regular progress report(s).

Resourcing the internal audit plan

The Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector require a clear analysis of the resources and hours available for internal audit engagements compared to other administrative and non-audit related activities or initiatives focused on improving the internal audit function.

Activity		Days
Risk-Based Audit /Advisory	- Delivery of risk-based internal audit assignments designed to fulfil the audit mandate, delivery of the internal audit strategy and in support of the Council in the achievement of corporate objectives.	154
Contingency	- Reactive and advisory work as may be required during the year	25
Audit Management	- Time allocated for the liaison and reporting to Senior Leadership Team and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, ongoing monitoring and update of the audit plan, implementation of management actions and ongoing quality review.	20
Total Audit Days	- Total resource allocation for the delivery of the internal audit plan	199

*100% of the commissioned audit days are dedicated to fulfilling the audit mandate, and delivery of the internal audit strategy. Internal audit services are provided through the Southern Internal audit Partnership who undertake all administrative and non-audit related activities outside of the commissioned audit days.

A range of internal audit services are provided to deliver the internal audit plan (see Internal Audit Charter). The approach is determined by the Chief Internal Auditor and will depend on the level of assurance required, the significance of the objectives under review to the organisation's success, the risks inherent in the achievement of objectives and the level of confidence required that controls are well designed and operating as intended.

Your Internal Audit Team

Your internal audit service is provided by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership. The team will be led by Iona Bond, Deputy Head of Southern Internal Audit Partnership (Chief Internal Auditor), supported by Punita Talwar, Audit Manager.

Independence

The Chief Internal Auditor will ensure that the internal audit function remains free from all conditions that threaten the ability of auditors to carry out their responsibilities in an unbiased manner, including matters of engagement selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, and communication. The Chief Internal Auditor is not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the internal audit team.

The internal audit team retains no roles or responsibilities that have the potential to impair the internal audit functions independence, either in fact or appearance. Should such circumstance arise, the Chief Internal Auditor will advise the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of the safeguards put in place to manage actual, potential or perceived impairments.

Internal Audit Plan 2026-27

Audit Assignment	SLT Sponsor	Scope	Risk Register Reference	Assurance / Advisory	Internal Audit Risk Assessment	Quarter
Conservators Account	DofCS	Review and completion of the annual governance and accountability return.	-	n/a	n/a	Q1
Payroll – Pensions Notifications	HofP&OD	Assurance over the processes and controls in controls for opt-in/opt-out notifications.	-	Assurance	High	Q1
Contract Management	ADCS	Assurance over the framework of control in place for contract management.	-	Assurance	High	Q1
Accounts Receivable and Debt Management	DofCS	Cyclical review of key financial system.	-	Assurance	High	Q1
Housing Benefits	DofCS	Cyclical review of key financial system.	F26	Assurance	High	Q2
HR – Recruitment/Capacity	HofP&OD	Assurance over the framework of control for recruitment and management of capacity.	-	Assurance	High	Q2
Council Tax & NNDR – Dormant Accounts Credit Balances	DofCS	Review of the processes and controls in place for the administration of refunds processed against dormant accounts.	-	Assurance	High	Q2

IT – Firewall Management and Monitoring	HofICT	Assurance over the secure management and monitoring of the new firewall implementation.	IT6	Assurance	High	Q3
Follow Up – IT – Systems to be confirmed	HofICT	As there are a number of previous IT audits with outstanding management actions, the priority of those audits to be followed up will be determined at the time of scoping.	IT6	Follow Up	Medium	Q3
Follow Up – Main Accounting	DofCS	To follow up on the key observations raised in the 2024-25 “limited assurance” review to ensure actions have been fully implemented.	-	Follow Up	Medium	Q3
Follow Up - Playgrounds	HofOS	To follow up on the key observations raised in the 2024-25 “limited assurance” review to ensure actions have been fully implemented.	PCR13	Follow Up	Medium	Q3
Follow Up – Use of Volunteers	HofP&OD	To follow up on the key observations raised in the 2024-25 “limited assurance” review to ensure actions have been fully implemented.	-	Follow Up	Medium	Q3
LGR - Contingency	CEX	Provision for reactive/advisory work as may be required through the LGR process.	E03	-	-	Q1-4

Audit Sponsor

CEX	Chief Executive	HofOS	Head of Operational Services
DofCS	Director of Corporate Services (S151)	HofICT	Head of ICT
HofP&OD	Head of People and Organisational Development	ADCS	Assistant Director, Corporate Services