



# BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

Internal Audit Plan 2022 - 2023

Presented at the Audit and Standards Committee meeting of: 3 March 2022

This report is solely for the use of the persons to whom it is addressed.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23 is presented for consideration by the Audit and Standards Committee.

The key points to note from our plan are:



**2022/23 Internal Audit priorities:** Internal audit activity for 2022/23 is based on analysing your service priorities and risk profile as well as other factors affecting you in the year ahead, including changes within the sector. Our detailed plan for 2022/23 is included at Section 1.



**Level of Resource:** The level of resource required to deliver the plan is consistent with last year and our day rates are in line with the tender submission. We will continue with our approach of using technology when undertaking our operational audits. During 2022/23 we will continue to embrace more ways of using technology to undertake our audit work including; the use of questionnaires, MS Teams meetings, secure web portals for audit data sharing (Huddle) and data analytics technology. This will continue to strengthen sampling and focus our audit testing. Refer to Appendix A.



**Core Assurance:** In addition to our core audit areas, we have focused our coverage on key risks to the organisation such as **Data Quality**, and **ICT – Digitalised Systems User Proficiency**.

# CONTENTS

1. YOUR INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022/23 .....	4
2. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022/23 .....	5
APPENDIX A: YOUR INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE.....	7
APPENDIX B: INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY 2021/22 – 2022/23.....	8
APPENDIX C: INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER .....	11
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.....	16

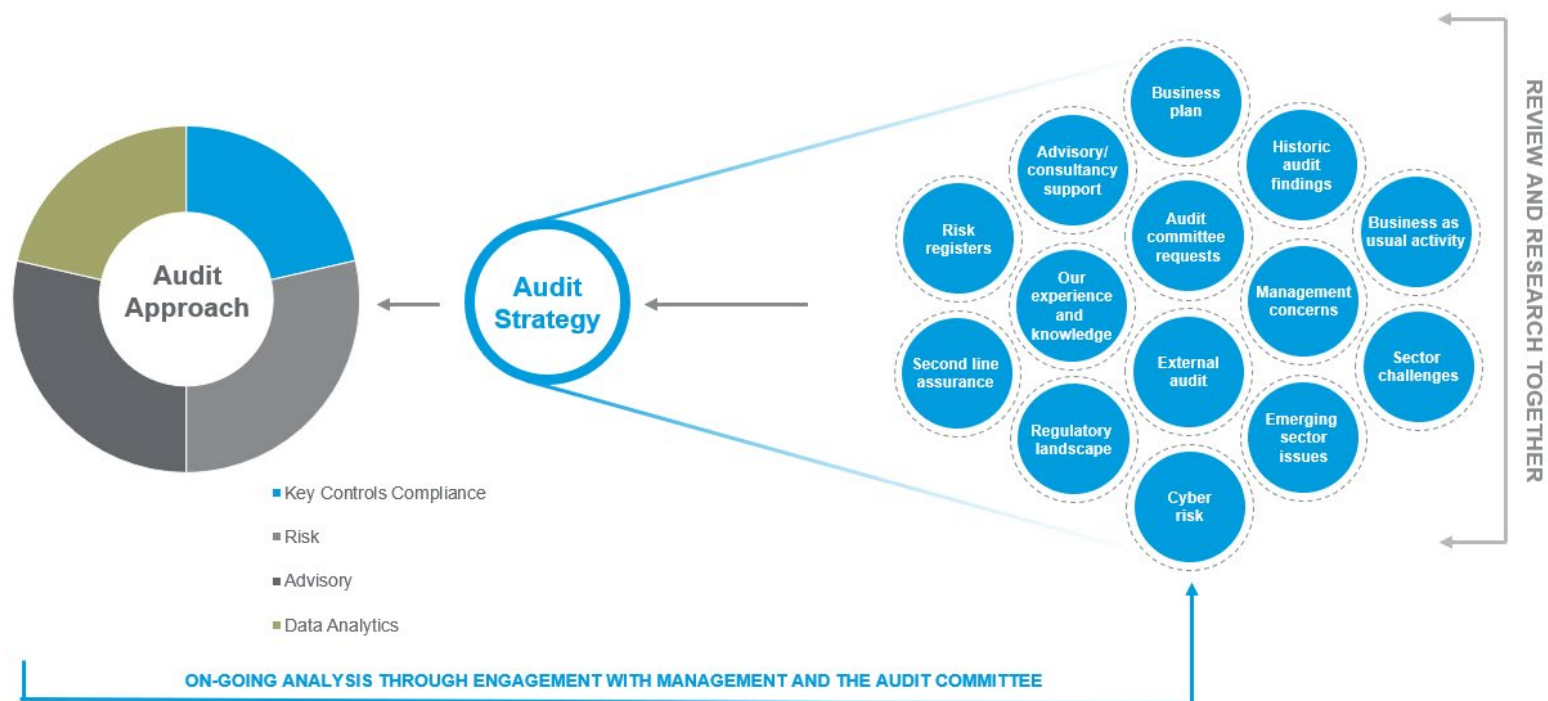
# 1. YOUR INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022/23

Our approach to developing your internal audit plan is based on analysing your priorities, risk profile and assurance framework as well as other, factors affecting Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority in the year ahead, including changes within the sector.

## Risk management processes

We have evaluated your risk management processes and consider that we can place reliance on your risk registers to inform the internal audit strategy. We have used various sources of information (see Figure A below) and discussed priorities for internal audit coverage with Corporate Management Team.

Figure A: Audit considerations – sources considered when developing the Internal Audit Strategy.



Based on our understanding of the organisation, the information provided to us by stakeholders, and the regulatory requirements, we have developed an annual internal plan for the coming year and a high level strategic plan (see Section 2 and Appendix B for full details).

## 2. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022/23

The table below shows each of the reviews that we propose to undertake as part of the internal audit plan for 2021/22. The table details the corporate risks which may warrant internal audit coverage. This review of your risks allows us to ensure that the proposed plan will meet the organisation's assurance needs for the forthcoming and future years. As well as assignments designed to provide assurance or advisory input around specific risks, the strategy also includes: time to follow up actions and an audit management allocation.

Objective of the review (Corporate risk)	Audit approach	Fee	Proposed timing
<p><b>ICT – Digitalised Systems User Proficiency</b></p> <p>This review will consider user competence and proficiency in respect of key digitalised systems to ensure the organisation is achieving the value and benefits of those systems. This will include the use of a questionnaire as well as one to one interviews to gauge staff awareness and competence in using those systems.</p> <p><i>Risk:</i></p> <p><i>3. Failure to maintain ICT systems to ensure an effective service response</i></p> <p><i>7. Ensure that our data management arrangements are robust</i></p>	Risk Based	£4,400	Q1
<p><b>Data Quality – Information Management and Governance Arrangements including GDPR</b></p> <p>The organisation has recently implemented a new data sharing system. This review will consider the governance arrangements in respect of data including how data is verified and utilised for decision making. This will also consider the completeness of the data and where it is held to ensure that this is being recorded as required, alongside ensuring compliance with GDPR regulations.</p> <p><i>Risk 7. Ensure that our data management arrangements are robust</i></p>	Risk Based	£4,600	Q1
<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p>The annual governance review for the organisation, including review of whether key groups within the governance structure are effectively discharging their duties.</p>	Systems Based	£2,800	Q2
<p><b>Risk Management</b></p> <p>We will consider the risk management arrangements to ensure that they support the business of the Authority and Service. This will include review of the Corporate Risk Register the risk management strategy, and the reporting and monitoring of risks.</p>	Systems Based	£2,800	Q3
<p><b>Key Financial Controls</b></p> <p>To review the key controls within the finance system which produce the management accounts and Authority financial management information. The specific areas to be reviewed will be agreed with management prior to the start of the audit.</p> <p><i>Risk 4. Insufficient funds to deliver the organisations CRMP</i></p>	Key Controls Compliance	£3,675	Q3
<b>Other Internal Audit Activity</b>			
<b>Follow up</b>	Follow up	£1,700	Q4

<b>Objective of the review (Corporate risk)</b>	<b>Audit approach</b>	<b>Fee</b>	<b>Proposed timing</b>
To meet internal auditing standards, and to provide assurance on action taken to address recommendations previously agreed by management.			
<b>Audit Strategy / Annual Report</b> This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Audit Needs Assessment / Strategic and Annual Internal Audit Plans</li> <li>• Preparation of the annual internal audit opinion</li> </ul>	N/A	£2,700	Throughout the year
<b>Management</b> This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and finalisation of reports;</li> <li>• Ongoing liaison meetings and calls, and progress reporting; and</li> <li>• Preparation for and attendance at Audit &amp; Standards Committee.</li> </ul>	N/A	£5,700	Throughout the year
<b>Total</b>		£28,375	

A detailed planning process will be completed for each review, and the final scope will be documented in an Assignment Planning Sheet. This will be issued to the key stakeholders for each review.

## 2.1 Working with other assurance providers

The Audit and Standards Committee is 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, such as external audit to ensure that duplication is minimised, and a suitable breadth of assurance obtained.

# APPENDIX A: YOUR INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

Your internal audit service is provided by RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP. The team will be led by Suzanne Rowlett as your Head of Internal Audit, supported by Louise Davies as your manager.

## Core team

The delivery of the 2022/23 audit plan will be based around a core team. However, we will complement the team with additional specialist skills where required.

## Conformance with internal auditing standards

RSM affirms that our internal audit services are designed to conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

Under PSIAS, internal audit services are required to have an external quality assessment every five years. Our risk assurance service line commissioned an external independent review of our internal audit services in 2021 to provide assurance whether our approach meets the requirements of the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), and the Internal Audit Code of Practice, as published by the Global Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) and the Chartered IIA, on which PSIAS is based.

The external review concluded that RSM 'generally conforms\*' to the requirements of the IIA Standards' and that 'RSM IA also generally conforms with the other Professional Standards and the IIA Code of Ethics. There were no instances of non-conformance with any of the Professional Standards'.

\* The rating of 'generally conforms' is the highest rating that can be achieved, in line with the IIA's EQA assessment model.

The risk assurance service line has in place a quality assurance and improvement programme to ensure continuous improvement of our internal audit services. Resulting from the programme, there are no areas which we believe warrant flagging to your attention as impacting on the quality of the service we provide to you.

## Conflicts of interest

We are not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the team, and which are required to be disclosed under internal auditing standards.

## APPENDIX B: INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY 2021/22 – 2022/23

The table below shows an overview of the audit coverage to be provided through RSM's delivery of the internal audit strategy. This has been derived from the process outlined in Section 1 above, as well as our own view of the risks facing the sector as a whole.

Assurance Provided	
	Red - Minimal Assurance / Poor Progress
	Amber/red - Partial Assurance / Little Progress
	Amber/green - Reasonable Assurance / Reasonable Progress
	Green - Substantial Assurance / Good Progress
	Advisory / AUP
	IDEA

Audit Area		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Risk Based</b>							
ICT	CRR3		Advisory	Advisory		✓	
Data Quality	CRR7				✓	✓	
Management of Assets	CRR8				✓		
<b>Core Assurance</b>							
Governance						✓	
Risk Management			Advisory		✓	✓	✓
Key Financial Controls	CRR4				✓	✓	✓
Follow Up					✓	✓	✓



**Other Potential areas of Internal Audit Activity**

Asset Management	CRR2 CRR8				
Human Resources	CRR1 CRR2 CRR5 CRR6				
2020/21 - Recruitment & Wellbeing				Support Recruitment	✓
2021/22 – Grey Book Recruitment				Wellbeing	
2023/24 - Succession Planning & Retained Recruitment				Advisory	
Collection / Use of Risk Information	CRR1				
Community Risk Management Plan	CRR4 CRR5				
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	CRR2				
Procurement					
Risk Protection Pool					
Stock Control					
Mobilising System Project					
Operational Business Continuity					
Property - Statutory Compliance					
Change Management - Benefits Realisation					

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Environmental Review



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Debrief and Organisational Learning

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# APPENDIX C: INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

## Need for the charter

This charter establishes the purpose, authority and responsibilities for the internal audit service for Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority. The establishment of a charter is a requirement of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and approval of the charter is the responsibility of the Audit and Standards committee

The internal audit service is provided by RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP (“RSM”).

We plan and perform our internal audit work with a view to reviewing and evaluating the risk management, control and governance arrangements that the organisation has in place, focusing in particular on how these arrangements help you to achieve its objectives. The PSIAS encompass the mandatory elements of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) as follows:

- Core principles for the professional practice of internal auditing;
- Definition of internal auditing;
- Code of ethics; and
- The Standards.

## Mission of internal audit

As set out in the PSIAS, the mission articulates what internal audit aspires to accomplish within an organisation. Its place in the IPPF is deliberate, demonstrating how practitioners should leverage the entire framework to facilitate their ability to achieve the mission.

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*“To enhance and protect organisational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight”.*

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## Independence and ethics

To provide for the independence of internal audit, its personnel report directly to the Director, Suzanne Rowlett (acting as your head of internal audit). The independence of RSM is assured by the internal audit service reporting to the Chief Fire Officer, with further reporting lines to the Assistant Chief Officer – Finance and Corporate Services.

The head of internal audit has unrestricted access to the chair of Audit and Standards Committee to whom all significant concerns relating to the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management activities, internal control and governance are reported.

Conflicts of interest may arise where RSM provides services other than internal audit to Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority. Steps will be taken to avoid or manage transparently and openly such conflicts of interest so that there is no real or perceived threat or impairment to independence in providing the internal audit service. If a potential conflict arises through the provision of other services, disclosure will be reported to the Audit and Standards committee. The nature of the disclosure will depend upon the potential impairment and it is important that our role does not appear to be compromised in reporting the matter to the Audit and Standards committee. Equally we do not want the organisation to be deprived of wider RSM expertise and will therefore raise awareness without compromising our independence.

## Responsibilities

In providing your outsourced internal audit service, RSM has a responsibility to:

- Develop a flexible and risk based internal audit strategy with more detailed annual audit plans. The plan will be submitted to the Audit and Standards Committee for review and approval each year before work commences on delivery of that plan.
- Implement the internal audit plan as approved, including any additional tasks requested by management and the Audit and Standards Committee.
- Ensure the internal audit team consists of professional audit staff with sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience.
- Establish a quality assurance and improvement program to ensure the quality and effective operation of internal audit activities.
- Perform advisory activities where appropriate, beyond internal audit's assurance services, to assist management in meeting its objectives.
- Bring a systematic disciplined approach to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of risk management, internal control and governance processes.
- Highlight control weaknesses and required associated improvements together with corrective action recommended to management based on an acceptable and practicable timeframe.
- Undertake follow up reviews to ensure management has implemented agreed internal control improvements within specified and agreed timeframes.
- Report regularly to the Audit and Standards Committee to demonstrate the performance of the internal audit service.

For clarity, we have included the definition of 'internal audit', 'senior management' and 'Authority'.

- Internal audit – a department, division, team of consultant, or other practitioner (s) that provides independent, objective assurance and consulting services designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. The internal audit activity 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.
- Senior management who are the team of individuals at the highest level of organisational management who have the day-to-day responsibilities for managing the organisation.

- Authority - The highest level governing body charged with the responsibility to direct and/or oversee the organisation's activities and hold organisational management accountable. Furthermore, "Authority" may refer to a committee or another body to which the governing body has delegated certain functions (eg an Audit and Standards committee).

## Client care standards

In delivering our services we require full cooperation from key stakeholders and relevant business areas to ensure a smooth delivery of the plan. We proposed the following KPIs for monitoring the delivery of the internal audit service:

- Discussions with senior staff at the client take place to confirm the scope six weeks before the agreed audit start date.
- Key information such as: the draft assignment planning sheet are issued by RSM to the key auditee six weeks before the agreed start date.
- The lead auditor to contact the client to confirm logistical arrangements at least 15 working days before the commencement of the audit fieldwork to confirm practical arrangements, appointments, debrief date etc.
- Fieldwork takes place on agreed dates with key issues flagged up immediately.
- A debrief meeting will be held with audit sponsor at the end of fieldwork or within a reasonable time frame.
- Draft reports will be issued within 10 working days of the debrief meeting and will be issued by RSM to the agreed distribution list / Huddle.
- Management responses to the draft report should be submitted to RSM.
- Within three working days of receipt of client responses the final report will be issued by RSM to the assignment sponsor and any other agreed recipients of the report.



We continue to closely monitor and implement official guidelines from the Government and health organisations in respect of Covid-19. All our staff must adhere to the relevant RSM Policies, including limiting time on site and completing the relevant approvals prior to any site visit.

## Authority

The internal audit team is authorised to:

- Have unrestricted access to all functions, records, property and personnel which it considers necessary to fulfil its function.
- Have full and free access to the Audit and Standards Committee.
- Allocate resources, set timeframes, define review areas, develop scopes of work and apply techniques to accomplish the overall internal audit objectives.

- Obtain the required assistance from personnel within the organisation where audits will be performed, including other specialised services from within or outside the organisation.

The head of internal audit and internal audit staff are not authorised to:

- Perform any operational duties associated with the organisation.
- Initiate or approve accounting transactions on behalf of the organisation.
- Direct the activities of any employee not employed by RSM unless specifically seconded to internal audit.

## Reporting

An assignment report will be issued following each internal audit assignment. The report will be issued in draft for comment by management, and then issued as a final report to management, with the executive summary being provided to the Audit and Standards Committee. The final report will contain an action plan agreed with management to address any weaknesses identified by internal audit.

The internal audit service will issue progress reports to the Audit and Standards Committee and management summarising outcomes of audit activities, including follow up reviews.

As your internal audit provider, the assignment opinions that RSM provides the organisation during the year are part of the framework of assurances that assist the Authority in taking decisions and managing its risks.

As the provider of the internal audit service we are required to provide an annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's governance, risk management and control arrangements. In giving our opinion it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that the internal audit service can provide to the Authority is a reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in risk management, governance and control processes. The annual opinion will be provided to the organisation by RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP at the financial year end. The results of internal audit reviews, and the annual opinion, should be used by management and the Authority to inform the organisation's annual governance statement.

## Data protection

Internal audit files need to include sufficient, reliable, relevant and useful evidence in order to support our findings and conclusions. Personal data is not shared with unauthorised persons unless there is a valid and lawful requirement to do so. We are authorised as providers of internal audit services to our clients (through the firm's terms of business and our engagement letter) to have access to all necessary documentation from our clients needed to carry out our duties.

## **Quality Assurance and Improvement**

As your external service provider of internal audit services, we have the responsibility for maintaining an effective internal audit activity. Under the standards, internal audit services are required to have an external quality assessment every five years. In addition to this, we also have in place an internal quality assurance and improvement programme, led by a dedicated team who undertake these reviews. This ensures continuous improvement of our internal audit services.

Any areas which we believe warrant bringing to your attention, which may have the potential to have an impact on the quality of the service we provide to you, will be raised in our progress reports to the Audit and Standards committee.

## **Fraud**

The Audit and Standards committee recognises that management is responsible for controls to reasonably prevent and detect fraud. Furthermore, the Audit and Standards committee recognises that internal audit is not responsible for identifying fraud; however internal audit will be aware of the risk of fraud when planning and undertaking any assignments.

## **Approval of the internal audit charter**

By approving this document, the internal audit strategy, the Audit and Standards Committee is also approving the internal audit charter.

# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during the course of our review and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all improvements that might be made. Actions for improvements should be assessed by you for their full impact. This report, or our work, should not be taken as a substitute for management's responsibilities for the application of sound commercial practices. We emphasise that the responsibility for a sound system of internal controls rests with management and our work should not be relied upon to identify all strengths and weaknesses that may exist. Neither should our work be relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud and irregularity should there be any.

Our report is prepared solely for the confidential use of Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority, and solely for the purposes set out herein. This report should not therefore be regarded as suitable to be used or relied on by any other party wishing to acquire any rights from RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP for any purpose or in any context. Any third party which obtains access to this report or a copy and chooses to rely on it (or any part of it) will do so at its own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party and shall not be liable for any loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature which is caused by any person's reliance on representations in this report.

This report is released to you on the basis that it shall not be copied, referred to or disclosed, in whole or in part (save as otherwise permitted by agreed written terms), without our prior written consent.

We have no responsibility to update this report for events and circumstances occurring after the date of this report.

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