



# BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

Internal Audit Strategy 2020/21 - 2022/23

Presented at the Audit and Standards Committee meeting of: 26 March 2020

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 is presented for consideration by the Audit and Standards Committee.

The key points to note from our plan are:



**2020 Internal Audit priorities:** Internal audit activity for 2020/21 is based on analysing your corporate objectives and risk profile as well as other factors affecting you in the year ahead, including changes within the sector and the HMICFRS inspections. Our detailed plan for 2020/21 is included at Section 1.



**Level of Resource:** The level of resource required to deliver the plan is increased from 2019/20 with additional work identified through discussion with the CMT. We will continue the use of technology when undertaking operational audits in 2020/21. This continues to strengthen our sampling, increasing the level of assurance provided. Refer to Appendix A.



**Core Assurance:** As required to provide the Head of Internal Audit Opinion, our plan includes an assessment of governance, risk management, key financial controls, key risk areas and follow up. We have worked with management to re-prioritise the work planned for 2020/21 to meet the risk profile of the organisation and the outcomes of the HMICFRS inspection including a review of the organisation's soon to be implemented cloud-based solution for the management of fleet and assets and review of the organisation's recruitment processes.

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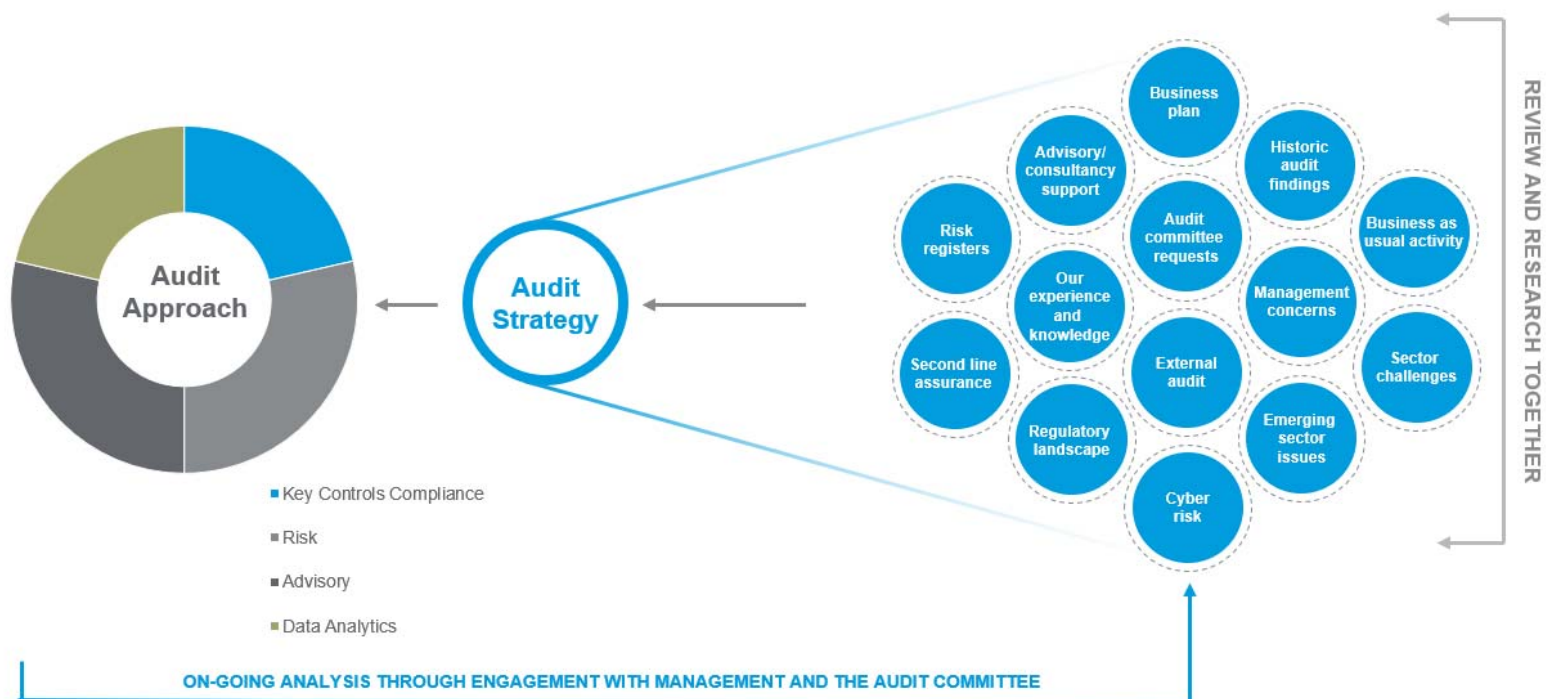
# 1. YOUR INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/21

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

## Risk management processes

We understand your risk management processes are in the process of being reviewed, we have placed reliance on your risk register, however, this will be kept under consideration and audit areas reviewed following the risk management training and risk register updates. We have used various sources of information (see Figure A below) and discussed priorities for internal audit coverage with senior management and the Audit and Standards Committee.

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 2020/21

The table below shows each of the reviews that we propose to undertake as part of the internal audit plan for 2020/21. The table details the corporate risks (CRRs) which 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 for tracking the implementation of actions and an audit management allocation.

Objective of the review (Strategic risk)	Audit approach	Fee	Proposed timing
<b>Risk Based</b>			
<b>Use of Risk Information</b> Review of how the Service collects, uses and reports on risk information received to ensure this is promptly available to the Officers on duty. This will include how the Service's risk information aligns with the Fire Safety Enforcement risk-based inspection program. <b>CRR00001 - Major Operational Incident Pre-Planning</b>	Risk Based	£2,150	Q1
<b>ICT – Cyber Security</b> The Service is planning to become Cyber Essentials Plus certified. This review will assess compliance with key elements of the certification and identify any areas for improvement, prior to the service undertaking the required independent external assessment. <b>CRR00038 - Cyber Security Measures &amp; CRR00045 That a Cyber Attack penetrates our network affecting key systems and services</b>	Key Controls Compliance	£3,150	Q1
<b>Human Resources - Recruitment</b> A review of the arrangements in place for the recruitment of all groups of staff, including compliance with internal policies and procedures. <b>CRR00024 - HR Legal Compliance</b> <b>CRR00004 – Maintaining our staff numbers</b>	Risk Based	£2,700	Q3
<b>Core Assurance</b>			
<b>Governance</b> The annual governance review for the organisation, including review of whether key groups within the governance structure are effectively discharging their duties. This will include a review of how the new governance structure is working.	Systems Based	£2,200	Q2
<b>Risk Management</b> Review of the risk management arrangements including review of the risk management strategy, risk register, reporting and monitoring of risks through the governance structure	Systems Based	£2,000	Q4

Objective of the review (Strategic risk)	Audit approach	Fee	Proposed timing
<b>Key Financial Controls</b> This will include key controls testing and any management concerns including previous recommendations. Areas potentially included general ledger, cash, banking and treasury management, payments and creditors, income and debtors, asset management and payroll.	Key Controls Compliance	£2,870	Q3
<b>CRR00011 - Adequate Financial Procedures</b>			
<b>Other Internal Audit Activity</b>			
<b>Procurement – Proactive Processes</b> A review of the arrangements and systems in place to ensure that the organisation is aware in advance of any required procurements and that these are effectively planned and delivered to minimise the use of any waivers and ensure procurement procedures can be effectively followed. This area is planned to be undertaken at the same time as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority and Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to enable sharing of best practice.	Systems Based	£2,700	Q2
<b>Human Resources – Wellbeing</b> Review of arrangements in place within the service to promote health and wellbeing, ensuring policies and procedures are in place to promote the welfare of staff and that these are being actively followed.	Systems Based	£1,950	Q4
<b>Follow up</b> To meet internal auditing standards, and to provide assurance on action taken to address recommendations previously agreed by management.	Follow up	£1,200	Q4
<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	£2,500	Throughout the year
<b>Management</b> This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and finalising reports;</li> <li>Ongoing liaison meetings and calls, and progress reporting; and</li> <li>Preparation for and attendance at Audit and Standards Committee.</li> </ul>	N/A	£5,145	Throughout the year

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 Risk Assurance Services LLP. The team will be led by Daniel Harris as your Head of Internal Audit, supported by Suzanne Rowlett as your senior manager and Satnam Parmar as your assistant manager.

## Core team

The delivery of the 2020/21 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 2016 to provide assurance whether our approach meets the requirements of the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) published by the Global Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) on which PSIAS is based.

The external review concluded that “there is a robust approach to the annual and assignment planning processes and the documentation reviewed was thorough in both terms of reports provided to Audit and Standards committee and the supporting working papers.” RSM was found to have an excellent level of conformance with the IIA’s professional standards.

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 2020/21 – 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

Internal Audit – Third Line of Assurance (Independent review / assurance)				
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23

Audit Area	Risk Register	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Risk Based</b>						
Asset Management	CRR00005		Draft (Spreadsheets)		✓ (Cloud Based solution – to be linked with Fleet Management)	
Collection / Use of Risk Information	CRR00001			✓		✓
ICT – Cyber Security	CRR00023 CRR00038 CRR00045		Opinion not provided as agreed	✓		
Human Resources	CRR00024 CRR00004 CRR00006 CRR00025 CRR00040			✓ ✓	✓	
2020/21 - Recruitment & Wellbeing				✓ ✓	✓	
2021/21 - Succession Planning						

Community Risk Management Plan	CRR00027	Commencing March 2020			✓
Data Quality	CRR00012 CRR00039				✓
Retained Recruitment	CRR00004				✓
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	CRR00048				✓
<b>Core Assurance</b>					
Governance				✓	✓
Risk Management		Advisory		✓	✓
Key Financial Controls	CRR00011			✓	✓
<b>Other Internal Audit Activity</b>					
Procurement				✓	
Risk Protection Pool					✓
Stock Control				✓	
Mobilising System Project		Commencing March 2020			
Operational Business Continuity				✓	
Property - Statutory Compliance					✓

Change Management - Benefits Realisation				✓	
Environmental Review			✓		✓
Follow Up	Reasonable progress	Currently in progress	✓	✓	✓

# 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 and 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 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 Partner 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 Temporary 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 and 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.
- Corporate Management Team 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 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 four weeks before the agreed audit start date.
- Key information such as: the draft assignment planning sheet are issued by RSM to the key auditee four weeks before the agreed start date.
- The lead auditor to contact the client to confirm logistical arrangements at least 10 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 / Sharefile.
- 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.

## 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 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 Service, 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 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 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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