

 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and date of Committee</b>	<b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 26 JUNE 2025</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL OPINION 2024/25</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	None
<b>Accountable member</b>	Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance Email: <a href="mailto:Alaric.Smith@westoxon.gov.uk">Alaric.Smith@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountable officer</b>	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance Email: <a href="mailto:Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk">Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report author</b>	Lucy Cater, Head of Internal Audit. Assistant Director, SWAP Internal Audit Services Email: <a href="mailto:Lucy.Cater@swapaudit.co.uk">Lucy.Cater@swapaudit.co.uk</a>
<b>Summary/Purpose</b>	<p>To present a summary of the work undertaken by Internal Audit during 2024/25 and to give an overall opinion on levels of assurance resulting from this work.</p> <p>Due to the information contained in The Internal Audit Annual Opinion, 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.</p>
<b>Annexes</b>	Annex A – Internal Audit Annual Opinion 2024/25 Annex B – Summary of audit work completed since the last meeting of this Committee Annex C – Open Agreed Actions
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	That the Audit and Governance Committee resolves to: I. Note the report and comment as necessary
<b>Corporate priorities</b>	(Internal Audit supports all Council Corporate Priorities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting Residents First</li> <li>• A Good Quality of Life for All</li> <li>• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li> <li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Not Applicable

## I. BACKGROUND

The Annual Opinion Report 2024/25, Annex 'A', provides the Head of Internal Audit's (SWAP Assistant Director) opinion, on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control within West Oxfordshire District Council ('the 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.

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.

Where operational control issues were raised in the audit reports, the risks associated with these, are being actively managed by Management.

The report outlines how the Internal Audit function has supported the Council in meeting the requirements of the International Professional Practices Framework of the Institute of Internal Auditors, further guided by interpretation provided by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the CIPFA Local Government Application Note. These state that:

- "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."
- "A relevant authority must conduct, each financial year, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control."

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 Council's system of internal control. This opinion is one component that the Council must take into account when completing its Annual Governance Statement which appears elsewhere on this agenda.

Officers from SWAP will be in attendance at the Committee meeting and will be available to address Members' questions.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

In accordance with the International Professional Practices Framework of the Institute of Internal Auditors, further guided by interpretation provided by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the CIPFA Local Government Application Note, the Head of Internal Audit is required to provide an annual opinion, based upon, and limited to, the work performed, on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's control arrangements. This is achieved through a risk-based programme of activities, agreed with Management and approved by the Audit and Governance Committee, which should provide a level of assurance across a range of Council activities. The opinion does not imply that the internal audit service has reviewed all risks and controls relating to the Council or the systems it reviews.

A number of audits have been completed since the last meeting of this Committee, and the reports are included at Annex B.

We continue to follow-up all agreed actions and a summary of the outstanding actions can be found at Annex C.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

Not Applicable

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Internal Audit Service is operating within the contract sum.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None directly from this report. Internal Audit reviews consider compliance with legislation relevant to the service area under review.

## **6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

The weaknesses in the control framework, identified by the Internal Audit activity, continues to threaten organisational objectives if recommendations are not implemented.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

Not Applicable

## **8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

### **8.1 Not Applicable**

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:
- Internal Audit Reports
- 9.2** These documents will be available for inspection online at [www.westoxon.gov.uk](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk) or by contacting democratic services [democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk) for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

(END)