

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE- FORWARD PLAN AND ASSURANCE MAP 2011/12**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To ask Members to approve the forward plan of reports for 2011/2012 and consider whether the assurances indicated in the plan provide adequate coverage to allow the Audit Committee to fulfill its terms of reference.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 A forward plan of reports and map of assurances was first introduced in June 2009 in response to recommendations made by external audit in the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.
- 2.2. The plan has been refreshed for 2011/2012 and shows the assurance each report will provide to allow the Audit Committee to fulfill its terms of reference. In addition to categories of assurance provided the forward plan also shows whether the source of assurance is primary or supporting. Changes have been made to reflect timing adjustments to some external audit reports, the removal of Use of Resources judgments, the impact of recent changes to the Accounts and Audit Regulations on reporting requirements and VFM opinion work. Further details on the revised Accounts and Audit Regulations are explained in the Final Accounts and Accounting Policies Report elsewhere on this agenda.
- 2.3 Appendix A shows the categories and level of assurance the Audit Committee need to fulfill its terms of reference and culminating in the approval of the council's accounts and Annual Governance Statement. A forward plan of reports for the Audit Committee to consider is shown in Appendix B.

**3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to consider whether the forward plan for 2011/2012 provides sufficient scope to obtain assurance on the adequacy of the council's internal control and governance arrangements to fulfill its terms of reference. The Committee may wish

to ask questions and seek clarification as necessary. If it concludes that it does provide sufficient scope to obtain assurance the Committee is invited to approve the forward plan for 2011/2012.

- 3.2 The Committee may decide not to approve or amend the forward plan for 2011/2012.

#### **4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 4.1 The forward plan addresses external audit's recommendations and is designed to provide Members with sufficient scope to gain adequate assurance to fulfill their role as set out in the Committee's terms of reference.

#### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

- 5.1 There are no additional resources implications.
- 5.2 Regular reviews of internal control and governance arrangements should safeguard the council's assets and ensure that value for money is achieved in the use of resources. There are no staffing, property or IT implications.

#### **6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer has a statutory duty under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. The council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The requirement for an Annual Governance Statement and reporting requirements is set out in the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.
- 6.2 Processes that underpin the Annual Governance Statement support excellent service delivery; enhance risk management arrangements and promote good corporate governance.

#### **7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The forward plan for 2011/2012 is the result of consideration of professional guidance and discussions between the Director of Finance, Assistant Director Audit, Risk and Insurance and External Audit.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Audit Committee should consider whether the forward plan for 2011/2012 provides sufficient scope to provide an appropriate level of assurance on the adequacy of the council's internal control and governance arrangements.
- 8.2 That the forward plan for 2011/2012 is approved.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

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Date: 21 March 2011

**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**The Audit Committee must receive sufficient assurance in the following areas to enable them to fulfil their terms of reference**

| <b>Delegated Audit Activity</b>   | <b>Assurances</b>  |
|---|--|
| (a) To consider the head of internal audit's annual report and opinion, a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the council's corporate governance arrangements. | Strong internal control environment & financial controls. Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards. Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved.           |
| (b) To consider significant issues arising from internal audit reviews carried out and high risk agreed actions not implemented within a reasonable timescale.  | Strong internal control environment & financial controls. . Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards. Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved.         |
| (c) To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance. This includes reports dealing with the management and performance of the internal audit service.       | Strong internal control environmental control & financial controls. Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards. Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved. |
| (d) To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.   | Strong internal control environment & financial controls. Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards. Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved            |
| (e) To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.  | Strong internal control environment & financial controls. Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards. Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved            |
| (f) To liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the council's external auditor.   | Strong internal control environment & financial controls.  |

**Regulatory Framework**

**Assurance**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(a) To maintain an overview of the council's constitution and governance arrangements in respect of contract procedure rules and financial regulations.</p>   | <p>Strong internal control environment &amp; financial controls.<br/>Good governance arrangements.<br/>Accurate financial statements that meet professional standards.</p>  |
| <p>(b) To monitor the effectiveness of the council's risk management arrangements. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitoring and reviewing the Strategic Risk Management Group's facilitation role in maintaining and developing the risk management framework in accordance with best practice.</li> <li>• approval of the risk management strategy</li> <li>• consideration of progress reports throughout the year.</li> </ul> | <p>Significant risks to the council are adequately managed.</p>   |
| <p>(c) To monitor the council's counter fraud strategy (including the Whistle Blowers' Charter).</p>   | <p>Effective counter fraud arrangements.</p>  |
| <p>(d) To oversee the production of the council's Annual Governance Statement and adopt it as part of the council's accounts.</p>  | <p>Strong internal control environment &amp; financial controls. Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards. Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved.</p> |
| <p>(e) To consider the council's arrangements for corporate governance and agreeing necessary action to ensure compliance with best practice.</p>  | <p>Good governance arrangements</p>   |
| <p>(f) To consider the council's compliance with its own and other published standards and controls.</p>   | <p>Strong internal control environment &amp; financial controls. Good governance arrangements. Accurate financial statements that meet professional standards.</p>  |
| <p>(g) To monitor the effectiveness of VFM arrangements throughout the council.</p>  | <p>Value for money is achieved.</p>   |
| <p>(h) To maintain an overview of the council's treasury management arrangements</p>   | <p>Strong internal control environment &amp; financial controls. Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. . Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved.</p>   |

**Accounts**

- (a) To review and/or approve the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.
  
- (b) To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

**Assurance**

Accurate financial statements that meet professional standards.

Strong internal control environment & financial controls. Effective Counter Fraud arrangements. Good Governance arrangements. Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards. Significant risks are adequately managed. Value for Money is achieved.

## Audit Committee Forward Plan and Assurance Map 2011/2012

Types of Assurance: P = Primary (provides an opinion on the adequacy of arrangements)

S = Supporting (describes work planned or in progress from internal sources or implied assurance from external audit/inspectories)

| Meetings and reports  | Audit Committee Assurances           |  |                              |  |   |                             |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
|   | Effective Counter Fraud Arrangements | Strong Internal Control Environment & Financial Controls | Good Governance Arrangements | Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards | Significant risks to the council are adequately managed | Value for Money is Achieved |
| <b>April 2011</b>   |                                      |  |                              |  |   |                             |
| <b>Forward Plan of Reports and Assurance Map 2011/12</b> – refresh of forward plan and assurance map  | P                                    | P  | P                            | P  | P   | P                           |
| <b>Risk Management Strategy</b> - the council's risk management arrangements including work schedule for the coming year and progress against previous year's work plan.  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | P   |                             |
| <b>Internal Audit Plan</b> – to approve Internal Audit's terms of reference, strategy and audit plan based on a risk based approach to audit planning and planned audit coverage of high risk systems for 2011/2012 | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Internal Audit Progress report</b> – audit plan progress, response to audit recommendations and significant issues arising from Internal Audit work which could impact on the council's control environment      |                                      | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Treasury Management quarterly progress report</b> - to detail investments, interest and highlight salient issues as they arise   | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |

| Meetings and reports   | Audit Committee Assurances           |  |                              |  |   |                             |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
|  | Effective Counter Fraud Arrangements | Strong Internal Control Environment & Financial Controls | Good Governance Arrangements | Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards | Significant risks to the council are adequately managed | Value for Money is Achieved |
| <b>External Audit Fees Letter 2011/2012</b> – to provide details of external audit’s proposed work and fee for the 2011/2012 audit   | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>VFM Audit Brief</b> - to provide details of external audit’s work to assess the council’s VFM arrangements  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | P                           |
| <b>External Audit Progress Report and Briefing</b> - an update on progress on external audit’s statutory work as well as highlighting key emerging national issues and developments which may be of interest to Members                                    | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>External Audit Recommendations Progress Report</b> evaluates the adequacy of management’s response to external audit recommendations and improving the council’s control environment  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Final Accounts and Accounting Policies</b> – to seek approval on the accounting policies that the council will use to close the 2010/2011 accounts and consider the implications of the revised Accounts & Audit Regulations                            |                                      | S  | S                            | P  |   |                             |
| <b>Sickness Update</b> – to provide an update on the impact of measures identified to reduce the level of sickness across the council  |                                      | S  | S                            |  | S   | S                           |
| <b>June 2011</b>   |                                      |  |                              |  |   |                             |
| <b>Internal Audit Effectiveness Report</b> – provides an assessment of the effectiveness of Internal Audit’s work as a major source of assurance. This includes compliance with professional standards and the adequacy of audit performance and coverage. | P                                    | P  | P                            | S  | S   | S                           |



| Meetings and reports   | Audit Committee Assurances           |  |                              |  |   |                             |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
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| <b>Internal Audit Annual Report</b> –provides an opinion on the adequacy of the council’s control environment and a summary of significant issues arising from Internal Audit’s work to support the evaluation. Brief summaries are provided of all fundamental financial systems and key systems such as risk management and corporate governance.                                    | P                                    | P  | P                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Counter Fraud Report</b> –proactive and reactive work undertaken by Internal Audit and Benefits Fraud Team in support of the council’s Counter Fraud Strategy   | P                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Annual Governance Statement</b> – presents a detailed evaluation of the adequacy of the council’s governance arrangements and highlights any areas of significant governance weakness for approval by the Audit Committee.  | P                                    | P  | P                            | P  | P   | P                           |
| <b>Risk Management Progress Report</b> – significant current or emerging risk management issues which could impact on the council’s control environment  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>External Audit Progress Report and Briefing</b> - an update on progress on external audit’s statutory work as well as highlighting key emerging national issues and developments which may be of interest to Members  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Data Quality Report</b> - to provide updates on data quality reviews.   |                                      | S  | S                            |  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Annual Report 2010/2011</b> – to provide a summary of performance on the previous years Treasury Management activities including measures taken during the year in response to changing circumstances and additional measures planned for 2011/2012 to improve arrangements in light of professional and governmental advice available. | S                                    | P  | S                            |  | P   | S                           |

| Meetings and reports  | Audit Committee Assurances           |  |                              |  |   |                             |
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|   | Effective Counter Fraud Arrangements | Strong Internal Control Environment & Financial Controls | Good Governance Arrangements | Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards | Significant risks to the council are adequately managed | Value for Money is Achieved |
| <p><b>Sept 2011</b></p> <p><b>Internal Audit Progress report</b> – audit plan progress, response to audit recommendations and significant issues arising from Internal Audit work which could impact on the council’s control environment</p> <p><b>Statement of Accounts</b> presents the council’s audited accounts for approval and highlights key messages and outcomes.</p> <p><b>Annual Governance Statement (update)</b> – to reflect the outcome of the accounts audit</p> <p><b>Risk Management Progress Report</b> – significant current or emerging risk management issues which could impact on the council’s control environment</p> <p><b>External Audit Recommendations Progress Report</b> – evaluates the adequacy of management’s response to external audit recommendations and improving the council’s control environment</p> <p><b>Audit of Accounts</b> – External Audit’s report to those charged with governance on significant issues arising from the audit of the council’s accounts. This includes an audit opinion on whether the accounts are ‘fairly stated’ and meet professional accounting requirements</p> <p><b>Treasury Management quarterly progress report</b> - to detail investments, interest and highlight salient issues as they arise</p> |                                      | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
|   | P                                    | P  | P                            | P  | P   | P                           |
|   | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
|   | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
|   | S                                    | S  | S                            | P  | S   | S                           |
|   | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |

| Meetings and reports   | Audit Committee Assurances           |  |                              |  |   |                             |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
|  | Effective Counter Fraud Arrangements | Strong Internal Control Environment & Financial Controls | Good Governance Arrangements | Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards | Significant risks to the council are adequately managed | Value for Money is Achieved |
| <b>VFM Judgement</b> - to report the Auditors Judgement for 2010/2011  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | P                           |
| <b>Annual Governance Report</b> – to report the Auditors findings on the financial statements audit and VFM work. This includes the audit opinion on the accounts and VFM judgement  | S                                    | S  | S                            | P  | S   | P                           |
| <b>January 2012</b>  |                                      |  |                              |  |   |                             |
| <b>Internal Audit Progress report</b> – audit plan progress, response to audit recommendations and significant issues arising from Internal Audit work which could impact on the council’s control environment. The report includes the review of Strategic Risk controls. |                                      | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Data Quality Report</b> - to provide updates on data quality reviews.   |                                      | S  | S                            |  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Risk Management Progress Report</b> – significant current or emerging risk management issues which could impact on the council’s control environment  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Counter Fraud Policies and Standards</b> – to report on the outcome of a review of the Anti Fraud Theft and Corruption Strategy and evaluation of the council’s counter fraud arrangements against best practice  | P                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Treasury Management quarterly progress report</b> - to detail investments, interest and highlight salient issues as they arise  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Grant Claims 2010/11</b> – to report the outcome of external audit’s review on the council’s arrangements for claiming grants in 2010/11  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |

| Meetings and reports  | Audit Committee Assurances           |  |                              |  |   |                             |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
|   | Effective Counter Fraud Arrangements | Strong Internal Control Environment & Financial Controls | Good Governance Arrangements | Accurate Financial Statements that meet Professional Standards | Significant risks to the council are adequately managed | Value for Money is Achieved |
| <b>External Audit Plan 2011/12-</b> to provide details of external audit's proposed work for the 2011/2012 audit  | S                                    | S  | S                            | S  | S   | S                           |
| <b>Annual Audit Letter-</b> provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the council, drawing on audit work throughout the year. | S                                    | S  | S                            | P  | S   | P                           |

**Culmination of assurances to support the approval of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement**