

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Audit Committee 2015/16

Issue	Yes	No	Partial	Evidence
Terms of Reference				
1. Have the committee's terms of reference been approved by full council?	✓			Original Terms of Reference approved by Council in March 2006 (minute ref: 100/March/2006). Responsibility for ethical values added by Council in 2014 following the abolition of the Standards Committee (minute ref: 58(4)/March/2014).
2. Do the Terms of reference follow the CIPFA model?	✓			Terms of Reference reflect those contained in the 2013 CIPFA Publication 'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police'
Internal Audit Process				
1. Does the committee approve the strategic audit approach and the annual audit programme?	✓			The programme is approved annually by the Audit Committee - Annual Audit Plan 2015/16 approved by the March 2015 Committee (minute ref: A41/March/2015).
2. Is the work of internal audit reviewed regularly?	✓			Progress reports are submitted to the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis:
3. Are summaries of quality questionnaires from managers reviewed?	✓			Performance statistics, including from questionnaires, are reported to the Audit Committee quarterly.
4. Is the annual report, from the head of audit, presented to the committee?	✓			Presented annually – Annual Report 2014/15 presented to the Audit Committee in June 2015 (minute ref: A9/June/2015).
External Audit Process				
1. Are reports on the work of external audit and other inspection	✓			External Audit's Annual Audit Letter 2014/15 presented to Audit Committee in December 2015 (minute ref: A27/December/2015).

agencies presented to the committee?				External Audit's reviews of Grant Certification work reported to the Audit Committee in December 2015 (minute ref: A26/December/2015). Ofsted inspection of Children's Services and Darlington Safeguarding Children Board 2015 reported to the Audit Committee in December 2015 (minute ref: A23/December/2015)
2. Does the committee input into the external audit programme?	✓			External Audit Plan 2014/15 considered by the Audit Committee in March 2015 (minute ref: A40/March/2015).
3. Does the committee ensure that officers are acting on and monitoring action taken to implement recommendations?	✓			Progress on implementing recommendations reported quarterly to the Committee.
4. Does the committee take a role in overseeing:				All the roles below are provided for in the Committee's Terms of Reference.
Risk management strategies?	✓			See Committee agendas/reports.
Internal control statements?	✓			See Committee agendas/reports.
Anti-fraud arrangements?	✓			See Committee agendas/reports.
Whistle blowing strategies?	✓			See Committee agendas/reports.
Membership				
1. Has the membership of the committee been formally agreed and a quorum set?	✓			Approved at Council March 2006, two Labour group members, one Conservative group member and one officer from another LA as a co-opted non-voting member (minute ref: 100/March/2006).
2. Is the chair free of	✓			The chair is restricted from being a member of Cabinet (minute ref: 100/March/2006).

executive or scrutiny functions?				
3. Are members sufficiently independent of the other key committees of the councils?	✓			Membership of the Committee restricted to one Cabinet and one Scrutiny member and that the Chair is not a member of Cabinet (minute ref: 100/March/2006). In addition the co-opted member from an external Local Authority further bolsters the independent function.
4. Have all members' skills and experience been assessed and training given for identified gaps?	✓			Initial training on role and responsibilities undertaken by Richard King, Chair of CIPFA Audit Panel, in Summer 2006. Specific training on the Council's internal control framework, AGS process, approach and methodology developed by Internal Audit, production of accounts and IFRS, delivered by Audit Services, Financial Services and External Audit. Further training will be delivered as appropriate.
5. Can the committee access other committees as necessary?	✓			This is provided for within the report to Council 23 March 2006, paragraph 10.
Meetings				
1. Does the committee meet regularly?	✓			Four regular meetings each year plus one special meeting to consider the Annual Treasury Management Strategy report.
2. Are separate, private meetings held with the external auditor and internal auditor?	✓			As required.
3. Are meetings free and open without political influences being displayed?	✓			Yes
4. Are decisions reached promptly?	✓			See minutes of meetings.
5. Are agenda papers circulated in advance of meetings to allow adequate preparations by	✓			Circulation of papers adheres to the timescales laid down by Democratic Services.

members?				
6. Does the committee have the benefit of attendance of appropriate officers at its meetings?	✓			Council officers and representatives from External Audit and other bodies attend the Committee as relevant to the agenda.
Training				
1. Is induction training provided to members?	✓			Training has been provided in respect of the role of the audit service and in respect of Risk Management. Overviews have also been given on the Financial and Accounting practices of the Council and External Audit have provided an overview of their role and responsibilities.
2. Is more advanced training available as required?	✓			Advanced training is available if required. For example training provided on treasury management and IFRS to enable the Committee to carry out its responsibilities effectively.
Administration				
1. Does the authority's s151 officer attend all meetings?	✓			Attended by S151 officer or his representative.
2. Are the key officers available to support the committee?	✓			See 'Meetings' point 6 above.