

Audit and Risk Management Committee - Terms of Reference / Ngā Ārahina Mahinga

Chair	Bruce Robertson (Independent)
Deputy Chair	Cllr McLellan
Membership	Cllr Fields Cllr MacDonald Cllr Scandrett External Members Mrs Hilary Walton Mr Michael Wilkes
Quorum	Half of the members if the number of members (including vacancies) is even, or a majority of members if the number of members (including vacancies) is odd.
Meeting Cycle	Quarterly and as required
Reports To	Council

Purpose

To assist the Council to discharge its responsibility to exercise due care, diligence and skill in relation to the oversight of:

- the robustness of the internal control framework;
- the integrity and appropriateness of external reporting, and accountability arrangements within the organisation for these functions;
- the robustness of risk management systems, process and practices;
- internal and external audit;
- accounting policy and practice;
- compliance with applicable laws, regulations, standards and best practice guidelines for public entities; and
- the establishment and maintenance of controls to safeguard the Council's financial and non-financial assets.

The foundations on which this Committee operates, and as reflected in this Terms of Reference, includes: independence; clarity of purpose; competence; open and effective relationships and no surprises approach.

Procedure

- In order to give effect to its advice the Committee should make recommendations to the Council and to Management.
- The Committee should meet the internal and the external auditors without Management present as a standing agenda item at each meeting where external reporting is approved, and at other meetings if requested by any of the parties.
- The external auditors, the internal audit manager and the co-sourced internal audit firm should meet outside of formal meetings as appropriate with the Committee Chair.

- The Committee Chair will meet with relevant members of Management before each Committee meeting and at other times as required.

Responsibilities

Internal Control Framework

- Consider the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls and the internal control framework including overseeing privacy and cyber security.
- Enquire as to the steps management has taken to embed a culture that is committed to probity and ethical behaviour.
- Review the processes or systems in place to capture and effectively investigate fraud or material litigation should it be required.
- Seek confirmation annually and as necessary from internal and external auditors, attending Councillors, and management, regarding the completeness, quality and appropriateness of financial and operational information that is provided to the Council.

Risk Management

- Review and consider Management's risk management framework in line with Council's risk appetite, which includes policies and procedures to effectively identify, treat and monitor significant risks, and regular reporting to the Council.
- Assist the Council to determine its appetite for risk.
- Review the principal risks that are determined by Council and Management, and consider whether appropriate action is being taken by management to treat Council's significant risks. Assess the effectiveness of, and monitor compliance with, the risk management framework.
- Consider emerging significant risks and report these to Council where appropriate.

Internal Audit

- Review and approve the annual internal audit plan, such plan to be based on the Council's risk framework. Monitor performance against the plan at each regular quarterly meeting.
- Monitor all internal audit reports and the adequacy of management's response to internal audit recommendations.
- Review six monthly fraud reporting and confirm fraud issues are disclosed to the external auditor.
- Provide a functional reporting line for internal audit and ensure objectivity of internal audit.
- Oversee and monitor the performance and independence of internal auditors, both internal and co-sourced. Review the range of services provided by the co-sourced partner and make recommendations to Council regarding the conduct of the internal audit function.
- Monitor compliance with the delegations policy.

External Reporting and Accountability

- Consider the appropriateness of the Council's existing accounting policies and practices and approve any changes as appropriate.
- Contribute to improve the quality, credibility and objectivity of the accounting processes, including financial reporting.
- Consider and review the draft annual financial statements and any other financial reports that are to be publicly released, make recommendations to Management.
- Consider the underlying quality of the external financial reporting, changes in accounting policy and practice, any significant accounting estimates and judgements, accounting implications of new and significant transactions, management practices and any significant disagreements between Management and the external auditors, the propriety of any related party transactions and compliance with applicable New Zealand and international accounting standards and legislative requirements.
- Consider whether the external reporting is consistent with Committee members' information and knowledge and whether it is adequate for stakeholder needs.
- Recommend to Council the adoption of the Financial Statements and Reports and the Statement of Service Performance and the signing of the Letter of Representation to the Auditors by the Mayor and the Chief Executive.
- Enquire of external auditors for any information that affects the quality and clarity of the Council's financial statements, and assess whether appropriate action has been taken by management.
- Request visibility of appropriate management signoff on the financial reporting and on the adequacy of the systems of internal control; including certification from the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer and the General Manager Corporate Services that risk management and internal control systems are operating effectively;
- Consider and review the Long Term and Annual Plans before adoption by the Council. Apply similar levels of enquiry, consideration, review and management sign off as are required above for external financial reporting.
- Review and consider the Summary Financial Statements for consistency with the Annual Report.

External Audit

- Annually review the independence and confirm the terms of the audit engagement with the external auditor appointed by the Office of the Auditor General. Including the adequacy of the nature and scope of the audit, and the timetable and fees.
- Review all external audit reporting, discuss with the auditors and review action to be taken by management on significant issues and recommendations and report to Council as appropriate.
- The external audit reporting should describe: Council's internal control procedures relating to external financial reporting, findings from the most recent external audit and any steps taken to deal with such findings, all relationships between the Council and the external auditor, Critical accounting policies used by Council, alternative treatments of financial information within Generally Accepted Accounting Practice that have been discussed with Management, the ramifications of these treatments and the treatment preferred by the external auditor.

- Ensure that the lead audit engagement and concurring audit directors are rotated in accordance with best practice and NZ Auditing Standards.

Compliance with Legislation, Standards and Best Practice Guidelines

- Review the effectiveness of the system for monitoring the Council's compliance with laws (including governance legislation, regulations and associated government policies), with Council's own standards, and Best Practice Guidelines.

Appointment of Independent Members

- Identify skills required for Independent Members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Appointment panels will include the Mayor or Deputy Mayor, Chair of Finance & Performance Committee and Chair of Audit & Risk Management Committee. Council approval is required for all Independent Member appointments.
- The term of the Independent members should be for three years. (It is recommended that the term for independent members begins on 1 April following the Triennial elections and ends 31 March three years later. Note the term being from April to March provides continuity for the committee over the initial months of a new Council.)
- Independent members are eligible for re-appointment to a maximum of two terms. By exception the Council may approve a third term to ensure continuity of knowledge.

Long Term Plan Activities

- Consider and review the Long Term and Annual Plans before adoption by the Council. Apply similar levels of enquiry, consideration, review and management sign off as are required above for external financial reporting.