

Appendix A: Current Terms of Reference for Harlow Audit and Standards Committee

The Audit and Standards Committee was established at the Annual Council meeting on 24 May 2012. Its role is two-fold:

1. Audit - The Committee oversees the Council's internal audit and risk functions; receives and approves external audit reports; scrutinises the Annual Statement of Accounts; makes reports and recommendations to the Cabinet, Committees and the Council as a whole on the adequacy of its corporate governance and risk management arrangements and the associated control environment.
2. Standards - The Committee deals with a range of matters including issues concerning Councillors' conduct, provides advice and guidance to the Council, the Cabinet and individual Councillors and advises on the application and review of the Constitution.

The Terms of Reference of the Audit and Standards Committee are as follows:

Audit

1. To consider the Audit Manager's annual report and opinion, the summary of Internal Audit activity and the level of assurance it can give over the Council's corporate governance arrangements.
2. To consider summaries of Internal Audit reports.
3. To consider reports from Internal Audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within reasonable timescales.
4. To consider reports dealing with the management and performance of the providers of Internal Audit services.
5. To consider the external auditor's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter and other reports.
6. To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
7. To liaise over the appointment of the Council's external auditor.
8. To commission work from Internal Audit and the external auditor.

Regulatory framework

9. To review any issue referred to it by the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, Statutory Officer or any Council body.

10. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance in the Council.

11. To monitor Council policies on whistle blowing, for contraventions of financial and other procedures or fraud-related situations; Anti-fraud and Corruption Strategy and complaints.

12. To monitor the production of the Annual Governance Statement and recommend its adoption to the Cabinet.

13. To consider the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and recommend necessary actions to ensure compliance with best practice.

14. To consider the Council's compliance with its own and other published standards and controls.

Accounts

15. To review the annual Statement of Accounts and 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 Cabinet and/or the Full Council.

16. To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from their audit of the accounts.

Standards

17. Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted persons of Committees.

18. Assisting Councillors and co-opted persons of Committees to observe the Code of Conduct.

19. Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Code of Conduct.

20. Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct.

21. Advising and/or censuring and/or imposing a sanction on a Councillor or co-opted person of a Committee (or former Councillor or co-opted person) of the Council.

22. Having oversight of all aspects of Councillor development.

23. Receiving annual reports in a monitoring and guidance role on whistle blowing, bullying and harassment.

24. Being fully involved in any ethical review of the Council or its activities.

Meetings are open to members of the public, except for when confidential information is being considered.

Members of the public may ask questions at meetings of the Audit and Standards Committee.