

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
Corporate Framework				
<p>Governance & Probity</p> <p>The corporate priorities are underpinned by the following principles: being the community leader, sound resource, management and equalities and fairness</p>	<p>The Council's governance framework underpins everything it does; therefore, robust arrangements are key in managing this risk.</p>	<p>The theme here is to review effectiveness of governance and oversight arrangements. Throughout the 2023/24 Plan reference is made to the Town Centre projects – this will include a review of the governance arrangements in place to oversee delivery of these</p>	<p>Governance (town Centre projects): Audit to be completed as part of the 2024/25 Plan</p> <p>Internal Audit (IA) facilitated the annual review of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. Only minor changes were required to ensure it was aligned with the Council's Corporate Strategy and references to Covid-19 removed.</p> <p>Internal Audit was an active member of the officer Corporate Governance Group, which met monthly.</p>	<p>Governance (town Centre projects) – forms part of the 2024/25 Plan</p>
<p>Fraud</p> <p>Proactive fraud work</p>	<p>CR01 (Financial resilience) - any loss through fraud is a drain on resources which, in turn, reduces the amounts available for service delivery.</p>	<p>Member of the Corporate Fraud Group. Oversee the delivery of the Council's anti-fraud and corruption action plan.</p> <p>Potential for fraud considered in all audits. Co-ordinate National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching process.</p>	<p>Internal Audit (IA) is an active member of the officer Corporate Fraud Group, which meets quarterly. This group oversees the Council's anti-fraud action plan that co-ordinates the Council's approach and activities that complements the Council's anti-fraud and corruption strategy. The group also monitors referrals made via the online fraud reporting form.</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
Assurance Framework including Risk Management and support to Audit Committee	Risk in not achieving corporate objectives	Co-ordination of year-end assurance reporting, including the Annual Governance Statement. Member of the Corporate Governance Group. Assistance provided to Head of Finance and the Insurance and Risk Manager in enhancing and embedding the Council's risk management framework. Support and training to the Audit Committee.	<p>Internal Audit drove the annual review each service undertakes regarding the effectiveness of its governance, risk management and internal control arrangements. Findings and key themes/common issues were reported to the Corporate Governance Group and fed into the Annual Governance Statement process.</p> <p>Internal Audit continues to provide advice and good practice as the Council continues to develop its risk management framework.</p> <p>IA has provided training to the Audit Committee on their role, the role Internal Audit and assurance frameworks, and facilitated the Committee's effectiveness review</p>	Completed for 2023/24

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
<p>Information Management and Governance</p> <p>Data protection and security. Data sets, owners and protocols. Governance and data sharing. Training and awareness</p>	<p>Breach of data protection and other legislation related risks which could lead to significant fines and reputational damage.</p>	<p>Continue to assist the Council's Data Protection Officer (DPO) and officer Information Governance Group by providing assurance in targeted areas.</p>	<p>Internal Audit supports the Data Protection Officer and the officer Information Governance Group with information governance matters, including ensuring compliance around Registers of Processing Activities, Freedom of Information and Subject Access requests.</p> <p>Telephone recording – Internal Audit continued to look into the justification for recording telephone calls and the legitimate reasons for this to ensure the Council remains compliant with Data Protection legislation. The results of this work was reported to both the officer Information Governance Group and the Corporate Governance Group</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>
<p>Performance Management</p> <p>Data integrity and quality (collection, collation, analysis and validation). Use of performance targets</p>	<p>Risk of non-achievement of corporate priorities and lack of transparency.</p>	<p>Internal Audit work will take place but it is not formally defined</p>	<p>Performance indicators were examined and commented on for a number of audits including payroll and Council Tax and Business Rates.</p> <p>Internal Audit also contributed to the development of the new Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
Value for Money (VfM) - Guiding principle of the Council	<p>VfM helps the Council manage its corporate risk</p> <p>CR01 financial resilience and the efficient Council strategic theme in the Corporate Strategy</p>	<p>Value for money and use of benchmarking is considered in all audits.</p> <p>Also, working in conjunction with policy and performance, accountancy and risk services Internal Audit continues to help the Council develop its approach to service and business planning ensuring this is integrated with budget setting and risk management processes</p>	<p>Areas for improvement in terms of the 3Es (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economy) identified in a number of audits including payroll, cyber security and budgetary control.</p> <p>Internal Audit regularly reviews Purchasing Card usage reports.</p> <p>IA continued to provide advice and guidance, through the Corporate Governance Group on the Council's work around service/business planning and risk management.</p>	Completed for 2023/24
Joint Working, Shared Services, Outsourcing, subsidiary companies and significant Partnerships	CR06 - Lack of resources and capacity, Council and key partners.	<p>The theme here is to ensure joint arrangements are working in the best interests for the Council with appropriate governance and monitoring arrangements in place. Focus each year will be on HTS through the operational audits detailed throughout the plan being the Council's most significant partnership.</p>	See Annual Service Charge later on under Housing and Property, and tree strategy follow up under Environment	Completed for 2023/24

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
<p>Projects</p> <p>Business case, project methodology, governance arrangements, contract management and viability</p>	<p>Poor project management increases the risk of projects not being delivered on time, to budget or does not meet the needs of the Council</p>	<p>Time is set aside each year to examine a sample of projects. In 2023/24 IA will look at the governance arrangements and any assurances required by central government as part of their funding requirements.</p> <p>In addition, Internal Audit continues to assist the Council in developing and embedding its project and programme governance framework.</p>	<p>Internal Audit was part of the officer working group looking to develop a consistent project management framework for the Council, sharing good practice seen elsewhere.</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>
<p>Contingency</p>	<p>Annual provision for responsive work, special investigations or key/emerging risk areas</p>	<p>Will also take into account themes/issues coming out of the Annual Governance Statement and completion of audits from the 2022/23 audit plan</p>	<p>IA undertook an investigation into an anonymous external whistleblowing referral. This involved IA investigating the use of a local contractor as they were allegedly overcharging the Council for their work. Through analysis of invoices paid, discussions with relevant officers and a review of costs paid by another council in the Internal Audit shared service for similar services the allegation could not be substantiated.</p> <p>IA provided substantial support as part of a whistleblowing investigation regarding a Council employee.</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
Themed/cross cutting audits				
Income Streams Sound resource management is one of the corporate plan principles	To ensure financial resilience the Council needs to protect and maximise its income streams (CR01)	The 2023/24 Harvey Centre audit will ensure the Council is getting an adequate return on their recent investment	Harvey Centre: Internal Audit has been kept abreast of the Council's investment; no significant issues have been brought to their attention. A full audit will take place as part of the 2024/25 Plan	Harvey Centre – forms part of the 2024/25 Plan
Procurement Themed audits could include-compliance, VfM, fraud, goods and services. End to end processes (need, selection, appointment, contract management & exit strategies)	Risks include non-compliance with legislation, fraud and not achieving value for money, poor service delivery	Not a specific audit in itself, instead in 2023/24 and Internal Audit will ensure as part of the Town Centre projects audits officers are adhering to the Council's procurement rules and strategy with adequate contract management and monitoring arrangements	No formal work undertaken. The Corporate Governance Group, of which Internal Audit was a member, received regular updates on procurement activity across the Council and ensuring the Council is prepared for the new Procurement Act.	Completed for 2023/24
Health and Safety (H&S)	Risk of compromising the health and safety of individuals and noncompliance with H&S legislation leading to fines or imprisonment	As well as keeping a watching brief of H&S, Internal Audit will provide assurances on how H&S is managed as part of the Harlow Museum Audit, being a slightly more high-risk area than the Council's offices and not previously audited.	See museum audit detailed later under Community Internal Audit kept abreast of any H&S issues through the review of H&S Group minutes and discussions with the Insurance and Risk Manager.	Completed for 2023/24

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
Business Continuity Planning (BCP) and climate emergency response	CR11 Business resilience	In 2023/24 ensure there is a holistic approach to Emergency Planning across the Council underpinned with robust relationships with those agencies the Council needs to work with	<p>The Audit and Standards Committee approved the deferral of the emergency planning audit as the emergency plan was being updated and an external review to take place, with the need to implement and embed any recommendations coming out of this.</p> <p>Internal Audit retained oversight of business continuity arrangements and climate emergency response through the Corporate Governance Group.</p>	Emergency Planning - deferred to 2025/26
<p>Key Financial Controls (KFC)</p> <p>Four-year rolling programme of full system and key control audits (unless significant change in process/system or poor audit outcome)</p>	CR01 (Financial resilience)	<p>Rolling programme of key financial control (KFC) audits. For 2023/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax and Business Rates (last audit 2016/17) • General Ledger (last audit 2017/18) 	<p>Council Tax and Business Rates: Processes and controls were working as expected. No recommendations were made.</p> <p>Safes: Audit was requested by the Insurance and Risk Manager and confirmed the Council has adequate insurance in place regarding its safes. With robust processes in place for managing its safes.</p> <p>General Ledger: Fieldwork in progress.</p>	<p>Council Tax and Business Rates – substantial assurance</p> <p>Safes – substantial assurance</p> <p>General Ledger – to be reported as part of the 2024/25 Plan</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
<p>IT Audits: IT Governance, IT Regulation, Security/Privacy, Business Systems, DRP/BCP, Network, Emerging Technologies e.g. mobile devices, IT Applications and Projects</p>	<p>Risks around data and asset security and loss of service</p> <p>Opportunity for IT to be an enabler for delivering the Council's priorities. Links to CR11 Business resilience</p>	<p>A specialist IT Auditor will be brought in for more technical audits. Due to the fast pace in IT technology changes and risk IT cyber security will be audited every two years. The software licenses audit will ensure these are being adequately monitored and providing value for money to the Council.</p>	<p>Cyber security: ICT have proactively improved the level of Cyber Security since the last audit in 2021/22 through a number of initiatives. However, there a number of other issues which need resolving to improve the overall control framework including decommissioning unsupported Window servers and e to build-in failover protection for all key firewall appliances.</p> <p>Software licenses: Deferred to 2024/25 to allow completion of the Council's cloud migration project as many applications will be licensed differently.</p>	<p>Cyber security – reasonable assurance</p>
Operational/service level audits				
<p>Housing Operations (People): Housing Needs and Options, Supported Housing, Housing projects, Leah Manning Centre, housing assets and business systems, tenancy conditions, tenant and leaseholder engagement</p>	<p>CR04 - Lack of adequate Council housing</p>	<p>The 2023/24 leaseholder audit builds on the 2022/23 Service Charge Major Works repayment audit</p>	<p>Leaseholders and Section 20: The Audit and Standards Committee approved deferral of this audit due to timing issues.</p> <p>During the year IA met with the Assistant Director Housing Operations (People) to understand and advise on the programme of tenancy audits commenced during the year.</p>	<p>Leaseholders and Section 20 – forms part of the 2024/25 Plan</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
<p>Housing and Property: Housing asset management and facilities, surveying and technical services, estates management, non-housing asset, property and facilities, office facilities, home ownership</p>	<p>CR03 - Lack of suitable housing</p>	<p>The 2023/24 commercial rents audit is a discrete audit regarding Latton Bush to ensure all income due to the Council is being collected, leases and tenancy agreements are up to date and being adhered to</p>	<p>Commercial rents (Latton Bush): Audit deferred to 204/25</p> <p>Annual Service Charge: The 2022/23 external consultant's review of services provided by HTS resulted in an improvement action plan. During 2023/24, Internal Audit met with the Assistant Director Housing and Property to receive quarterly updates as new systems and processes started to be embedded.</p>	<p>Commercial rents (Latton Bush – forms part of the 2024/25 Plan</p>
<p>Environment: Environmental Health, licencing, Street Scene and trees, health and safety, environmental management including carbon management and GIS</p>	<p>CR06 - Lack of Resources and Capacity, Council and key partners</p> <p>CR09 - Provision of repairs, maintenance, landscape and Streetscene service</p>	<p>The 2023/24 tree maintenance strategy audit will follow up the 2020/21 limited assurance parks and landscapes audit to ensure there is a joined up approach both across the Council and with HTS.</p>	<p>Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO): Fieldwork in progress</p> <p>Tree maintenance strategy and action plan follow up: Not a formal audit. Internal Audit continued discussions with the Insurance and Risk Manager, Environment and HTS in respect of tree management.</p>	<p>HMO audit will be reported as part of the 2024/25 Plan</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
<p>Community resilience: Safer Harlow Partnership/ Community Safety, health and wellbeing, youth and citizenship, safeguarding, Pets' Corner, Sam's Place, Harlow Museum, Harlow Playhouse, arts, culture and tourism, economic growth and development (incl visitor economy), community engagement</p>	<p>CR05 - Inability to fulfil Community Wellbeing role</p> <p>CR07 - Ability to support children and family aspirations</p>	<p>The 2022/23 Harlow Museum will be a non-technical audit of the site to ensure adherence to a range of Council policies and procedures including health and safety, security, procurement practices, cash handling, use of volunteers and safeguarding</p>	<p>Harlow Museum: Field commenced during 2024/25, then paused following the resignation of the Museum Manager. The audit will recommence in the summer following the successful appointment of a new one.</p> <p>Martyn's Law: This is draft UK legislation aimed at placing a requirement on publicly accessible venues and locations to consider the threat of terrorism and put in place appropriate mitigation measures. Internal Audit evaluated how prepared each of the four councils in the shared service were with this, and confirmed Harlow is well on its way with its preparations.</p>	<p>Harlow Museum – to be reported as part of the 2024/25 Plan</p>
<p>Regeneration: Regeneration projects, Council housing delivery</p>	<p>CR02 - The Harlow Offer</p> <p>CR04 - Lack of adequate Council housing</p> <p>CR10 - Inability to fulfil Community Leadership role.</p>	<p>The audit of the Town Centre projects in 2023/24 is the same audits as identified in the earlier project management section</p>	<p>Town Centre projects: This audit will take place after the governance audit (detailed at the start) has been completed.</p>	<p>Town Centre projects – forms part of the 2024/25 Plan</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
<p>Planning and Building Control: Planning policy, development management, building control</p>	<p>CR02 - The Harlow Offer</p>	<p>No specific audit for 2023/24, instead Internal Audit will review the departmental risk register to gain assurance these have been adequately articulated and being managed to an acceptable level</p>	<p>Risk review completed.</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>
<p>Corporate Services: Communications and media/website, performance management, project support, complaints/FOIs, Customer Services, print unit, ICT, business continuity</p>	<p>Risk of corporate priorities not being met should these service areas fail to deliver. And fits in with the efficient Council strategic theme in the Corporate Strategy.</p>	<p>Covered in the IT Audits section</p>	<p>See cyber security audit detailed earlier in the plan</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>
<p>Governance, HR and Legal: Corporate and Governance Support, Electoral services, HR, Legal Services, Local Land Charges</p>	<p>Risk of corporate priorities not being met should these service areas fail to deliver. And fits in with the efficient Council strategic theme in the Corporate Strategy.</p>	<p>Internal Audit will continue to monitor progress of the iTrent system implementation as new modules are introduced such as expenses, time sheets, absence monitoring and training records.</p>	<p>IA has continued overseeing the project for ongoing implementation of the new HR and payroll system, facilitating discussions between key departments to ensure there is a holistic approach to the project.</p> <p>Payroll (carried over from 2022/23): There are robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that payroll processes are carried out effectively. System workflows support the processing of starters, leavers and variations; as well as a payroll checklist to ensure all processes have been carried out.</p>	<p>Payroll – substantial assurance</p>

Audit Area and Context	Corporate Risks as at March 2023	Proposed outline/ scope for 2023/24	Year End position	Status / Assurance
<p>Finance: Finance and accountancy, Internal Audit, insurance and risk</p> <p>Revenues and Benefits</p>	<p>CR01 - Financial resilience</p>	<p>The 2023/24 budgetary control audit will ensure there are robust processes to both set the budget and to monitor this closely throughout the year at an operational level</p>	<p>Budgetary control: Good processes are in place for budgetary control. However, these could be improved by making budget holders more accountable for their budgets, provide refresher training, making accountancy more accessible and reviewing the format of monitoring reports.</p>	<p>Budgetary control – reasonable assurance</p>
<p>Follow Up Audits</p> <p>Review of progress against recommendations on the tracker</p>	<p>Tracker process ensures risks identified in audits have been managed to an acceptable level</p>	<p>Includes specific follow up work especially where Limited assurance has previously been given. Includes maintaining the recommendation tracker, which is reported at each Audit and Standards Committee.</p>	<p>Implementation of all recommendations continues to be scrutinised as part of the tracker process.</p> <p>Recommendations made in previous reports are routinely followed up when the audit is next undertaken, for example payroll, general ledger and council tax and business rates</p>	<p>Completed for 2023/24</p>