

WIRRAL COUNCIL

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

28 MARCH 2011

SUBJECT:	SELF ASSESSMENT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	CHIEF INTERNAL AUDITOR
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR SIMON MOUNTNEY
KEY DECISION ?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The meeting of this Committee on 17 January 2011 considered a statement by the Chair regarding the requirement to complete an annual evaluation of the role and effectiveness of the Audit and Risk Management Committee as part of the systems of internal audit.
- 1.2 The CIPFA publication 'A Toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees' recommends the use of a self assessment checklist to achieve this task. The Chair has completed the checklist which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Attached at Appendix 2 is an Action Plan developed following the exercise and identifying two recommendations relating to external audit performance assessment and Member training to improve existing systems in operation. Implementation will be monitored by Internal Audit and an update report on this provided to a future meeting of this Committee.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. That the self assessment checklist be considered and approved.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To comply with best practice identified in the CIPFA publication 'A Toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees'.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued amended regulations in 2006, to the 2003 Accounts and Audit Regulations – 'The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 4.2 One of the amended regulations impacts on the process for preparing the Statement of Internal Control (SIC) which is subsumed within the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and relates specifically to the the systems of internal audit in operation. This is:-

- Regulations require bodies to regularly review their systems of internal audit, and for the findings to be considered by a committee of the body, or by the body as a whole.

4.3 Advice from CIPFA includes the assertion that the “systems of internal audit” can be considered to include the role and effectiveness of the Audit Committee.

4.4 To assist Councils in this evaluation exercise CIPFA has provided a self assessment checklist and recommends that this be completed annually.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 Possible failure of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to comply with best professional practice and thereby not function in an efficient and effective manner.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 No other options considered.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Members of this Committee have been consulted throughout the process to complete the annual assessment and their views are reflected in the document attached at Appendix 1.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising from this report.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising from this report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are none arising from this report.

FNCE/61/11

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Self-Assessment Checklist
Appendix 2 – Self-Assessment Action Plan

REFERENCE MATERIAL

CIPFA Publication 'A Toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees'

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Audit and Risk Management Committee	November 2010
Audit and Risk Management Committee	January 2011

Wirral Council

Audit and Risk Management Committee

Self-Assessment Checklist

ESTABLISHMENT OPERATION AND DUTIES					
Role and Remit					
Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
1	Does the audit committee have written terms of reference?	X			
1	Do the terms of reference cover the core functions of the audit committee as identified in the CIPFA guidance?	X			
1	Are the terms of reference approved by the council and reviewed periodically?	X			
1	Has the audit committee been provided with sufficient membership, authority and resources to perform its role effectively and independently?	X			
1	Can the audit committee access other committees and full council as necessary?	X			
1	Does the authority's statement on internal control include a description of the audit committee's establishment and activities?	X			
2	Does the audit committee periodically assess its own effectiveness?	X			

Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
2	Does the audit committee make a formal annual report on its work and performance during the year to full council?	X			
Membership, induction and training					
1	Has the membership of the audit committee been formally agreed and a quorum set?	X			
1	Is the chair independent of the executive function?	X			
1	Has the audit committee chair either previous knowledge of, or received appropriate training on, financial and risks management, accounting concepts and standards, and the regulatory regime?	X			
1	Are new audit committee members provided with an appropriate induction?	X			
1	Have all members' skills and experiences been assessed and training given for identified gaps?		X		See attached Action Plan
1	Has each member declared his or her business interests?	X			
2	Are members sufficiently independent of the other key committees of the council?	X			
Meetings					
1	Does the audit committee meet regularly?	X			
1	Do the terms of reference set out the frequency of meetings?	X			
1	Are agenda papers circulated in advance of meetings to allow adequate preparation by audit committee members?	X			

Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
Meetings (continued)					
1	Does the audit committee calendar meet the authority's business needs, governance needs and the financial calendar?	X			
1	Are members attending meetings on a regular basis and if not, is appropriate action taken?	X			
1	Are meetings free and open without political influences being displayed?	X			
1	Does the authority's S151 officer or deputy attend all meetings?	X			
1	Does the audit committee have the benefit of attendance of appropriate officers at its meetings?	X			
INTERNAL CONTROL					
1	Does the audit committee consider the findings of the annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control (as required by the Accounts & Audit Regulations) including the review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit?	X			
1	Does the audit committee have responsibility for review and approval of the SIC and does it consider it separately from the accounts?	X			
1	Does the audit committee consider how meaningful the SIC is?	X			
1	Does the audit committee satisfy itself that the system of internal control has operated effectively throughout the reporting period?	X			

Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
Internal Control (Continued)					
1	Has the audit committee considered how it integrates with other committees that may have responsibility for risk management?	X			
1	Has the audit committee (with delegated responsibility) or the full council adopted "Managing the Risk of Fraud – Actions to Counter Fraud and Corruption?"	X			
1	Is the audit committee made aware of the role of risk management in the preparation of the internal audit plan?	X			
2	Does the audit committee review the authority's strategic risk register at least annually?	X			
2	Does the audit committee monitor how the authority assesses its risk?	X			
2	Do the audit committee's terms of reference include oversight of the risk management process?	X			
FINANCIAL REPORTING AND REGULATORY MATTERS					
1	Is the audit committee's role in the consideration and/or approval of the annual accounts clearly defined?	X			
1	Does the audit committee consider specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the suitability of accounting policies and treatments • major judgements made • large write-offs • changes in accounting treatment • the reasonableness of accounting estimates the narrative aspects of reporting?	X			

Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
Financial Reporting and Regulatory Matters (continued)					
1	Is an audit committee meeting scheduled to receive the external auditor's report to those charged with governance including a discussion of proposed adjustments to the accounts and other issues arising from the audit?	X			
1	Does the audit committee review management's letter of representation?	X			
2	Does the audit committee annually review the accounting policies of the authority?	X			
2	Does the audit committee gain an understanding of management's procedures for preparing the authority's annual accounts?	X			
2	Does the audit committee have a mechanism to keep it aware of topical legal and regulatory issues, for example by receiving circulars and through training?	X			
INTERNAL AUDIT					
1	Does the audit committee approve, annually and in details, the internal audit strategic and annual plans including consideration of whether the scope of internal audit work addresses the authority's significant risks?	X			
1	Does internal audit have an appropriate reporting line to the audit committee?	X			

Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
Internal Audit (continued)					
1	Does the audit committee receive periodic reports from the internal audit service including an annual report from the Head of Internal Audit?	X			
1	Are follow-up audits by internal audit monitored by the audit committee and does the committee consider the adequacy of implementation of recommendations?	X			
1	Does the audit committee hold periodic private discussions with the Head of Internal Audit?	X			
1	Is there appropriate cooperation between the internal and external auditors?	X			
1	Does the audit committee review the adequacy of internal audit staffing and other resources?	X			
1	Has the audit committee evaluated whether its internal audit service complies with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom?	X			
2	Are internal audit performance measures monitored by the audit committee?	X			
2	Has the audit committee considered the information it wishes to receive from internal audit?	X			

Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
EXTERNAL AUDIT					
1	Do the external auditors present and discuss their audit plans and strategy with the audit committee (recognising the statutory duties of external audit)?	X			
1	Does the audit committee hold periodic private discussions with the external auditor?	X			
1	Does the audit committee review the external auditor's annual report to those charged with governance?	X			
1	Does the audit committee ensure that officers are monitoring action taken to implement external audit recommendations?	X			
1	Are reports on the work of external audit and other inspection agencies presented to the committee, including the Audit Commission's annual audit and inspection letter?	X			
1	Does the audit committee assess the performance of external audit?		X		See attached Action Plan
1	Does the audit committee consider and approve the external audit fee?	X			
ADMINISTRATION					
Agenda Management					
1	Does the audit committee have a designated secretary from Committee/Member Services?	X			
1	Are agenda papers circulated in advance of meetings to allow adequate preparation by audit committee members?	X			

Priority	Issue	Yes	No	N/a	Comments/action
Agenda Management (continued)					
2	Are outline agendas planned one year ahead to cover issues on cyclical basis?	X			
2	Are inputs for Any Other Business formally requested in advance from committee members, relevant officers, internal and external audit?	X			
Papers					
1	Do reports to the audit committee communicate relevant information at the right frequency, time, and in a format that is effective?	X			
2	Does the audit committee issue guidelines and/or a proforma concerning the format and content of the papers to be presented?	X			
Actions arising					
1	Are minutes prepared and circulated promptly to the appropriate people?	X			
1	Is a report on matters arising made and minuted at the audit committee's next meeting?	X			
1	Do action points indicate who is to perform what any by when?	X			

ACTION PLAN**AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – SELF ASSESSMENT****File Ref: ARM 26/01/11**

Ref	Recommendations	Priority	Officer Responsible	Agreed	Planned Action Date	Client Comments	Date Verified (For Audit use only)
R.1	Ensure that all Members' skills and experiences are periodically assessed and training is provided for any identified gaps.	Medium	Director of Law, HR & Asset Management	Y	31/03/2011 -	Issue currently being addressed by Director of Law, HR and Asset Management	
R.2	The Audit and Risk Management Committee should assess the performance of the external audit providers.	Medium	Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee	Y	31/03/2011	This action is currently being implemented through the presentation of regular progress reports to ARM.	