



JOINT INDEPENDENT AUDIT COMMITTEE

Information Pack

Introduction

The Independent Joint Audit Committee supports the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable to discharge their responsibilities by providing independent assurance on the adequacy of their corporate governance, risk management arrangements and the associated control environments and the integrity of financial statements and reporting.

The main duties of the Independent Joint Audit Committee are to oversee:

- corporate governance, risk management, internal control and the regulatory framework;
- external financial reporting;
- internal audit;
- external audit;
- other assurance functions; and
- counter fraud.

The committee is authorised by the commissioner and the chief constable to:

- investigate any activity within its terms of reference;
- seek any information it requires from any employee;
- obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice;
- secure the attendance of outsiders with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this necessary; and
- undertake training of its new members as required.

Terms of Reference

Purpose

To support the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable to discharge their responsibilities by providing independent assurance on the adequacy of their corporate governance, risk management arrangements and the associated control environments and the integrity of financial statements and reporting.

Membership

- a) The Commissioner will appoint the Committee, after consultation with the Chief Constable.

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- b) The Committee shall consist of no fewer than four members.
- c) A quorum shall be two members.
- d) At least one member shall be a CCAB qualified accountant with recent and relevant financial experience
- e) The Commissioner will appoint the Chair of the Committee, following consultation with the Chief Constable and the members of the Committee.
- f) The Chair shall normally be a CCAB qualified accountant, with recent and relevant financial experience.
- g) Members shall normally be appointed for a period of up to three years, extendable by no more than two additional three year periods, so long as members continue to be independent.
- h) In the absence of the Chair at any meeting of the Committee, the members attending the meeting will elect a Chair for the meeting.

Secretary of the Committee

The Chief Executive of the Commission will nominate an officer from the Commissioner's Office to act as Secretary to the Committee. Currently this is the Strategic Resources Manager.

Frequency of Meetings

- a) Meetings shall be held at least four times each year, timed to align with the financial reporting cycle.
- b) Extra-ordinary meetings can be held for specific purposes at the discretion of the Chair.
- c) External or internal auditors may request the Chair to call a meeting if they consider one is necessary.

Protocols for Meetings

- a) Agenda and supporting papers will be circulated to members at least five working days prior to any meeting.
- b) Minutes shall be prepared and distributed to members of the Committee, regular attendees and the Commissioner and Chief Constable in draft, unapproved format within 10 working days of the meeting.
- c) All papers/minutes should be read prior to the meeting and the meeting will be conducted on this basis with papers being introduced concisely
- d) It is expected that all actions are reviewed prior to the meeting and updates provided even if individuals cannot attend the meeting.
- e) Standing Orders of the Commission and the Force as appropriate apply to formally established committees. As such, members of this committee may requisition a meeting in writing in line with Standing Orders.
- f) The Chair of the Committee shall draw to the attention of the Commissioner and Chief Constable any issues that require disclosure or require executive action

Questions and Addresses by the Public

- i. General

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Members of the public, with the permission of the Chair of the Committee, may ask questions of members of the Committee, or may address the Committee, on an item on the public part of the agenda.

ii. Order of questions and address

- (a) Questions will be asked and addresses given in the order notice of them was received, except that the Chair of the Committee may group together similar questions or addresses.
- (b) A list of questions and addresses of which notice has been given shall be circulated to members of the Committee at or before the meeting.

iii. Notice of questions and addresses

A question may only be asked or an address given if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Monitoring Officer no later than noon two working days before the meeting. Each notice of a question must give the name and address of the questioner and must name the person to whom it is to be put, and the nature of the question to be asked. Each notice of an address must give the name and address of the persons who will address the meeting and the purpose of the address.

iv. Scope of questions and addresses

The Chair of the Committee may reject a question or address if it:

- Is not about a matter for which the Committee has a responsibility or which affects Northamptonshire;
- is defamatory, frivolous, offensive or vexatious;
- is substantially the same as a question which has been put or an address made by some other person at the same meeting of the Committee or at another meeting of the Committee in the past six months; or
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

v. Asking the question or making the address at the meeting

The Chair of the Committee will invite the questioner to put the question to the person named in the notice. Alternatively, the Chair of the Committee will invite an address to the Committee for a period not exceeding three minutes. Every question must be put and answered without discussion but the person to whom the question has been put may decline to answer it or deal with it by a written answer. Every address must be made without discussion.

Attendance at Meetings

- a) The Committee may invite any person to attend its meetings.
- b) The Commissioner and Chief Constable shall be represented at each meeting of the Committee.
- c) The Commissioner's representation will normally comprise the Assistant Commissioners – Justice and Resources [respectively Monitoring Officer and statutory Chief Financial Officer] and/or their respective deputies;

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- d) The Chief Constable shall normally be represented by the Deputy Chief Constable and the Chief Financial Officer of the Force, and / or deputy Chief Financial Officer.
- e) Internal and External auditors will normally attend each meeting of the Committee.
- f) There should be at least one meeting each year where the Committee meets the external and internal auditors without the Commissioner's and Chief Constable's officers being present. This need not be the same meeting; and such meetings would usually take place after the normal Committee meeting has concluded.

Authority

- a) The Committee is authorised by the Commissioner and the Chief Constable to:
 - investigate any activity within its terms of reference;
 - seek any information it requires from any employee;
 - obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice;
 - secure the attendance of outsiders with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this necessary;
 - undertake training of its new members as required.
- b) All employees are directed to co-operate with any request made by the Committee.
- c) The Committee may only make decisions within the remit set out in these Terms of Reference. The Committee has no authority to reverse decisions made by the Commissioner or Chief Constable. It has no authority to incur expenditure.

Duties

The duties of the Committee shall be:

A - Corporate Governance, Risk Management, Internal Control and the Regulatory Framework

To support the PCC, Chief Constable and statutory officers in ensuring effective governance arrangements are in place and are functioning efficiently and effectively, across the whole of the Commission's and Force's activities, making any recommendations for improvement, to support the achievement of the organisations' objectives.

Specific annual activities of the Committee will include:

- a) Review of corporate governance arrangements against the 'Good Governance framework';
- b) Consideration of the framework of assurances to assess if it adequately reflects the Commission's and Force's priorities and risks;
- c) Consideration of the processes for assurances that support the Annual Governance Statement;
- d) Consideration of VFM arrangements and review of assurances;

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- e) To review any issue referred to it by the statutory officers of the Commission and the Chief Constable and to make recommendations as appropriate;
- f) To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and to make recommendations as appropriate;
- g) To be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and policies
- h) Consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.

B - External Financial Reporting

To scrutinise the draft statements of accounts and annual governance statements prior to approval by the Commissioner and Chief Constable and publication. The Committee will challenge where necessary the actions and judgements of management, and make any recommendations as appropriate, to ensure the integrity of the statements.

Particular attention should be paid to the following:

- Critical accounting policies and practices, and any changes in them;
- Decisions requiring a significant element of judgement;
- The extent to which the financial statements are affected by unusual transactions in the year and how they are disclosed;
- The clarity of disclosures;
- Significant adjustments resulting from the audit;
- Compliance with accounting standards;
- Compliance with other legal requirements

C - Internal Audit

The Committee shall monitor and review the internal audit function to ensure that it meets mandatory Internal Audit Standards and Public Sector Internal Standards and provides appropriate independent assurance to the Audit Committee, Chief Executive of the Commission, the Commissioner and Chief Constable.

This will be achieved by:

- a) Overseeing the appointment of the internal auditors and making recommendations to the Commissioner and Chief Constable, who will make the respective appointments;
- b) Consideration of the internal audit strategy and annual plan, and making recommendations as appropriate;
- c) Consideration of the head of internal audit's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over corporate governance arrangements, and make recommendations as appropriate;
- d) Consideration of summaries of internal audit reports, and Management's responses, and make recommendations as appropriate;

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- e) Consideration of the management and performance of internal audit, and its cost, capacity and capability, in the context of the overall governance and risk management arrangements, and to make recommendations as appropriate;
- f) Consideration of a report from internal audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale and make recommendations as appropriate;
- g) Consideration of the effectiveness of the co-ordination between Internal and External Audit, to optimise the use of audit resources;
- h) Consideration of any issues of resignation or dismissal from the Internal Audit function.

D - External Audit

The Committee shall review and monitor External Audit's independence and objectivity and the effectiveness of the audit process.

This will be achieved by consideration of:

- a) the Commission's and Force's relationships with the external auditor;
- b) the appointment, re-appointment and removal of the external auditor;
- c) the qualifications, expertise and resources, effectiveness and independence of the external auditor annually;
- d) the external auditor's annual plan, annual audit letter and relevant specific reports as agreed with the external auditor, and make recommendations as appropriate;
- e) the draft Management Representation letters before authorisation by the Commissioner and Chief Constable, giving particular consideration to non-standard issues;
- f) the effectiveness of the audit process;
- g) the effectiveness of relationships between internal and external audit other inspection agencies or relevant bodies;
- h) the Commissioner's and Chief Constable's policies on the engagement of the External Auditors to supply non-audit services, taking into account relevant ethical guidance and the Audit Commission's requirements.

E - Other Assurance Functions

The Committee shall review the findings of other significant assurance functions, both internal and external to the organisation.

F - Counter Fraud

The Committee shall satisfy itself:

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- a) that the Commission and Force have adequate arrangements in place for detecting fraud and preventing bribery and corruption;
- b) that effective complaints and whistle blowing arrangements exist and proportionate and independent investigation arrangements are in place.

Reporting

- a) The Chairman shall be entitled to meet with the Commissioner and Chief Constable prior to their approving the accounts each year;
- b) The Committee shall annually review its Terms of Reference and its own effectiveness and recommend any necessary changes to the Commissioner and Chief Constable;
- c) The Committee shall prepare a report on its role and responsibilities and the actions it has taken to discharge those responsibilities for inclusion in the annual accounts;
- d) Such a report shall specifically include:
 - A summary of the role of the Committee
 - The names and qualifications of all members of the Committee during the period
 - The number of Committee meetings and attendance by each member; and
 - The way the Committee has discharged its responsibilities
 - An assessment of the Committee's performance against its plan and terms of reference;
 - Identification of the key issues considered by the Committee and those highlighted to the Commissioner and Chief Constable
 - An assessment of Internal and external Audit
- e) If the Commissioner and / or the Chief Constable do not accept the Committee's recommendations regarding the appointment, reappointment or removal of the external auditor the Committee shall include a statement regarding explaining its recommendation and the reasons why the Commissioner / Chief Constable has taken a different stance in its annual report

Standing Agenda Items

The agenda for each meeting of the Committee shall normally include the following:

- Procedural items:
- Apologies for absence
- Declaration of Interests
- Minutes of the last meeting
- Matters Arising Action Log
- Date, time and venue of next meeting
- Business items

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- Progress Reports
 - Internal Audit
 - External Audit
- Update on implementation of Audit Recommendations
- Items for escalation to the Commissioner and / or Chief Constable
- Agenda Plan for the next four meetings

Accountability

The Committee is accountable to the Commissioner and Chief Constable.

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