



CITY OF ELY COUNCIL INTERNAL AUDIT TERMS OF REFERENCE AND INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. The council as a whole is responsible in law for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that the council has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of their functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk. - *Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide 2023*

To safeguard the City of Ely Council finances, there are 3 systems of control:

- **Internal control**
- **Internal Audit**

Internal audit is a key component of the system of internal control. Its purpose is to review and report to the Council, whether the systems of financial and other internal controls over the activities and operating procedures of the Council are effective. Internal audit is not a detailed inspection of all records and transactions of the Council in order to detect error or fraud. However, it can assist the Council in its responsibility for the prevention and detection of such occurrences.

- **External Audit**

The procedures for internal control are detailed within the Council's adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. They are also identified within the Council's adopted Risk Management Policy Statement and Procedures.

The Internal Auditor must be sufficiently independent from the management of financial controls and procedures of the Council, which are subject to review. They must also be competent to carry out the role in a way that meets the business needs of the Council. They must understand the accounting requirements within the legal framework and power of local councils. Any change in personal circumstances that may cause a question over the independence requirement must be reported to the Council.

The Internal Auditor will carry out under the direction and management of the Council (or as may be delegated to a Committee or to the Clerk) the following tasks: ,

- To review twice during the year the accounting and internal control systems, noting that their establishment and alteration is the responsibility of the Council. One interim review, midway through the year and one after the year end accounts have been completed.
- As part of the overall check on the authority's governance arrangements, review all full authority and committee minutes (and supporting papers) to gain an overview of the authority's financial and governance controls, monitoring that no actions of a potentially unlawful nature are being considered or any such decisions have been taken and that

approval of all minutes is in accordance with the legislation.

- To report in writing to Council twice each year on the results of such tests of the system that are carried out;
- To report to Council in the format required in the Annual Return as published by the Audit Commission each year;

The Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA) is responsible for appointing external auditors for opted-in smaller authorities.

These tasks will be carried out to ensure the council can satisfy that it has undertaken a review of the effectiveness of their overall internal audit arrangement, using the guidance taken from *Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide 2023*

It is a matter for the authority to determine how best to meet the statutory requirement for internal audit, having regard to its size, scope of services and complexity of financial arrangements.

Authorities should, at least annually, carry out a review of the effectiveness of their overall internal audit arrangements. It should be designed to provide sufficient assurance for the authority that standards are being met and that the work of internal audit is effective. Authorities should judge the extent and scope of the review by reference to their own individual circumstances.

As with any review, it should be evidence based. Wherever possible this should be gathered throughout the year. Sources may include:

- *previous review and action plan*
- *annual report by internal audit*
- *other reports from internal audit, including internal audit plan, monitoring reports, and the results of any investigations*
- *any reports by the external auditor*
- *the results of any other external reviews of internal control.*

As part of the review the internal auditor should produce a report to the authority highlighting areas for improvement or development. An action plan should be produced setting out the areas of improvement required, any proposed remedial actions, the members or officers responsible for delivering improvement, and the deadlines for completion of the actions.

Internal auditors should be aware of the National Audit Office guidance to external auditors regarding the additional work expected in respect of authorities with income or expenditure in excess of £2,000,000

The following schedule outlines an approach to the testing of key internal controls and provide assurance that the minimum level of coverage has been met.

AGAR certificate reference	Internal Audit action for expected controls
<p>A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the year.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure the correct roll forward of the prior year cashbook balances to the new financial year. ● Check a sample of financial transactions in cashbooks to bank statements, etc: the sample size dependent on the size of the authority and nature of accounting records maintained. ● Ensure that bank reconciliations are prepared routinely, are subject to independent scrutiny and sign-off by members. ● Verify the accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation detail and ensure accurate disclosure of the combined cash and bank balances in the AGAR, section 2, line 8. ● Where the authority has bank balances in excess of £100,000 it has an appropriate investment strategy.
<p>B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review the procedures in place for acquisition of formal tenders and quotes, ensuring they are in line with the SOs and FRs which should be based on the latest version. ● Ensure that consistent values are in place for the acquisition of formal tenders between SOs and FRs (frequently different limits are recorded in the two documents). ● Review the procedures for receipt of invoices, agreement of invoice detail and confirmation of goods /services delivery and approval for payment: ideally, a suitably designed certification stamp should be in place providing for evidencing of these checks and payment authorisation. ● Check that there is effective segregation between the writing of cheques or the setting up of online payments, and physical release of payments. ● Check that VAT reclaims are prepared and submitted in a timely manner in line with the underlying records and in accordance with current HMRC requirements. ● Where debit / credit cards are in use, establish the total monthly and individual transaction limits and ensure appropriate controls over physical security and usage of the cards are in place.
<p>C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that authorities have prepared, and formally adopted, at least once annually, an appropriate and comprehensive register of assessed risks, both regular and ad hoc. ● Ensure that appropriate levels of insurance cover are in place for land, buildings, public, employers' and hirers' (where applicable) liability, fidelity / employees (including councillors) liability, business interruption and cyber security. ● Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for monitoring play areas, open spaces and sports pitches: such reviews should be undertaken by appropriately qualified external inspectors or, if by officers or members, that they have received the appropriate training and accreditation. ● Review the effectiveness of internal control carried out by the authority.

<p>D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that the full Authority, not a committee, has considered, approved and adopted the annual precept for the coming year in accordance with the required parent Authority timetable. ● Ensure that current year budget reports are prepared and submitted to Authority / Committees periodically during the year with appropriate commentary on any significant variances. ● Review the budget performance either during the year or at the financial year-end seeking explanations for any significant or unanticipated variances. ● Ensure that the Authority has considered the establishment of specific earmarked reserves and, ideally, reviews them annually as part of the budget assessment process. ● Ensure that the precept received in the accounts matches the prior year submission form to the relevant authority and the public record of precepted amounts.
<p>E. Expected income was fully received based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT appropriately accounted for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review “Aged debtor” listings to ensure appropriate follow up action is in place. ● Allotments: ensure that appropriate signed tenancy agreements exist, that an appropriate register of tenants is maintained identifying, that debtors are monitored. ● Burials: ensure that a formal burial register is maintained that it is up-to-date and that a sample of interments and memorials are appropriately evidenced, that fees have been charged at the correct approved rate and been recovered within a reasonable time: (Authorities should also acquire and retain copies of Burial / Cremation certificates). ● Hall hire: ensure that an effective diary system for bookings is in place identifying the hirer, hire times and ideally cross-referenced to invoices raised. ● Leases: ensure that leases are reviewed in a timely manner in accordance with the terms of the lease and rents similarly reviewed appropriately at the due time. ● Other variable income streams: ensure that appropriate control procedures and documentation are in existence to provide a clear audit trail through to invoicing and recovery of all such income. ● Where amounts are receivable on set dates during the year, ensure that an appropriate control record is maintained duly identifying the date(s) on which income is due and actually received / banked
<p>F. Petty Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A number of authorities are now running down and closing their petty cash accounts and using debit / credit cards for ad hoc purchases. Consequently, a “Not covered” response is frequently required in this area. ● Review the systems in place for controlling any petty 30 cash and also cash floats (used for bar, catering, etc). ● Check a sample of transactions during the financial year to ensure appropriate supporting documentation is held. ● Review the existence of evidenced periodic independent verification of the petty cash and any other cash floats held ● Ensure that VAT is identified wherever incurred and appropriate. ● Physically check the petty cash and other cash floats held ● Where bar or catering facilities are in place, ensure that appropriate cashing-up procedures are in place reconciling the physical cash takings to the till “Z” total readings.

<p>G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that, for all staff, a formal employment contract is in place together with a confirmatory letter setting out any changes to the contract ● Ensure that appropriate procedures are in place for the payment of members allowances and deduction of any tax liability ● Ensure that, for a sample of staff salaries, gross pay due is calculated in accordance with the approved spinal point on the NJC scale or hourly rate, if off-scale, and also with the contracted hours ● Ensure that appropriate tax codes are being applied to each employee ● Where free or paid for software is used, ensure that it is up to date. ● For the test sample of employees, ensure that tax is calculated appropriately ● Check the correct treatment of Pension contributions ● For NI, ensure that the correct deduction and employer's contributions are applied: NB. The employers allowance is not available to councils but may be used by other authorities ● Ensure that the correct employers' pension percentage contribution is being applied ● Ensure that for the test sample, the correct net pay is paid to the employee with tax, NI and pension contributions correctly paid to the respective agencies.
<p>H. Asset and investment registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained. This section/assurance should be extended to include loans to or by the authority.</p>	<p>Tangible Fixed Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that the Authority is maintaining a formal asset register and updating it routinely to record new assets at historic cost price, net of VAT and removing any disposed of/ no longer serviceable assets. ● Physically verifying the existence and condition of high value, high risk assets may be appropriate. ● Ideally, the register should identify for each asset the purchase cost and, if practicable, the replacement / insured cost, the latter being updated annually and used to assist in forward planning for asset replacement. ● Additions and disposals records should allow tracking from the prior year to the current. ● Ensure that the asset value to be reported in the AGAR at section 2, line 9 equates to the prior year reported value, adjusted for the nominal value of any new acquisitions and / or disposals. ● Compare the asset register with the insurance schedule to ensure that all assets as recorded are appropriately insured or "self-insured" by the Authority. <p>Fixed asset investments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that all long-term investments (i.e., those for more than 12 month terms) are covered by the "<u>Investment Strategy</u>" and reported as Assets in the <u>AGAR at section 2, line 9.</u> <p>Borrowing and Lending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that the authority has sought and obtained appropriate DMO approval for all loans acquired. ● Ensured that the authority has accounted for the loan appropriately (i.e., recorded the full value of the loan. Any arrangement fee should be regarded as an admin expense) in the year of receipt. ● Ensure that the combined principal loan repayment and interest for the year is correctly recorded in the AGAR at section 2 line 5. ● Ensure that the outstanding loan liability as at 31st March

	<p>each year is correctly recorded in the AGAR at section 2, line 10 (value should be verified via the DMO website).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where the Authority has issued loans to local bodies, they should ideally seek signed indemnities from the 32 recipient body, or their members, agreeing to underwrite the loan debt.
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cashbook, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	<p>Whilst IAs are not required to verify the accuracy of detail to be disclosed in the AGAR, this assertion, together with the expectation of most Authorities, effectively requires IAs to ensure that the financial detail reported at section 2 of the AGAR reflects the detail in the accounting records maintained for the financial year. Consequently, IAs should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that, where annual turnover exceeds £200,000, appropriate records are maintained throughout the year on an Income and Expenditure basis to facilitate budget reporting in that vein. ● Ensure that appropriate accounting arrangements are in place to account for debtors and creditors during the year and at the financial year-end.
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the prior year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.	<p>IAs should ensure that, all relevant criteria are met (receipts and payments each totalled less than £25,000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the correct exemption certificate was prepared and minuted in accordance with the statutory submission deadline. ● that it has been published, together with all required information on the Authority's website and noticeboard.
L. The authority publishes information on a free to access website / web page, up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	<p>IAs should review the Authority's website ensuring that all required documentation is published in accordance with the relevant legislation.</p>
M. The authority, during the previous year, correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<p>IAs should acquire / examine a copy of the required "Public Notice" ensuring that it clearly identifies the statutory 30 working day period when the Authority's records are available for public inspection. IAs may also check whether councils have minuted the relevant dates at the same time as approving the AGAR</p>
N. The authority complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.	<p>IAs should ensure that the statutory disclosure / publication requirements in relation to the prior year's AGAR have been met as detailed on the front page of the current year's AGAR.</p>
O. Trust funds (including charitable) - the Council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confirm that all charities of which the council is a Trustee are up to date with CC filing requirements ● that the council is the sole trustee on the Charity Commission register. ● that the council is acting in accordance with the Trust deed ● that the Charity meetings and accounts recorded separately from those of the council. ● review the level and activity of the charity and where a risk

	based approach suggests such, review the Independent Examiners report.
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The internal audit terms of reference and internal audit plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Reviewed and approved 22nd May 2023

Signed

Cllr C Phillips – Chairman of the Council

Please note some of the information contained within this document has been taken from the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners’ Guide 2023