



REPORT TO: MORAY INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD AUDIT, PERFORMANCE AND RISK COMMITTEE ON 30 JANUARY 2020

SUBJECT: PUBLIC SECTOR INTERNAL AUDIT STANDARDS – EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL AUDIT

BY: CHIEF INTERNAL AUDITOR

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Moray Integration Joint Board (MIJB) Audit, Performance and Risk Committee with details of an external quality assessment undertaken on the council's internal audit service.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Audit, Performance and Risk Committee considers and notes the report and the action plan prepared to address the issues raised in the external quality assessment of internal audit.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 at paragraph 7 require that 'a local authority must operate a professional and objective internal auditing service in accordance with recognised standards and practices in relation to internal auditing'.
- 3.2 The recognised standards adopted by all public bodies are the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, (PSIAS) developed by standard setters including the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors. The standards include a requirement for an External Quality Assessment (EQA) of internal audit once every five years, and for the findings to be considered at a meeting of a council committee. The information is also relevant to the internal audit work conducted for the MIJB.
- 3.3 Through the Scottish Local Authorities Chief Internal Auditors' Group which the council participates in, and in line with the Standards, it was agreed that the EQA requirement could be met through a peer review process. This required each Chief Internal Auditor to undertake an assessment at another council and receive an assessment in return. It was agreed by the group that to avoid any potential conflicts of interest reviews would not be carried out at

or by a neighbouring authority. Fife Council was selected to undertake the assessment of Moray Council.

- 3.4 The assessment involved the Audit Manager and an Auditor from Fife and took place over two days in early February 2019. It involved the review of a portfolio of evidence, interviews with the Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive, and the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) responsible for internal audit, as well as discussions and file reviews involving all staff in the audit team. A copy of the report detailing the audit findings together with an action plan containing recommendations is provided as **APPENDIX 1**.
- 3.5 The inspection was thorough and the report gives a useful external perspective of how the service performs as well as providing advice on areas where compliance with the standards can be strengthened. There are a couple of areas highlighted around audit planning where there is a need to do more to evidence the basis for selection of planned audit topics otherwise for the most part the recommendations will be readily implemented subject to time being made available to do so. Overall the positive comments around Moray Council audit working paper and reporting processes were welcomed as an endorsement of the combined efforts of all staff in the team.
- 3.6 In the interim, work has been done to progress some of the recommendations made, namely:
- The Chief Auditor appraisal has been signed off by the Depute Chief Executive (post title recently amended from previous Corporate Director (Corporate Services)) and Chief Executive of the council
 - Audit staff have been required to confirm in writing their understanding of ethics and the need to maintain high ethical standards in the course of their work
 - The job description has been updated for the Chief Auditor post
 - Employee Review and Development Programme forms (appraisals) have been updated for all audit staff.
 - The council's anti-fraud policy has been updated and approved.
 - The council's internal audit manual is being updated to reflect latest auditing standards
 - The Chief Auditor now has access to agendas for Senior Management Team meetings within the council and can attend as required.
- 3.7 Other recommendations will be taken forward as time permits with a focus being given in particular to assurance mapping. This should aid audit planning/selection of audit topics in future years.

4. KEY MATTERS RELEVANT TO RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Participation in the EQA process provides an independent assessment of Internal Audit's application of the standards expected of public sector internal audit. The provision of this report to the recipients of internal audit services provides transparency around the results of the assessment and of the actions proposed to secure service improvement.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)) and Moray Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan 'Moray Partners in Care 2019 – 2029'

No direct implications.

(b) Policy and Legal

Completion and reporting results of the external review secures compliance with the relevant statutory requirements and auditing standards.

(c) Financial implications

No implications.

(d) Risk Implications and Mitigation

The findings from the independent review of internal audit mitigate the risk that the service operates without regard to the applicable professional standards.

(e) Staffing Implications

None

(f) Property

None

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An equality impact assessment is not required as there is no impact on people with protected characteristics as a result of consideration of this report.

(h) Consultations

This report has been discussed with the Chief Financial Officer of the IJB, any comments have been considered in writing the report.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report provides the Audit, Performance and Risk Committee with a summary of findings arising from an external quality assessment of Moray Council's internal audit service.

Author of Report:	Atholl Scott, Chief Internal Auditor
Background Papers:	Public Sector Internal Audit Standards Self-Assessment Evaluation
Ref:	ijb/ap&rc/30012020