



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE



Item 23/25 Appendix A

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

Report of Internal Audit Activity

Plan Progress 2023/24 Quarter 1

Internal Audit ■ Risk ■ Special Investigations ■ Consultancy

Unrestricted

Internal Audit Plan Progress 2023/24 Quarter 1

Contents

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Internal Audit Plan Progress 2023/24 Quarter 1

Introduction

This report summarises the Internal Audit activity completed for Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service in Quarter 1 2023/24 in line with the Annual Audit Plan approved by the Finance & Audit (F&A) Committee and the Chief Fire Officer in March 2023.

The schedule provided in Appendix 1 contains a list of all audits agreed in the Annual Audit Plan 2023/24.

We have provided a summary of activity which outlines our assurance opinion and the number and priority of any actions that we made in relation to the audit work undertaken in Quarter 1. To assist the Committee in its monitoring and scrutiny role, a summary of each audit (objective, risk, controls tested, findings and actions) has also been provided, the content of which has been discussed and agreed with the responsible Director.

The scope for each audit is agreed in advance with nominated managers. This process intends to focus on the key risks to which that area of the Services activity is exposed and the associated controls which we would expect to be in place to ensure that risk is managed.

The key controls have been assessed against those we would expect to find in place if best practice in relation to the effective management of risk, the delivery of good governance and the attainment of management objectives is to be achieved. Where applicable, selected and targeted testing has been used to support the findings and conclusions reached.

We have performed our work in accordance with the principles of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) International Professional Practice Framework (IPPF) and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) in so far as they are applicable to an assignment of this nature and you, our client.

Internal Audit Plan Progress 2023/24 Quarter 1

Audit Summary

In Quarter 1 2023/24, the following Audits were completed in accordance with the Audit Plan:

Audit Name	Healthy Organisation Theme	Linked To	Status	Opinion	No of Actions	Priority of Actions		
						1	2	3
Industrial Relations	People & Asset Management Corporate Governance	HMICFRS People/Effectiveness Pillars Priority 3,4,5 Strategic Risk 530	Final	Substantial	1	-	-	1
Cyber Security (Data Backups)	Information Management People & Asset Management	HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4 Strategic Risk 301	Final	Substantial	1	-	-	1

Assurance Definitions

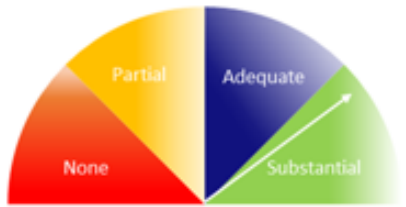
Each completed audit has been awarded an “Assurance opinion” rating. This opinion takes account of whether the risks material to the achievement of the Services’ objectives for this area are adequately managed and controlled. The assurance opinion ratings have been determined in accordance with the Internal Audit “Audit Framework Definitions” as detailed in the below:

Assurance Definitions	
None	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Partial	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Adequate	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Substantial	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

From our work In Quarter 1, we have raised actions which seek to strengthen the Services controls within each audit area. We highlight those matters of that we believe merit acknowledgement in terms of good practice or undermine the system’s control environment, and which require attention by management. All improvement actions are allocated a priority grading and have been agreed with the management teams in the appropriate area.

Categorisation of Actions	
In addition to the corporate risk assessment, it is important that management know how important the action is to their service. Each action has been given a priority rating at service level with the following definitions:	
Priority 1	Findings that are fundamental to the integrity of the service’s business processes and require the immediate attention of management.
Priority 2	Important findings that need to be resolved by management.
Priority 3	Finding that requires attention.

Industrial Relations

Assurance Opinion		Number of Actions	
	<p>A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.</p>	Priority	Number
		Priority 1	-
		Priority 2	-
		Priority 3	1
		Total	1

Audit Opinion:

Substantial Assurance

Objectives:

To provide assurance that the Service has effective relationships in place with Representative Bodies.

Risk:

Poor or ineffective industrial relations are in place, which could contribute to disruption to the Service as a result of greater absenteeism among workers.

Industrial Relations

Controls Tested:

The following areas of control were covered under the scope of this audit programme:

- The Service has an agreed procedure in place, which defines the relationships with Representative Bodies.
- Regular and effective engagements are in place with Representative Bodies.
- Industrial relations are effectively managed within key situations, including organisational structure changes, the Service's resourcing and savings programme and the potential industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union.

Areas of Good Practice:

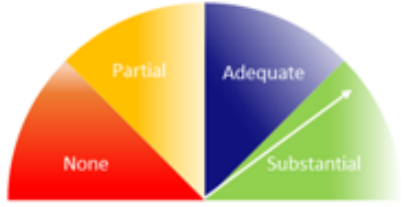
- The union representative roles and responsibilities are clearly documented in the EPR-17 Document.
- For 3 of the 4 Representative Bodies, the union representatives spoke highly of their relationships with the Service.
- Meetings are scheduled fairly and documentation such as agendas, minutes and action logs are circulated appropriately.
- 3 of the 4 union representatives we met with were confident with raising concerns or issues with DWFRS and felt they were able to reach out at any time should the need arise.
- The EPR-17 Document is regularly reviewed and any changes are documented.
- All of the union representatives we spoke with were aware of the EPR-17 document and were confident with where to locate the document.
- 3 of the 4 representative bodies felt they have suitable involvement within the key situations reviewed.
- 3 of the 4 union representatives stated that overall, they were satisfied with their involvement with the Service.

Summary of Actions:

Findings & Risk	Action	Management Response	Officer Responsible/ Timescale	Rec Priority
<p>Whilst positive relations were noted by three of the four representative bodies, the Chair and Secretary of one (the FRSA) outlined that they did not feel they were treated equally to other unions. Whilst the EPR 17 procedure listed them having consultation and negotiation rights, they did not feel this was the case. The Chair also cited the difficulty of attending formal liaison meetings due to them being held in Salisbury, and the challenges this provides their on-call role.</p> <p>This was raised with the Assistant Chief Officer, Director of People Services, who advised that the Service provide rights to the FRSA, despite them not being a recognised union body by the Trades Union Congress (TUC). It was also noted that the majority of meetings are held via MS Teams, therefore location should not be an issue. Nonetheless, it would be beneficial for the following areas to be discussed and agreed between the Service and the FRSA representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that formal meetings are held on a regular and timely basis, with cancellations rearranged. Review of the past 12 months found that only 	<p>The Service should seek to enhance the relationship with the FRSA representatives, through actions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that formal meetings are held on a regular and timely basis, with cancellations rearranged. Determining locations of meetings, either in person at sites reachable by the FRSA representatives, or via MS Teams. A discussion regarding any other challenges and opportunities for improvement. 	<p>The nature on On-Call means that both the FRSA Chair and Vice Chair have primary employment which needs to be balanced with their FRSA role. In this regard it is more difficult to arrange meetings that can be attended by all parties.</p> <p>The Service believes it has undertaken consultation and negotiation with the FRSA to the same and appropriate level as other trade unions. Examples of this are the negotiation of the on-call pay scheme and the resulting collective agreement and discussions regarding activities that their members would be voluntarily asked to undertake during COVID. FRSA are also invited to attend the same corporate meetings such as Health and Safety Committee and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, as other trade union representatives. Notwithstanding this, the Service are keen to listen to any areas of improvement.</p> <p>In relation to the highlighted areas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings have been arranged to take place on a quarterly basis until the end of March 2025 Following discussion with the FRSA, meetings will continue to take place on Teams. It has further been agreed that should there be any issues where either 	<p>Assistant Chief Officer, Director of People Services</p> <p>All actions have now been completed</p>	3

Findings & Risk	Action	Management Response	Officer Responsible/ Timescale	Rec Priority
<p>one formal liaison meeting had been held, due to some required cancellations by both parties meaning that the planned quarterly meetings had not occurred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining locations of meetings, either in person at sites reachable by the FRSA representatives, or via MS Teams. A discussion regarding any other challenges and opportunities for improvement. <p>The Assistant Chief Officer, Director of People Services was in support of wanting to enhance the relationship in place with the FRSA representatives.</p>		<p>party would like to discuss matters face to face, this would be accommodated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A discussion regarding areas for improvement took place on 19 June 2023. Any agreed improvement actions would be monitored through the liaison meetings. 		

Cyber Security (Data Backups)

Assurance Opinion		Number of Actions	
	<p>A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.</p>	Priority	Number
		Priority 1	-
		Priority 2	-
		Priority 3	1
		Total	1

Audit Opinion:

Substantial Assurance

Objectives:

To review the effectiveness of the Service's backup arrangements, including policies and processes; automated backup, data recovery and continuity arrangements; performance monitoring and governance arrangements; and protection of backup data.

Risk:

Failure to ensure suitable backups prevent a restore or regression of systems and data resulting in a loss of service continuity over prescribed periods.

Cyber Security (Data Backups)

Controls Tested:

The following areas of control were covered under the scope of this audit programme:

- There are approved policies in place which are regularly reviewed and aligned with Service needs and best practice.
- Backup registers include all relevant backup services which support the different types of requirements.
- Backup storage has been risk assessed and appropriate protections are in place.
- Backup errors are investigated.
- Data recovery is tested, lessons learned are documented and implemented, and business continuity arrangements are in place.
- Performance management is in place with oversight, reporting and escalation processes in place.
- There are clear governance arrangements in place with clear roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability in place.

Areas of Good Practice:

- There is an ICT Strategy in place which is regularly reviewed and recognises the current position and goals for ICT resilience and data backup. The Strategy supports the recovery of critical systems through investment and vision to upgrade their current position.
- Backup and recovery is recognised as part of the 'cyber threats and attacks' risk on the Service's strategic risk register.
- Critical assets, priority lists and a business continuity procedure are in place and align to the backup schedule.
- There are clear backup and recovery processes in place and access to backup data is restricted.
- There is a process in place to monitor and manage backup jobs. Sampling evidence found that where errors are identified an explanation of the error is recorded, actions are undertaken to correct the issues, and where consecutive errors were found, there was assurance that the error did not impact the recovery of backups.
- The ICT Strategy recognises the need to continuously review backup provisions and storage needs. The current backup provision has been subject to assessment to ensure it meets the Service's needs. There is ongoing monitoring of storage requirements and a recognition that those needs are growing; a review is currently taking place to address the storage needs.
- Monthly recovery tests are carried out and back-up and recovery exercises take place throughout the year in-house and with partners. However, a report of the last monthly recovery exercise was not received during the audit.
- There are adequate governance arrangements in place for monitoring and oversight. However, we did not receive meeting minutes or reports.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly set out during business as usual and during critical events.

Summary of Actions:

Findings & Risk	Action	Management Response	Officer Responsible/ Timescale	Rec Priority
<p>The ICT team maintain a system backup and recovery spreadsheet which captures key information regarding what is backed up, where it is backed up, who is responsible, backup frequency, retention period and recovery details. The document lists four systems which are maintained by third-party contractors, however none of these contained any information in relation to the areas listed above. Two of the four systems were identified by the Network & Security Manager as critical, with the other two non-critical.</p> <p>The critical systems were discussed in further detail with the Head of ICT, who was able to evidence that backup requirements and expectations are outlined within contractual documentation between the parties. They also stated that they work closely with the National Fire Service Partnership (NFSP), who provide these critical systems. It was, however, agreed that the Service should be more proactive in seeking periodic evidence of the backups performed by the NFSP, as per the requirements within the contracts.</p> <p>It should also be ensured that the system backup and recovery spreadsheet is updated to include complete information on the third-party arrangements in place.</p>	<p>To receive periodic updates from third-party contractors and partners on backup and recovery results.</p> <p>To ensure that the system backup and recovery spreadsheet is updated in relation to the third party backup arrangements in place, supporting the oversight and awareness within the ICT team.</p>	<p>Action agreed and steps already in place to obtain the back-up data for the critical control systems (BOSS and Vision). Other third party systems will also be added to the data we hold on internal systems.</p>	<p>Head of ICT</p> <p>30th September 2023</p>	3

Appendix 1 – 2023/24 Audit Plan and Performance

Audit Name	Healthy Organisation Theme	Linked To	Status	Opinion	No of Actions	Actions		
						1	2	3
Industrial Relations	People & Asset Management Corporate Governance	HMICFRS People/Effectiveness Pillars Priority 3,4,5 Strategic Risk 530	Final	Substantial	1	-	-	1
Cyber Security (Data Backups)	Information Management Corporate Governance	HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4 Strategic Risk 301	Final	Substantial	1	-	-	1
Secondary Contracts Monitoring	People & Assets Management Corporate Governance	HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4, 5	Planning					
Grievance Arrangements	People & Assets Management Corporate Governance	HMICFRS People Pillar Priority 5	Planning					
Short Term Absence Management	People & Assets Management	HMICFRS People Pillar Priority 5	Not Started					
Payroll	Financial Management	HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4 Strategic Risk 0006	Not Started					
P-cards and Fuel Cards	Financial Management Corporate Governance	HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4 Strategic Risk 0006	Not Started					

Audit Name	Healthy Organisation Theme	Linked To	Status	Opinion	No of Actions	Actions		
						1	2	3
Business Continuity Arrangements	Performance Management Risk Management	HMICFRS Effectiveness/Efficiency Pillars Priority 1,2,3,4 Strategic risk 530	Not Started					
Follow Ups	All	All	-					

The performance results for progress against the internal audit plan for Quarter 1 of the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan are as follows:

Performance Target	Average Performance	
	% of the Annual Plan	Number of Assignments
<u>Audit Plan – Percentage Progress</u>		
Final, Draft, Discussion, Removed	25%	2
In progress, Ongoing	25%	2
Not yet started	50%	4
	100%	8

The completion of the plan is currently on target.