



Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

Internal Audit Plan 2026-27
and Internal Audit Charter

The Internal Audit Strategy

The Internal Audit Plan represents a summary of the proposed audit coverage for the financial year 2026-27

Delivery of an internal audit programme of work that provides sufficient and appropriate coverage, will enable us to provide a well-informed and comprehensive year-end annual internal audit opinion.



Introduction and Objective of the Internal Audit Plan

Internal audit provides an independent and objective opinion on the Service's risk management, governance, and control environment by evaluating its effectiveness.

Prior to the start of each financial year, SWAP, in conjunction with senior management, put together a proposed plan of audit work. The objective of our planning process and subsequent plan is to put us in a position to provide a well-informed and comprehensive annual audit opinion, based on sufficient and appropriate coverage of key business objectives, associated risks, and risk management processes.

The outcomes of each of the audits in our planned programme of work, will provide senior management and members with assurance that the current risks faced by the Service in these areas are adequately controlled and managed.

It should be noted that internal audit is only one source of assurance, and the outcomes of internal audit reviews should be considered alongside other sources, as part of the 'three lines' model. Key findings from our internal audit work should also be considered in conjunction with completion of the Service's Annual Governance Statement.

It is the responsibility of the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), and the Finance & Audit Committee, to determine that the audit coverage contained within the proposed audit plan is sufficient and appropriate in providing independent assurance against the key risks faced by the Service.

When reviewing the proposed internal audit plan (as set out in Appendix A), key questions to consider include:

- Are the areas selected for coverage this coming year appropriate?
- Does the Internal Audit Plan cover Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services (the Service) key risks as they are recognised by SLT and the Finance & Audit Committee?
- Is sufficient assurance being received within our annual plan to monitor the Service's risk profile effectively?

To develop an appropriate risk-based audit plan, SWAP have consulted with senior management, as well as reviewing key documentation, in order to obtain an understanding of the Service's strategies, key business objectives, associated risks, and risk management processes.



Approach to Internal Audit Planning

The factors considered in putting together the 2026-27 internal audit plan have been set out below:



We will regularly re-visit and adjust our programme of audit work to ensure that it matches the changing risk profile of the Service's operations, systems, and controls. Our 2026-27 audit plan is therefore flexible to respond to new and emerging risks as and when they are identified.

A documented risk assessment prior to developing an internal audit plan, ensures that sufficient and appropriate areas are identified for consideration.

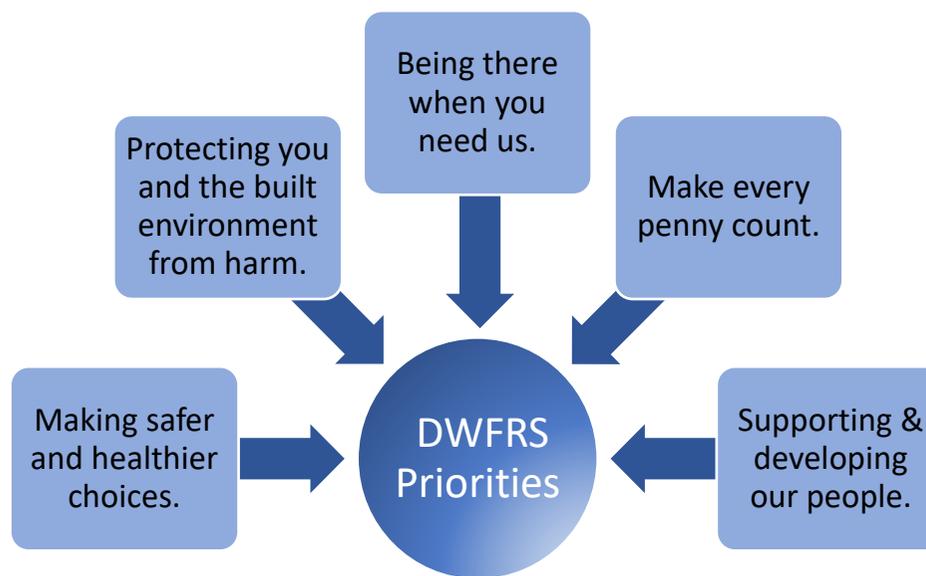
As above, it is the responsibility of the Service's SLT, and the Finance & Audit Committee to ensure that, following our risk assessment, the proposed plan contains sufficient and appropriate coverage.



Internal Audit Coverage

The 2026-27 internal audit programme of work is based on a documented risk assessment, which SWAP will revisit regularly, at least annually. The input of SLT as well as a review of the Service's risk register will be considered in this process.

Below we have set out a summary of the internal audit coverage in relation to the Strategic Priorities for the Service:



**2026-27 plan and 4 year strategy considered when compiling this summary.*



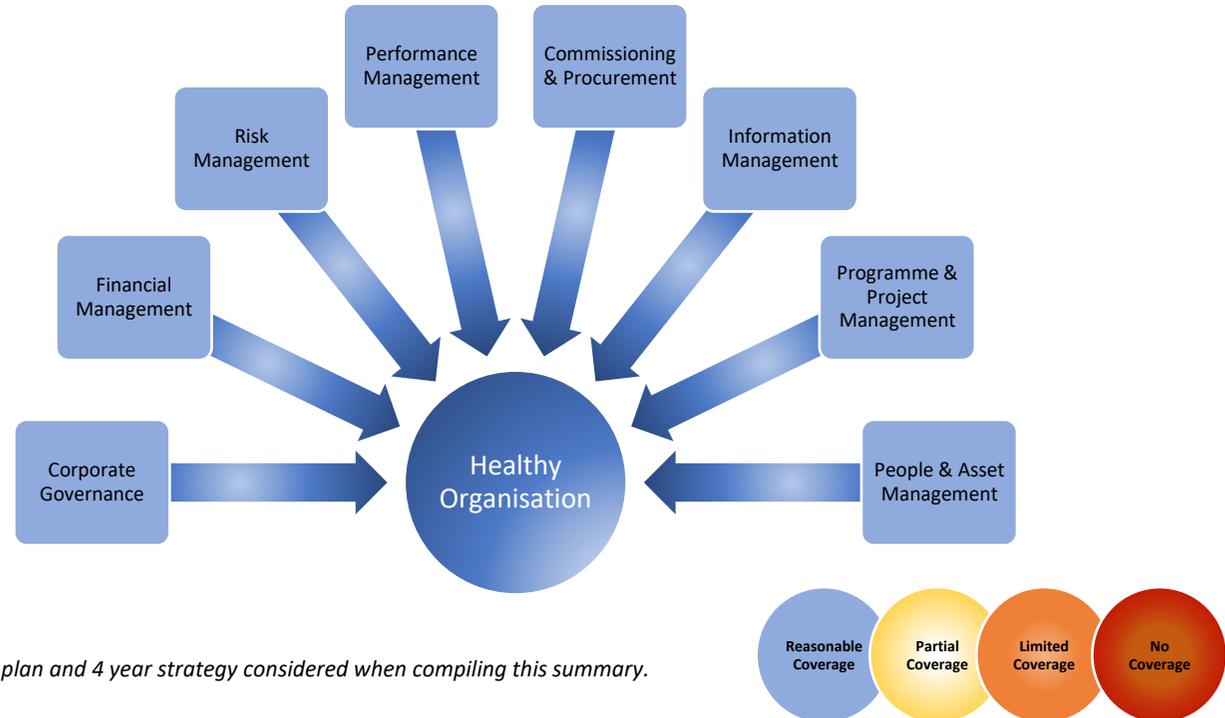
Following our SWAP Risk Assessment above, we have set out how the proposed 2026-27 plan presented in Appendix A provides coverage of the Service's key corporate outcomes, as well as coverage of the eight themes of a 'Healthy Organisation'.

Internal audit is only one source of assurance; therefore, where we have highlighted gaps in our coverage, assurance should be sought from other sources where possible in order to ensure sufficient and appropriate assurances are received.



Internal Audit Coverage

Following our SWAP risk assessment, we have also set out below the extent to which the Audit Strategy provides coverage of the eight themes of a 'Healthy Organisation'.



Internal audit coverage can never be absolute and responsibility for risk management, governance and internal control arrangements will always remain fully with management. As such, internal audit cannot provide complete assurance over any area, and equally cannot provide any guarantee against material errors, loss, or fraud.

SWAP Internal Audit Services is a public sector, not-for-profit partnership, owned by the public sector partners that it serves. The SWAP Partnership now includes 27 public sector partners but also providing services throughout the UK.



Your Internal Audit Service

As a company, SWAP has adopted the following values, which we ask our clients to assess us against following every piece of work that we do:

- People Centred
- Professional Integrity
- Supportive Collaboration
- Service Excellence
- Purpose-Driven Efficiency

Audit Resources

The 2026-27 internal audit programme of work will be equivalent to 70 days. The current internal audit resources available represent a sufficient and appropriate mix of seniority and skill to be effectively deployed to deliver the planned work. The key contacts in respect of your internal audit service is:

Dan Newens, Interim Director – Daniel.Newens@swapaudit.co.uk, 07730198838

Jodie Bromell, Interim Assistant Director – Jodie.Bromell@swapaudit.co.uk, 0208 142 5030

Conformance with Internal Audit Standards

SWAP work is completed to comply with the Global Internal Audit Standards, the UK Public Sector Application Note and the CIPFA Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government.

Every five years, SWAP is subject to an external quality assessment of internal audit activity. The last of these was carried out in December 2024 which confirmed conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Conflicts of Interest

We are not aware of any conflicts of interest within the Service that would present an impairment to our independence or objectivity. Furthermore, we are satisfied that we will conform with our Institute of Internal Auditors Code of Ethics in relation to Integrity, Objectivity, Confidentiality, & Competency.

Consultancy Engagements

As part of our internal audit service, we may accept proposed consultancy engagements, based on the engagement's potential to improve management of risk, add value, and improve the Service's operations. Consultancy work that is accepted, will contribute to our annual opinion, and will be included in our plan of work.

Approach to Fraud

Internal audit may assess the adequacy of the arrangements to prevent and detect irregularities, fraud, and corruption. We have dedicated counter fraud resources available to undertake specific investigations if required. However, the primary responsibility for preventing and detecting corruption, fraud and irregularities rests with management who should institute adequate systems of internal control, including clear objectives, segregation of duties and proper authorisation procedures.

Over and above our internal audit service delivery, SWAP will look to add value throughout the year wherever possible. This will include:

- Regular newsletters and bulletins containing emerging issues and risks.
- Communication of fraud alerts received both regionally and nationally.
- Annual Member information sessions
- Benchmarking and sharing of best practice between our public-sector Partners

Our Reporting

A summary of internal audit activity will be reported quarterly to SLT and the Finance & Audit Committee. This reporting will include any significant risk and control issues (including fraud risks), governance issues and other matters that require the attention of senior management and/or the members. We will also report any response from management to a risk we have highlighted that, in our view, may be unacceptable to the Service.

Internal Audit Performance

As part of our regular reporting to SLT and the Finance & Audit Committee, we will report on internal audit performance. The following performance targets will be used to measure the performance of our audit activity:

Performance Measure	Performance Target
<p><u>Delivery of Annual Internal Audit Plan</u> Completed at year end</p>	>95%
<p><u>Quality of Audit Work</u> Overall Client Satisfaction <i>(Did our audit work meet or exceed expectations, when looking at our Communication, Auditor Professionalism and Competence, and Value to the Service)</i></p>	>95%

The Internal Audit Plan 2026-27

It should be noted that the audit titles and high-level scopes included below are only indicative at this stage for planning our resources. At the start of each audit, an initial discussion will be held to agree the specific terms of reference for the piece of work, which includes the objective and scope for the review.

Area to be audited	Proposed Audit Scope/Notes	Eight Themes of a healthy organisation	Linked to	2026-27 Timing
Malpractice Management arrangements	To ensure that the Service has effective arrangements in place to manage potential malpractice, such as fraud, bribery & corruption. Processes and arrangements in place that cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • corruption • bribery • complaints 	Corporate Governance	Strategic Risk 598 HMICFRS People Pillar Priority 5	Q1
Business Continuity	To establish whether planning and response structures will enable continued delivery of services in times of extended crisis, emergency, or structural change.	Corporate Governance Risk Management	HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4	Q1
Accounts Payable	To ensure the Service has an effective control framework in place for its Accounts Payable / Creditors function.	Financial Management	Strategic Risk 0006 HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4	Q2
Accounts Receivable	To ensure the Service has an effective control framework in place for its Accounts Receivable / Debtors function.	Financial Management	Strategic Risk 0006 HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4	Q2

Data Recovery and Security	<p>To ensure that back-ups are in place to ensure that IT solutions and processes are providing resilience to service data.</p> <p>Policies/process/controls for protecting against cyber-attacks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automated backups, data recovery and continuity arrangements Performance monitoring and Governance arrangements Protection of back up data 	Information Management	Strategic Risk 301 HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4	Q3
Health and wellbeing arrangements	<p>To provide assurance that the Service has appropriate measures in place to support the health and wellbeing of its staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overarching Health and Wellbeing Programme objectives have been defined and agreed The Health and Wellbeing resources made available to staff have been scoped to ensure alignment with the objectives of the overarching programme The outcomes of the Health and Wellbeing Programme are measured through effective performance monitoring Health and Wellbeing resources are well publicised and promoted to all staff across the Service. 	People and Asset Management	Strategic Risk 598 HMICFRS People Pillar Priority 5	Q3
Energy management & environmental considerations	<p>To ensure the Service is planning and delivering change across the Service to deliver environmental improvements.</p>	People and Asset Management	HMICFRS Efficiency Pillar Priority 4	Q4
Skills management and competency recording	<p>To provide assurance that the Service has established, clear and well-defined arrangements in place to ensure that staff within the Service have the required skills and competencies required of their roles, and to evidence compliance with national, legislative, and operational skill requirements.</p>	People and Asset Management	HMICFRS People Pillar Priority 5	Q4

Follow Ups	As required, a review of the recommendations previously raised will be completed with ongoing reviews annually.	All	All	Throughout Year
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The Internal Audit Charter

Purpose

SWAP Internal Audit Services creates, protects, and sustains value by providing the Finance and Audit Committee and management with independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight, that meets rigorous professional standards.

The internal audit function enhances:

- Successful achievement of its objectives.
- Governance, risk management, and control processes.
- Decision-making and oversight.
- Reputation and credibility with its stakeholders.
- Ability to serve the public interest.

The internal audit function is most effective when:

- Internal auditing is performed by competent professionals in conformance with the Institute of Internal Auditors Global Internal Audit Standards™ which are set in the public interest.
- The internal audit function is independently positioned with direct accountability to the Finance and Audit Committee.
- Internal auditors are free from undue influence and committed to making objective assessments.

Commitment to Adherence to the Professional Standards

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations, state that: *“A relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account the public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”*

The internal audit function will adhere to the mandatory elements of The Institute of Internal Auditors' International Professional Practices Framework, which are the Global Internal Audit Standards and Topical Requirements as well as the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The chief audit executive will report annually to the partner audit committee and senior management regarding the internal audit function's conformance with the Standards, which will be assessed through a quality assurance and improvement program, managed and monitored by the SWAP senior management team and the SWAP board.

Mandate

The Finance and Audit Committee grants the internal audit function the mandate to provide the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management with objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight.

The internal audit function's authority is created by its direct reporting relationship to the Finance and Audit Committee. Such authority allows for unrestricted access to the audit committee.

The Finance and Audit Committee authorises the internal audit function to:

- Have full and unrestricted access to all functions, data, records, information, physical property, and personnel pertinent to carrying out internal audit responsibilities. Internal auditors are accountable for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information.
- Allocate resources, set frequencies, select subjects, determine scopes of work, apply techniques, and issue communications to accomplish the function's objectives.
- Obtain assistance from the necessary personnel of the Partner and other specialized services from within or outside the Partner organisation to complete internal audit services.

Independence, Organisational Position, and Reporting Relationships

The chief audit executive will be positioned at a level in the organisation that enables internal audit services and responsibilities to be performed without interference from management, thereby establishing the independence of the internal audit function. The chief audit executive will report functionally to the Finance and Audit Committee and administratively (for example, day-to-day operations) to the Strategic Planning & Assurance Manager.

This positioning provides the authority and status to bring matters directly to senior management and escalate matters to the Finance and Audit Committee, when necessary, without interference and supports the internal auditors' ability to maintain objectivity.

The chief audit executive will confirm to the Finance and Audit Committee, at least annually, the organisational independence of the internal audit function. If the governance structure does not support organisational independence, the chief audit executive will document the characteristics of the governance structure limiting independence and any safeguards employed to achieve the principle of independence. The chief audit executive will disclose to the Finance and Audit Committee any interference internal auditors encounter related to the scope, performance, or communication of internal audit work and results. The disclosure will include communicating the implications of such interference on the internal audit function's effectiveness and ability to fulfill its mandate.

Changes to the Mandate and Charter

Circumstances may justify a follow-up discussion between the chief audit executive, Finance and Audit Committee, and senior management on the internal audit mandate or other aspects of the internal audit charter. Such circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- A significant change in the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- A significant acquisition or reorganisation within the organisation.
- Significant changes in the chief audit executive, Finance and Audit Committee, and/or senior management.
- Significant changes to the organisation's strategies, objectives, risk profile, or the environment in which the organisation operates.
- New laws or regulations that may affect the nature and/or scope of internal audit services

Finance and Audit Committee Oversight

To establish, maintain, and ensure that the internal audit function has sufficient authority to fulfill its duties, the Finance and Audit Committee will:

- Discuss with the Chief Audit Executive and senior management the appropriate authority, role, responsibilities, scope, and services (assurance and/or advisory) of the internal audit function.
- Ensure the Chief Audit Executive has unrestricted access to, communicates, and interacts directly with the Finance and Audit Committee, including in private meetings without senior management present.
- Ensure arrangements are in place to notify the Chief Audit Executive of all suspected or detected fraud, corruption, or impropriety.
- Discuss with the Chief Audit Executive and senior management other topics that should be included in the internal audit charter.
- Participate in discussions with the Chief Audit Executive and senior management about the "essential conditions," described in the Global Internal Audit Standards, which establish the foundation that enables an effective internal audit function.
- Approve the internal audit function's charter, which includes the internal audit mandate and the scope and types of internal audit services.
- Review the internal audit charter annually with the chief audit executive to consider changes affecting the organisation, such as the employment of a new Chief Audit Executive or changes in the type, severity, and interdependencies of risks to the organisation; and approve the internal audit charter annually.

- Approve the risk-based internal audit plan.
- Collaborate with senior management to determine the budgets, qualifications, and competencies the organisation expects in a Chief Audit Executive, as described in the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- Review the Chief Audit Executive’s performance, provide feedback to the SWAP CEO, plus senior management, and the organisation’s CEO.
- Receive communications from the Chief Audit Executive about the internal audit function including its performance relative to its plan.
- Ensure a quality assurance and improvement program has been established.
- Review of the results of the quality assurance and improvement program annually.
- Make appropriate inquiries of management and the Chief Audit Executive to determine whether scope or resource limitations are inappropriate.

Chief Audit Executive Roles and Responsibilities

Ethics and Professionalism

The chief audit executive will ensure that internal auditors:

- Conform with the Global Internal Audit Standards, including the principles of Ethics and Professionalism: integrity, objectivity, competency, due professional care, and confidentiality.
- Understand, respect, meet, and contribute to the legitimate and ethical expectations of the Partner organisation and be able to recognize conduct that is contrary to those expectations.
- Encourage and promote an ethics-based culture in the organisation.
- Report organisational behavior that is inconsistent with the organisation’s ethical expectations, as described in applicable policies and procedures.

Objectivity

The Chief Audit Executive will ensure that the internal audit function remains free from all conditions that threaten the ability of internal auditors to carry out their responsibilities in an unbiased manner, including matters of engagement selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, and communication. If the chief audit executive determines that objectivity may be impaired in fact or appearance, the details of the impairment will be disclosed to appropriate parties.

Internal auditors will maintain an unbiased mental attitude that allows them to perform engagements objectively such that they believe in their work product, do not compromise quality, and do not subordinate their judgment on audit matters to others, either in fact or appearance.

Internal auditors will have no direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities they review. Accordingly, internal auditors will not implement internal controls, develop procedures, install systems, or engage in other activities that may impair their judgment, including:

- Assessing specific operations for which they had responsibility within the previous year.
- Performing operational duties for the Partner organisation or its affiliates.
- Initiating or approving transactions external to the internal audit function.
- Directing the activities of any Partner organisation's employee that is not employed by the internal audit function, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to internal audit teams or to assist internal auditors.

Internal auditors will:

- Disclose impairments of independence or objectivity, in fact or appearance, to appropriate parties and at least annually, such as the Chief Audit Executive, Finance and Audit Committee, management, or others.
- Exhibit professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information.
- Make balanced assessments of all available and relevant facts and circumstances.
- Take necessary precautions to avoid conflicts of interest, bias, and undue influence.

Managing the Internal Audit Function

The Chief Audit Executive has the responsibility to:

- At least annually, submit a risk-based internal audit plan to the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management for review and approval.
- Communicate the impact of resource limitations on the internal audit plan to the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management.

- Review and adjust the internal audit plan, as necessary, in response to changes in the Partner organisation’s business, risks, operations, programs, systems, and controls.
- Communicate with the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management if there are significant interim changes to the internal audit plan.
- Ensure internal audit engagements are performed, documented, and communicated in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- Follow up on engagement findings and confirm the implementation of recommendations or action plans and communicate the results of internal audit services to the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management annually]and for each engagement as appropriate.
- Ensure the internal audit function collectively possesses or obtains the knowledge, skills, and other competencies needed to meet the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards and fulfill the internal audit mandate.
- Identify and consider trends and emerging issues that could impact the Partner organisation and communicate to the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management as appropriate.
- Consider emerging trends and successful practices in internal auditing.
- Establish and ensure adherence to methodologies designed to guide the internal audit function.
- Ensure adherence to the Partner organisation’s relevant policies and procedures unless such policies and procedures conflict with the internal audit charter or the Global Internal Audit Standards. Any such conflicts will be resolved or documented and communicated to the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management.
- Coordinate activities and consider relying upon the work of other internal and external providers of assurance and advisory services. If the chief audit executive cannot achieve an appropriate level of coordination, the issue must be communicated to senior management and if necessary escalated to the Finance and Audit Committee.

Communication with the Finance and Audit Committee and Senior Management

The Chief Audit Executive will report annually to the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management regarding:

- The internal audit function’s mandate.
- The internal audit plan and performance relative to its plan.
- Significant revisions to the internal audit plan.

- Potential impairments to independence, including relevant disclosures as applicable.
- Results from the quality assurance and improvement program, which include the internal audit function's conformance with The IIA's Global Internal Audit Standards and action plans to address the internal audit function's deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.
- Significant risk exposures and control issues, including fraud risks, governance issues, and other areas of focus for the Finance and Audit Committee.
- Results of assurance and advisory services.
- Managements responses to risk that the internal audit function determines may be unacceptable or acceptance of a risk that is beyond the Partner organisation's risk appetite.
- Clarification over the responsibility to complete a fraud risk assessment, and presentation of this where responsibility belongs to SWAP.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Program

The SWAP senior leadership team in collaboration with the chief audit executive will develop, implement, and maintain a quality assurance and improvement program that covers all aspects of the internal audit function. The program will include external and internal assessments of the internal audit function's conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards, as well as performance measurement to assess the internal audit function's progress toward the achievement of its objectives and promotion of continuous improvement. The program also will assess, if applicable, compliance with laws and/or regulations relevant to internal auditing. Also, if applicable, the assessment will include plans to address the internal audit function's deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

Annually, the chief audit executive will communicate with the Finance and Audit Committee and senior management about the internal audit function's quality assurance and improvement program, including the results of internal assessments (ongoing monitoring and periodic self-assessments) and external assessments. External assessments will be completed at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside both SWAP and the Partner Organisation; qualifications must include at least one assessor holding an active Chartered (CMIIA) credential.

Scope and Types of Internal Audit Services

The scope of internal audit services covers the entire breadth of the organization, including all the Partner organisation's activities, assets, and personnel. The scope of internal audit activities also encompasses but is not limited to objective examinations of evidence to provide independent assurance and advisory services to the Finance and Audit Committee and management on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management, and control processes for the Partner organisation.

The nature and scope of advisory services may be agreed with the party requesting the service, provided the internal audit function does not assume management responsibility. Opportunities for improving the efficiency of governance, risk management, and control processes may be identified during advisory engagements. These opportunities will be communicated to the appropriate level of management.

Internal audit engagements may include evaluating whether:

- Risks relating to the achievement of the Partner Organisations strategic objectives are appropriately identified and managed.
- The actions of the Partner organisations officers, directors, management, employees, and contractors comply with the Partner organisations policies, procedures, and applicable laws, regulations, and governance standards.
- The results of operations and programs are consistent with established goals and objectives.
- Operations and programs are being carried out effectively and efficiently.
- Established processes and systems enable compliance with the policies, procedures, laws, and regulations that could significantly impact the Partner organisation.
- The integrity of information and the means used to identify, measure, analyze, classify, and report such information is reliable.
- Resources and assets are acquired economically, used efficiently and sustainably, and protected adequately.

Approval/Signatures

Finance and Audit Committee Chair

Date

Rich Clarke

Chief Executive Officer (SWAP)

Date 28/01/2026