

Internal Audit Strategy 2026/7 – 2027/8

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In line with Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS), the Internal Audit service is required to develop and implement a strategy for the internal audit function that supports the strategic objectives and success of the organization and aligns with the expectations of the board, senior management, and other key stakeholders. The Strategy is defined in GIAS as “a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall objective”.
- 1.2 For the purpose of GIAS, the Internal Audit Strategy must include a vision, strategic objectives, and supporting initiatives for the internal audit function. The Internal Audit Strategy helps guide the internal audit function toward the fulfilment of the internal audit mandate, and it complements the Internal Audit Charter and annual Internal Audit Plan.
- 1.3 This document sets out the Internal Audit Strategy for Cambridgeshire County Council for the financial years 2026/7 to 2027/8. It is a high-level document, which sets out how the Internal Audit service will be delivered and developed over this period. The Internal Audit Plan then demonstrates how this Strategy translates into a detailed workplan, and is continuously updated and presented to the Audit Committee quarterly for review.

2. Internal Audit Mission & Vision

- 2.1 At Cambridgeshire County Council, Internal Audit’s mission is to enhance and protect organisational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight. Our vision is to provide a top-quality, trusted professional service which is continually improving and which operates in compliance with GIAS.
- 2.2 Through delivering on this strategy, Internal Audit will help to enhance the Council’s governance, risk management and control framework, which in turn will ultimately contribute to the achievement of the Council’s corporate priorities and objectives.

3. Internal Audit Strategic Objectives

- 3.1 In order to deliver our mission and vision, the Internal Audit service has defined the following strategic objectives:
 - **Fulfil the Internal Audit mandate and deliver the Annual Internal Audit Plan and independent Annual Opinion** on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s framework of governance, control environment and risk management.
 - **Operate in conformance with our Internal Audit Charter and with GIAS**, subject to the interpretations and additional requirements set out

in the *Application Note on Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector* issued by the Relevant Internal Audit Standard Setters (RIASS) and the *CIPFA Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government*.

4. Internal Audit Supporting Initiatives

4.1 To support the delivery of the team's strategic objectives as set out above, in addition to the 'business-as-usual' work of the Internal Audit team outlined in the Internal Audit Charter and aligned to the GIAS, the following initiatives have been identified as priorities for the team over the financial years 2025/6 to 2027/8:

- **Embedding GIAS & External Quality Assessment:** The introduction of GIAS will continue to be embedded in team systems and processes and the commissioning of an external quality assessment is a priority to provide assurance over the team's conformance with GIAS and identify any areas for improvement. The overall objective of this initiative will be to ensure full conformance with GIAS and to undertake an External Quality Assessment.
- **Implementation of Follow-Up Actions:** The Internal Audit team will continue to work closely with senior management and the Performance team to develop and enhance systems to give increased oversight of the implementation of agreed audit actions. The Internal Audit team will also work to identify approaches to encourage services to implement actions in a timely way. The overall objective of this initiative will be to increase the proportion of agreed audit actions which are implemented by their initial agreed target date, year-on-year.
- **Enhance Team Resourcing:** Developing the approach to ongoing effective resourcing of the Internal Audit team will continue to be a focus. In particular this will include developing a more structured in-house training plan, continuing to support our ongoing CIPFA training programme with colleagues in Finance, and increasing the breadth of qualifications across the Internal Audit team, with a particular focus on counter-fraud qualifications. The overall objective of this initiative will be to ensure that Internal Audit maintains sufficient resourcing to successfully deliver the Internal Audit Plan.
- **Local Government Reorganisation:** Planned Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will result in a change from two-tier local authorities across Cambridgeshire, to unitary council(s). Change of this scale will have a significant impact on the Council's risk profile and there will be a period of transition for Internal Audit Teams. The Head of Internal Audit at Cambridgeshire will maintain membership of the Local Authority Chief Auditors Network LGR working group to access guidance and best practice on managing Internal Audit through this major transition, and the Council's Corporate Risk Manager will provide support and guidance regarding risk management approaches for the

LGR transformation. The overall objective of this initiative will be to support a safe and compliant transition into the new authorities, with effective and compliant Internal Audit arrangements in place throughout the transition.

- **Review of Internal Audit Technology and Systems:** Internal Audit will conduct a review and benchmarking exercise looking at the team's use of ICT systems, with a particular focus on the use of AI, document storage and filing systems, and time recording and quality management systems. The overall objective of this initiative will be to identify any areas where systems could be improved or enhanced to better support delivery of effective Internal Audit services, and this will also be helpful to inform the future shape of services following LGR.

5. Review and Update of the Strategy

- 5.1 In line with GIAS, the Head of Internal Audit must review the Internal Audit Strategy with the Audit & Accounts Committee and senior management periodically. In practice this will take place on an annual basis, aligned to the Internal Audit Plan report.