

## Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority Internal Audit Plan 2026-27

### Background

The responsibility to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority's (MRWA) system of internal control, in accordance with proper internal audit practices, rests with the Director of Finance of the MRWA under Section 73 of the Local Government Act 1985 and the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Internal Audit is provided by St Helens Borough Council's Internal Audit Service and is delivered via an annual Service Level Agreement (SLA), and in broad terms will require the MRWA to:

- Approve an annual Internal Audit Plan;
- Consider Internal Audit's Annual Opinion on the effectiveness of the control, risk, and governance environment;
- Reflect any significant governance issues identified by Internal Audit or other sources of assurance when outlining the Authority's governance arrangements in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

In addition, officers of MRWA are requested to:

- Consider and agree the findings and recommendations of individual internal audit reports prior to publication;
- Present published internal audit reports to the Authority and take appropriate action to ensure agreed actions arising are implemented;
- Notify Internal Audit promptly of any material change in the risks facing the MRWA;
- Agree variations to the Internal Audit Plan during its currency to allow internal audit to respond to changing risks and priorities.

Internal Audit work aims to support the MRWA and its staff in the delivery of its corporate aims, plan, and vision 'To ensure that we reduce the impact of our actions on climate change and improve the sustainable management of waste and resources'.

Internal Audit work will therefore be planned to contribute to identifying weaknesses in control, governance and risk management and help ensure that the Authority maintains a control environment that minimises the risk of inefficient use of resources and the loss of resources and/or reputation from fraud, bribery, and corruption.

Internal Audit will meet its responsibilities by:

- Providing an independent opinion on the effectiveness of the MRWA's financial, operational, risk management, governance, and control framework;
- Conducting risk-based reviews of internal systems within the MRWA, reporting to managers on their effectiveness and making recommendations for improvement where appropriate and proportionate;
- Attending Authority Audit Committee meetings to present update members on audit activity;
- Providing a regular progress report to the Audit Committee, including current progress against internal audit management actions;
- Where requested, advising on the adequacy and effectiveness of controls in new and developing systems;



- Where requested, advising on the implementation of controls aimed at the prevention and detection of fraud, bribery, and corruption and to investigate reports of suspected fraud or irregularity.

All internal audit work carried out by St Helens Borough Council's Internal Audit Service is performed in accordance with professional standards necessary to ensure an effective internal audit service. These requirements are specified within:

- IIA Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS), in the UK Public Sector.
- CIPFA guidance detailing proper practice and arrangements to inform the AGS - Delivering Good Governance Framework 2016.

The annual internal audit planning process was informed by a discussion of audit needs based on an assessment of risk in conjunction with the Director of Finance who had also taken advice from MRWA's Senior Leadership Team.

Factors informing the content of the 2026-27 Internal Audit Plan include:

- The Authority's Risk Register;
- Budgetary information and high value contracts;
- Known areas of weakness;
- Discussion with the Director of Finance;
- Existence of any alternative sources of assurance.

The proposed internal audit coverage will support the Chief Executive in preparing their annual opinion and report to the Authority as to the effectiveness of its control, risk and governance environment and the Authority's AGS.

### **Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2026-27**

The service level agreement sets out that 50 days of internal audit work will be provided by St Helens Borough Council's Internal Audit Service.

A key objective of Internal Audit's work is to provide MRWA management with independent assurance as to the effectiveness of the control, risk and governance environment within their respective areas of responsibility.

The proposed individual internal audit assignments are detailed below. The audit areas have been ranked in order of risk, i.e. high, medium or low.

The plan provides a balanced approach to the review of the control risk and governance environment and includes reviews of:

1. **Resource Recovery Contract Management (High Risk)** – relates to Risk 3 Failure of Waste Contractors to deliver the contracted level of service to the Authority and risk of breakdown of relationships.

A review of the effectiveness of the control environment for contract management for the Resource Recovery Contract.

2. **Financial Monitoring (Medium Risk)** – relates to Risk 10 External Audit VFM reputational risk should Authority Policy and Procedures fail to provide a strong enough governance framework to ensure high standards.



The review will assess the effectiveness of the Authority's financial monitoring framework in ensuring that financial resources are accurately recorded, regularly reviewed, and appropriately managed to support sound decision-making and good governance.

3. **Corporate Governance (Medium Risk)** – relates to Risk 10 External Audit VFM reputational risk should Authority Policy and Procedures fail to provide a strong enough governance framework to ensure high standards.

To assess the governance framework, the promotion of ethics and values, risk management arrangements and the processes surrounding the production of the Annual Governance Statement, including the annual assessment process and the production and review of the Annual Improvement Plan.

#### 4. Data Protection

An audit review of Data Protection was last carried out in 2018 following the introduction of the Data Protection Act 2018, including General Data Protection Regulations. A follow up review will be carried out to ensure processes developed following the introduction of the new legislation have been fully embedded and are still operating effectively.

An agile and flexible approach will be taken, ensuring that the internal audit plan is subject to review throughout the year to ensure that its content reflects new and emerging risks and priorities, and as such will be subject to amendment where required. If any changes are required, these will be reported to the Authority.

Should any of the planned reviews identify issues which require additional testing or audit coverage, which would affect the current Service Level Agreement of 50 days, this will be discussed with the Director of Finance at the earliest opportunity and agreement sought on resources.

### Reporting Arrangements

Internal Audit will, on the completion of audit work, provide draft reports to the Director of Finance for consideration and review as part of a drafting process prior to publication of the final version.

Any significant issues identified by internal audit work will be highlighted to the Director of Finance as soon as they are noted.

On publication, a copy of each final report will be forwarded to the Clerk to the Authority for inclusion within the Authority's scheduled meetings.

A representative from Internal Audit will be available to attend Authority meetings to present relevant reports and to respond to any questions or points for clarification that Members may have.

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