



Committee and Date

West Mercia Energy Joint
Committee

22nd March 2024

Item

Public

**WEST MERCIA ENERGY (WME)
INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGIC PLAN 2024/25**

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This report details the proposed programme of audit work for the year 2024/25 and recommends that members approve the programme, as set out in the report.
- 1.2 Internal Audit Services to West Mercia Energy have continued to be provided by Shropshire Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to consider and endorse, with appropriate comment, the proposed programme of audits for 2024/25.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 Under the Joint Committee's terms of reference, reviewing the risk based audit plan, including internal audit resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any other work upon which reliance is placed, is an important responsibility. In considering this plan Members should be assured that it is linked to the West Mercia Energy's key risks and provides enough coverage to ensure a reasonable opportunity to identify any weaknesses in the internal control environment. When critical to the business operations these will be reported and rectified where possible and viable.
- 3.2 Areas to be audited within the plan have been considered with the knowledge of risk register information both operational and strategic.
- 3.3 The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. There are no direct environmental, equalities, consultation or climate change consequences of this proposal.

- 3.4 Provision of the Internal Audit Annual Plan satisfies both the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, part 2 which sets out the requirements on all relevant authorities in relation to internal control, including requirements in respect of accounting records, internal audit and review of the system of internal control. Specifically:

‘A relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.’

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The proposed plan includes 20 days in 2024/25 with two days carried forward to 2025/26 relating to the procurement audit.

5. Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 This report does not directly make decisions on energy and fuel consumption; renewable energy generation; carbon offsetting or mitigation; or on climate change adaptation. However, the work of Internal Audit will look at the aspects relevant to the governance, risk management and control environment. The Committee can seek direct assurance on these matters where required.

6. Background

- 6.1 The S151 Officer is legally required to maintain sound and proper financial management on behalf of the West Mercia Energy (WME). This includes a responsibility for maintaining internal audit. Internal audit, provided by Shropshire Council, is based on a programme of audits over a rolling four-year period.
- 6.2 Audit priorities and known risks have been examined and a detailed audit plan has been produced for the provision of audit services in the next financial year, for consideration by the Committee. Each potential audit area has been reviewed with the Director and considered in relation to the strategic risks of the business. Some areas are required to be audited every year, as they are fundamental to sound financial management.
- 6.4 The audit programme is shown at **Appendix A**. The proposed plan is presented to Committee for approval to reflect current issues and risks. This will ensure that the audits are timely, appropriate and add value, subject to the comments raised above. It takes account of issues identified by the West Mercia Energy risk management frameworks, including the risk appetite levels set by management for the different activities or parts of the business audited. The proposed Internal Audit plan considers the requirement to produce an annual internal audit opinion and assurance framework. Some minor adjustments may be needed to the plan before it is finalised; if significant, these will be agreed by the Director and reported to the next Joint Committee.

7. Resources and Delivery

WME has provided a budget in 2024/25 to deliver 20 days of audit.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Internal audit strategic plan 2020/21 – February 2020

Internal audit strategic plan 2021/22 – March 2021

Internal audit strategic plan 2022/23 – March 2022

Internal audit strategic plan 2023/24 – March 2023

Member

Councillor Gwilym Butler of Shropshire Council (Chair of the Joint Committee)

Appendices

Appendix A: West Mercia Energy – Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2024/25

APPENDIX A**WEST MERCIA ENERGY - AUDIT AREAS**

AUDIT	Including review of:	2024/25 DAYS
PROCUREMENT	Review of procurement arrangements re the new electricity and liquid fuels contracts	1 (2 days carried forward to 2025/26)
DEBTORS	Review the operational aspects of billing and account management	4
FINANCE	A combined audit reviewing the areas of Finance, Payroll and Creditors general controls.	5
IT	Review development of IT controls as required by management and follow up of IT related recommendations.	4
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT	Corporate Governance & Risk Management Combined review (including EGARRP)	2
ENGAGEMENT MANAGEMENT	To include follow up of previous recommendations, audit management, audit planning, servicing Audit Committee, advisory	4
	Contingency	0
TOTAL		20