

AUDIT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Suffolk Audit Committee was held at Police Headquarters Martlesham, and via Microsoft Teams at 09:00 on Friday 31 March 23.

PRESENT:

Audit Committee Members

Ian Blofield (joined via Teams), Hugh May, Robert Millea (joined via Team), Andrew Peck and David Rowe (Chair).

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Colette Batson (Chief Finance Officer), Kate Boswell (Executive Assistant to the PCC and Chief Executive), Sandra Graffham (Head of Communications and Engagement), Christopher Jackson (Chief Executive), and Tim Passmore (PCC).

Constabulary

Rachel Kearton (Chief Constable), Kenneth Kilpatrick (Assistant Chief Officer).

Present by invitation

Mark Hodgson (Partner, Ernst and Young – External Auditor) joined for the Private Agenda, Claire Lavery (Audit Manager, TIAA – Internal Auditor), Fiona Roe (Director of Audit, TIAA – Internal Auditor)

Apologies

Vicky Chong (Assistant Manager, Ernst and Young – External Auditor),

PRIVATE AGENDA

[A more detailed account of the discussions and decisions on the following items is contained in the confidential minutes]

1 CLOSED MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2022 AND MATTERS ARISING (AC23/01)

- 1.1 The minutes of the Audit Committee held on the 2 December 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and approved by the Audit Committee Chair.

2. **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22 (VERBAL)**

2.2 The Assistant Chief Officer provided an update on the Statement of Accounts 2021/22

3 **DATA PROTECTION MATTER (VERBAL)**

3.1 The Chief Constable provided an update on the data protection matter.

4. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

4.1 There was no other business.

Meeting end 09:33

PUBLIC AGENDA

5. **ELECTION OF AUDIT COMMITTEE CHAIR**

5.1 The Chief Executive opened the meeting and asked for nominations for Chair. David Rowe was elected as Chair for the ensuing year by unanimous vote.

6 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

6.1 An Audit Committee Member made a declaration of interest, stating that although they didn't believe this to be an issue, they wished to have it noted on record that they have a son who is a serving Police Officer with the City of London Police.

7 **MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2022 AND MATTERS ARISING (PAPER AC23/02)**

7.1 The minutes of the Audit Committee held on the 2 December 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and approved by the Audit Committee Chair.

7.2 An update on the following actions was provided as follows:

Item	Action	Owner / Outcome
3.4	Workplace Health: The Internal Auditor to work with Workplace Health and provide a copy of the KPIs already in place.	Complete – the Internal Auditor confirmed an update has been provided and the KPIs are in place.

3.6	Workplace Health: The Internal Auditor to recirculate the missing report as mentioned in appendix C.	Complete – the Internal Auditor confirmed this has been circulated.
3.7	Workplace Health: The Internal Auditor to follow up on the request of the PCC to provide the Trauma Risk Management Data for Suffolk, and details around the issue with the two extra members of staff.	The Internal Auditor confirmed they will circulate the spreadsheet.
3.8	Workplace Health: The Internal Auditor to find follow up on the records backlog and provide them to the Audit Committee.	Complete – the Internal Auditor confirmed that the backlog has been cleared.
3.9	Complaints: The Internal Auditor to provide the numbers behind these figures to the Audit Committee.	The Internal Auditor confirmed 372 complaints were received in the previous year, versus 289 this year, and these figures are favourable compared to Norfolk. An Audit Committee Member questioned if there are any discernible trends within the complaints, e.g., things that come up regularly. The Internal Auditor confirmed there are no trends being identified, but there is a general increase being seen in public confidence due to the nature of the media at present.
3.10	Complaints: The Internal Auditor to provide the raw numbers involved for the escalation of complaints to the PCC information in the next report.	Complete – the Internal Auditor confirmed this will be included within the next report.
3.11	Complaints: The Internal Auditor to provide an update with further data as to what was covered regarding the complaints, rather than just the Executive Summary.	An Audit Committee Member questioned if any trends around complaints about Officer X have been identified. The Internal Auditors confirmed if trends are identified regarding a specific officer, they are passed to PSD to be investigated, but to date no significant trends have been identified.
3.12	Complaints: The Internal Auditor to update the figures, separating out Norfolk and Suffolk for complaint recommendations.	The Internal Auditor confirmed reports going forward will show Suffolk and Norfolk separately.
3.13	Complaints: The OPCC to share the website link for complaints with the Audit Committee Members.	The OPCC confirmed this has been completed.

3.14	PEQF: The Internal Auditor to expand the term for PEQF (Executive Police Education Qualification Framework) rather than use the acronym for the next report.	The Internal Auditor confirmed this will be updated in the next report.
3.15	Progress Against Annual Plan: The Audit Committee Chair to work with the CFO and the Internal Auditors to delivery this approach.	The Audit Committee Chair, CFO, and Internal Auditor confirmed this is included within the internal plan.
3.16	Progress Update: The Internal Auditor to include the references for Progress Update in the next report.	The Internal Auditor confirmed the report is in progress.
3.17	Progress C: The Internal Auditor to provide more information around the comments on page 12 directly to the PCC.	Complete.
4.6	External Auditors to respond to the client feedback around the request for specifics with regards to the development of the “right audit culture”.	Complete.

8 SUMMARY OF INTERNAL CONTROLS (SICA) ASSURANCE REPORT (PAPER AC23/03)

8.1 The Internal Auditor presented this report, highlighting that all audits are showing as reasonable assurance with no priority 1 recommendations made.

Establishment, Capacity, Recruitment and Retention:

8.2 The Internal Auditor highlighted that the recommendation raised concerns regarding the resourcing team, and to ensure they will be multidisciplinary, plus there will be KPIs developed for recruitment.

8.3 The PCC asked when will the recruitment timeline be met. The Internal Auditor confirmed that the timeline is set and provided by the Constabulary.

8.4 An Audit Committee Member queried if having a multidisciplinary recruitment team would be the most efficient way to complete recruitment, considering the differences in Police Officer vs Police Staff roles. The Internal Auditor confirmed the recruitment team organise and oversee the process of recruitment, and once at interview stage this would then be designated within the relevant team.

Absence Management:

- 8.5 The Internal Auditor confirmed there were 7 outstanding recommendations. Inconsistencies have been flagged via this audit with regards to the meetings taking place for those off sick, or placed on limited duties. A process has been put in place to manage limited duties, but monitoring will continue to ensure there is improved compliance within this area.
- 8.6 An Audit Committee Member raised the point that all of the recommendations expire as at 31 March or 30 April 2023, and questioned whether timely delivery is expected. The Internal Auditor confirmed that the recommendations are on track, and will provide a detailed follow up as part of the next report.
ACTION: The Internal Auditor to provide a detailed follow up on the progress of Absence Management recommendations due on 31 March and 30 April 2023.
- 8.7 An Audit Committee Member asked if there were concerns about waiting for legal advice for 3 years. The ACO responded that the legal advice is awaited from Norfolk. The outstanding areas have had their policies endorsed, therefore the process has not been delayed due to the legal team.
- 8.8 The PCC commented that there was no point in having the action dates if they aren't adhered to, and requested confirmation that the policy about being on sick and secondary employment has now been put into place. The Chief Constable confirmed this policy was in place.
- 8.9 An Audit Committee Member queried the monitoring arrangements for limited duties, is there an HR dashboard that tracks this. The Internal Auditor confirmed that they are aware of a dashboard within HR, but would need to check if limited duties are covered within this.
ACTION: Internal Auditor to clarify if limited duties is included within the HR monitoring dashboard, and feedback to the Audit Committee.
- 8.10 An Audit Committee Member requested an update on the review of sickness cases, and the 3 that have not had their follow up meeting. The Internal Auditor confirmed that the sickness policy is available and has been published, the cases flagged have been reviewed and the meetings have then happened.

Performance Management:

- 8.11 The Internal Auditor confirmed that 2 minor recommendations have been made for qualitative quality of information (data quality) and performance analysts.
- 8.12 The PCC raised that the issue of data quality has also been mentioned at the Accountability and Performance Panel, and whether progress was being made. Secondly in terms of reference for the analysts how do we decide what we prioritise. The Internal Auditor confirmed that the performance team has a manager in place, as well as a process for escalating issues with work. In terms of data quality, there are still issues with poor input data resulting in poor data output. Therefore this requires a cultural shift, and the Internal Auditors have focused on visiting the Police Investigation Centres (PICS), to assess how the data is being inputted to see where things are going wrong. Often the data input is constrained due to time pressure, without any thought for where

the data goes. Work is ongoing to help staff to understand the implications of their data entry, gain their buy in, to help increase the quality of the data output.

Safeguarding:

- 8.13 The Internal Auditor confirmed that 5 routine recommendations have been made.
- 8.14 An Audit Committee Member asked why the rating of reasonable assurance was made and not substantial; that on page 8 of the report that there are plans for Norfolk, but no mention for Suffolk. The Internal Auditor confirmed that this is a joint report, but as Suffolk has no concerns only the ones for Norfolk have been mentioned. The PCC suggested that to avoid confusion in any future reports, can a note be added stating there are no issues for Suffolk.
ACTION: The Internal Auditor to add a note to any future reports stating that in appropriate circumstance Suffolk has no issues, to avoid any confusion.
- 8.15 An Audit Committee Member raised in the context of the inspection for safeguarding, who carries out the inspection of the Police Force. The Chief Constable confirmed the HMICFRS are the inspectorate body that carries out the inspections of the force.
- 8.16 An Audit Committee Member asked for confirmation as to the sample size for protection order testing, as referenced on page 9, point 4 of the report.
ACTION: Internal Auditor to confirm the sample size used for the protection order testing.
- 8.17 An Audit Committee Member asked regarding the report into Child Strip Searches, why were appropriate adults not present. The Chief Constable confirmed that for Suffolk none of the searches were conducted contrary of policy. Where it does happen without an appropriate adult present there are exceptional circumstances that allows this to take place in this way.
- 8.18 An Audit Committee Member flagged that recommendation 4 is regarding a missing file. The Internal Auditor confirmed that processes have been put in place to ensure this doesn't happen in future.

Progress Against Annual Plan:

- 8.18 The Internal Auditor confirmed that for Whistle Blowing / Use of Social Media the scope of these audits has been extended but they are still at draft stage, and are awaiting the now delayed national guidelines. There have been some delays to audits already in progress, due to vetting having expired for the audit staff working on them. Measures are now in place within next year's plans to ensure there are not further issues caused by vetting.
- 8.19 An Audit Committee Member questioned regarding the use of social media, whilst national guidance is awaited, how can there be assured that Suffolk is not participating in inappropriate social media usage as reported on by the media regarding the Metropolitan Police. The Internal Auditor confirmed there doesn't seem to be a problem, the culture is allowing whistle blowing reports via PSD, and no issues have been identified so far.

- 8.20 An Audit Committee Member asked that regarding the 14 audits due to come to the next meeting in June, whether that too much to look at during a single meeting. The Internal Auditor proposed to circulate the reports outside of the meeting to allow time to digest before the June meeting. The Audit Committee Chair confirmed that this will need to be noted accordingly for the agenda, and the audits will still need to be covered during the meeting.
- 8.21 An Audit Committee Member queried the removal of approval for POs under £50K, as mentioned on page 16 of the report. The Internal Auditor confirmed the process is in place, but the remainder of the work will be completed after the process launches on 1 April 2023 to ensure it is working. The ACO confirmed that it has always been the case that POs under £50K remain at a local level for sign off, which is still the current position.
- 8.22 The PCC asked why there were delays within the E-recruitment system. The Internal Auditor confirmed that the policy needs to be aligned to the new system, and to avoid duplication within the system the recommendations are paused until the go live date of June 2023. An Audit Committee Member asked for confirmation that this was signed off at the March JNCC meeting. The ACO confirmed this would need to be checked and will confirm in due course.
ACTION: ACO to confirm if the March JNCC meeting signed off the use of the E-recruitment system.
- 8.23 An Audit Committee Member asked regarding protecting public places from terrorist attacks, whether this responsibility fell to the Police, or should it be local authority / environmental health etc. The Chief Constable confirmed the Police are the service that responds in a crisis, but other agencies have responsibilities to ensure everything is in place prior to incidents happening.

9 INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (AC23/04)

- 9.1 The Internal Auditor presented this report and asked for any questions.
- 9.2 An Audit Committee Member asked regarding the drop in days planned for next year, afforded sufficient coverage and time for the internal audit to cover the items within the plan. The ACO responded that the days are linked to the agreed budget, and that full discussions have taken place with the Internal Auditors to ensure there is suitable coverage for the plan. However should anything arise during the course of the year the discussion can be revisited.
- 9.3 An Audit Committee Member asked for clarity around the Absence Management Audit Plan, and how it is different to this year's audit. The Internal Auditor confirmed absence continues to be a significant pressure for Norfolk and Suffolk, therefore further audit will address that appropriate measures are in place to ensure it is being managed.
- 9.4 An Audit Committee Member requested what the focus of the plan for data quality will be, to differentiate it from this year. The Internal Auditor confirm that data quality is a key strategic risk, therefore it will be up to management to decide and direct where assurance is required.

- 9.5 An Audit Committee Member questioned the scope of content of the plan for the coming 3 years, and the extent to which the Internal Auditors were looking at insurance arrangements. The Internal Auditor confirmed that this is looked at within audits for banking, health and safety, risk management etc, so it is covered within each audit area rather than there being an individual audit solely on insurance.
- 9.6 An Audit Committee Member questioned if the business continuity audit will address the changes in working practices since Covid, i.e., with more remote and hybrid working. The Internal Auditor responded that they ensure the arrangements are more suitable with a more agile approach to working, as reflected by the changes of practice.
- 9.7 An Audit Committee Member asked what the cyber security robustness is. The Internal Auditor confirmed this would be specific to IT, and the audit will review against peers and national standards.

10 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT AC23/05

- 10.1 The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) presented this report.
- 10.2 The key headlines show that both the mid-year and strategy haven't changed, and the criteria we assess against remains the same. There is a single long term loan which is due for repayment in 2035, and presently there are no plans to expand our external borrowing. The CFO invited comments and questions.
- 10.3 An Audit Committee Member asked regarding the £8M held in non-UK banks, whether there was enhanced monitoring in place. The CFO confirmed that there is currently heightened sensitivity due to the current media, but these investments are reported and monitored, and our counterparty maintenance criteria is high, therefore they are strictly monitored.
- 10.4 An Audit Committee Member queried if there should be four treasury management reports a year as stated within the terms of quarterly reporting on p 8-9 of the report. The CFO confirmed that presently there are three treasury management reports via the audit committee, but in addition to this the monthly financial monitoring reports given to the PCC includes treasury reporting which hits the necessary parameters.
- 10.5 An Audit Committee Member questioned whether the training logs were continuous or just on Day One. The CFO confirmed that with the Treasury Management Contract, services include access to training materials, and the relevant officers are qualified accountants who annually have to undertake training as part of their own continuing professional development.
- 10.6.1 An Audit Committee Member asked in reference to page 14, point 5.8, whether it could be confirmed that this was the long list, and if so, you would a short list be selected from it. The CFO

confirmed that this is the long list, but there is a short list of counterparties that is monitored and that each investment is considered on an individual basis.

- 10.7 The PCC requested it be formally noted that he would be cautious of placing taxpayers’ money in overseas bank accounts, having experienced the previous fall out of the financial crash of both the Icelandic banks and Egg, and will take forward the Audit Committee Members comments regarding investments and discuss further with the CFO.

ACTION: PCC and CFO to further discuss Treasury Management Investments.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 11.1 There was no other business.

This part of the meeting closed at 10:56

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Item	Action	Owner
8.6	The Internal Auditor to provide a detailed follow up on the progress of Absence Management recommendations due on 31 March and 30 April 2023.	Internal Auditor
8.9	Internal Auditor to clarify if limited duties is included within the HR monitoring dashboard, and feedback to the Audit Committee.	Internal Auditor
8.14	The Internal Auditor to add a note to any future reports stating that in appropriate circumstances Suffolk has no issues, to avoid any confusion.	Internal Auditor
8.16	Internal Auditor to confirm the sample size used for the protection order testing.	Internal Auditor
8.22	ACO to confirm if the March JNCC meeting signed off the use of the E-recruitment system.	ACO
10.7	PCC and CFO to further discuss Treasury Management Investments.	CFO / PCC