

CIPFA Knowledge and Skills Framework

Knowledge area	Details of knowledge required	How the audit committee member is able to apply the knowledge	Overall assessment of knowledge/skills (1-5, 1 being minimal and 5 being strong)				
			1	2	3	4	5
Organisational knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of the authority's governance structure and decision-making processes. Knowledge and organisational objectives and major functions of the authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This knowledge will be core to most of the audit committee's activities, including the AGS review, internal and external audit reports and risk registers. 					
Audit committee role and functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An understanding of the audit committee's role and place within the governance structures. Familiarity with the committee's terms of reference and accountability arrangements. Knowledge of the purpose and role of the audit committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This knowledge will enable the audit committee to prioritise its work to ensure it discharges its responsibilities under its terms of reference and to avoid overlapping the work of others. It will help the committee undertake a self-assessment and prepare its annual report. 					
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the seven principles as outlined in Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (CIPFA/Solace, 2016). The requirements of the AGS. How the principles of governance are implemented locally as set out in the local code of governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee will review the local code of governance and consider how governance arrangements align to the principles in the Framework. The committee will plan the assurances it is to receive to adequately support the AGS. The committee will review the AGS and consider how the authority is meeting the principles of good governance. The committee will receive audit reports and information on risks relating to governance. 					
Internal audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An awareness of the key principles of the PSIAS and the LGAN. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The audit committee has oversight of the internal audit function and will monitor its adherence to professional internal audit standards. 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the arrangements for delivery of the internal audit service in the authority and the charter. • How the role of the head of internal audit is fulfilled. • Details of the most recent external assessment and level of conformance with the standards. • Internal audit's strategy, plan and most recent annual opinion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit committee will review the assurances from internal audit work and will review the risk-based audit plan. • The committee will also receive the annual report, including an opinion and information on conformance with professional standards. • In relying on the work of internal audit, the committee will need to be confident that professional standards are being followed. • The audit committee chair is likely to be interviewed as part of the external quality assessment, and the committee will receive the outcome of the assessment and action plan. 					
Financial management and financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the financial statements that a local authority must produce and the principles it must follow to produce them. • An understanding of good financial management practice as set out in the CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code) and the level of compliance with it. • Knowledge of how the organisation meets the requirements of the role of the CFO as required by The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, 2016) and The Role of CFOs in Policing (2021). • An overview of the principal financial risks the authority faces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the financial statements prior to publication, asking questions. • Receiving the external audit report and opinion on the financial audit. • Reviewing both external and internal audit recommendations relating to financial management and controls. • The audit committee should consider compliance with the FM Code and the role of the CFO and how this is met when reviewing the AGS. 					

External audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the role and functions of the external auditor and who currently undertakes this role. • Knowledge of the key reports and assurances that external audit will provide. • Familiarity with the auditor's most recent plan and the opinion reports. • Knowledge about arrangements for the appointment of auditors and quality management undertaken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit committee will meet with the external auditor regularly and receive their reports and opinions. • Monitoring external audit recommendations and maximising the benefit from the audit process. • The audit committee should monitor the relationship between the external auditor and the authority and support the delivery of an effective service. 					
Risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the principles of risk management, including how it supports good governance and decision making. • Knowledge of the risk management policy and strategy of the organisation. • Understanding of risk governance arrangements, including the role of members and of the audit committee. • Knowledge of the current risk maturity of the organisation and any key areas of improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reviewing the AGS, the committee will consider the robustness of the authority's risk management arrangements. • Awareness of the major risks the authority faces is necessary to support the review of several audit committee agenda items, including the risk-based internal audit plan, external audit plans and the explanatory foreword of the accounts. Typically, risk registers will be used to inform the committee. • The committee should also review reports and action plans to develop the application of risk management practice. 					
Counter fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the main areas of fraud and corruption risk that the organisation is exposed to. • Knowledge of the principles of good fraud risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of fraud risks and good fraud risk management practice will be helpful when the committee reviews the organisation's fraud strategy and receives reports on the effectiveness of that strategy. 					

	<p>practice in accordance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the organisation's arrangements for tackling fraud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment of arrangements should support the AGS, and knowledge of good fraud risk management practice will support the audit committee member in reviewing that assessment. 					
Values of good governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the Seven Principles of Public Life. • Knowledge of the authority's key arrangements to uphold ethical standards for both members and staff (eg code of conduct). • Knowledge of the whistleblowing arrangements in the authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit committee member will draw on this knowledge when reviewing governance issues and the AGS. • Oversight of the effectiveness of whistleblowing will be considered as part of the AGS. The audit committee member should know to whom concerns should be reported. 					
Treasury management (only if it is within the terms of reference of the committee to provide scrutiny)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Scrutiny of Treasury Management is an assessment tool for reviewing the arrangements for undertaking scrutiny of treasury management. The key knowledge areas identified are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – regulatory requirements – treasury risks – the organisation's treasury management strategy – the organisation's policies and procedures in relation to treasury management. <p>See also Treasure your assets (Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, 2017).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core knowledge on treasury management is essential for the committee undertaking the role of scrutiny. 					

Core Skills

Skills	Key elements	How the audit committee member is able to apply the skill	Overall assessment of knowledge/skills (1-5, 1 being minimal and 5 being strong)				
			1	2	3	4	5
Strategic thinking and understanding of materiality	Able to focus on material issues and the overall position rather than being side tracked by the detail.	When reviewing audit reports, findings will include areas of higher risk or materiality to the organisation but may also highlight more minor errors or control failures. The audit committee member will need to pitch their review at an appropriate level to avoid spending too much time on detail.					
Questioning and constructive challenge	Able to frame questions that draw out relevant facts and explanations, challenging performance and seeking explanations while avoiding hostility or grandstanding.	The audit committee will review reports and recommendations to address weaknesses in internal control. The audit committee member will seek to understand the reasons for weaknesses and ensure a solution is found.					
Focus on improvement	Ensuring there is a clear plan of action and allocation of responsibility.	The audit committee's outcome will be to secure improvements to the governance, risk management or control of the organisation, including clearly defined actions and responsibilities. Where errors or control failures have occurred, the audit committee should seek assurances that appropriate action has been taken.					
Able to balance practicality against theory	Able to understand the practical implications of recommendations to understand how they might work in practice.	The audit committee should seek assurances that planned actions are practical and realistic.					

Clear communication skills and focus on the needs of users	Support the use of plain English in communications, avoiding jargon, acronyms, etc.	The audit committee will seek to ensure that external documents such as the AGS and the narrative report in the accounts are well written for a non-expert audience.					
Objectivity	Evaluate information based on evidence presented, avoiding bias or subjectivity.	The audit committee will receive assurance reports and review risk registers. There may be differences of opinion about the significance of risk and the appropriate control responses, and committee member will need to weigh up differing views.					
Meeting management skills	Chair the meeting effectively: summarise issues raised, ensure all participants can contribute, and focus on the outcome and actions from the meeting.	These skills are essential for the audit committee chair to help ensure that meetings stay on track and address the items on the agenda. The skills are desirable for all other members.					