



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Audit and Risk Committee

1.0.1

Title:	1.0.1 – AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE
Adopted:	19 December 2018
Last Reviewed:	17 February 2021
Associated Legislation:	Sections 7.1A, of the Local Government Act A1995. Regulations 16 of the Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996
Associated Documents:	Shire of Mingenew Standing Orders Local Law 2017 1.2.2 Risk Management Policy v1 Risk Management Framework & Procedures v1 Shire of Mingenew Risk Profile 1.2.8 Code of Conduct
Review Responsibility:	Audit & Risk Committee
Delegation:	-

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Audit and Risk Committee “the Committee” is to accept responsibility for the annual external audit and liaise with the local government’s auditor so that Council can be satisfied with the performance of the local government in managing its statutory and fiscal affairs.

Reports from the Committee will assist Council in discharging its legislative responsibilities of controlling the local government’s affairs, determining the local government’s policies and overseeing the allocation of the local government’s finances and resources. The Committee will ensure transparency in the Local Government’s reporting and will liaise with the CEO to ensure the effective and efficient management of the local government’s systems and processes.

The Committee is to facilitate –

- the enhancement of the credibility and objectivity of internal and external financial reporting;
- effective management of financial and other risks and the protection of Council assets;
- compliance with laws and regulations as well as use of best practice guidelines relative to audit, risk management, internal control and legislative compliance;
- the coordination of the internal audit function with the external audit; and
- the provision of an effective means of communication between the external auditor, any internal auditor/s, the CEO and the Council.

POWERS OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

The Audit and Risk Committee is to report to Council and provide appropriate advice and recommendations on matters relevant to its term of reference. This is in order to facilitate informed decision-making by Council in relation to the legislative functions and duties of the local government that have not been delegated to the CEO.

The Committee is a formally appointed Committee of Council and is responsible to that body. The Committee does not have executive powers or authority to implement actions in areas over which the



CEO has legislative responsibility and does not have any delegated financial responsibility. The Committee does not have any management functions and cannot involve itself in management processes or procedures.

MEMBERSHIP

- The Committee will consist of at least four members including one external member, with a recommended four elected members and one external person. All Council-appointed members shall have full voting rights.
- The CEO and employees are not members of the Committee.
- The CEO or his/her nominee is to be available to attend meetings to provide advice and guidance to the Committee.
- The local government shall provide secretarial and administrative support to the Committee.

QUORUM

A quorum shall consist of at least 50% of the number of offices of Committee members, unless a reduction is approved by the local government under s5.15 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Appointments of external independent persons will be made following a public advertisement/expressions of interest process or as otherwise determined by Council and be for a maximum term of three years. An independent member is eligible to reapply and be appointed for an additional term but is subject to the requirements of the recruitment / expressions of interest process each term expiry.

The following selection criteria is desirable to assist in appointing an Independent Member to the Committee:

- Financial literacy and, ideally with qualifications or extensive experience in business management and/or accounting;
- Knowledge of local government operations and the environment within which councils operate;
- Strong communication skills;
- High level of personal and professional integrity and ethics; and
- Demonstrated knowledge of risk management principles and practices.

The evaluation of potential members will be administered by the CEO and appointments will be approved by Council.

Council may terminate the appointment of any member prior to the expiry of his/her term, if:

- The Chairperson considers that the member is not making a positive contribution to the Committee; or
- The member is found to be in breach of the Shire of Mingenew Code of Conduct or a serious contravention of the Local Government Act 1995; or
- A member's conduct, action or comments brings the Shire of Mingenew into disrepute.

The terms of the appointment should be arranged to ensure an orderly rotation and continuity of membership, despite changes to Council's elected representatives.



By approval of the CEO and within budgetary constraints, reimbursement of reasonable out of pocket expenses, such as travel costs, will be paid to each external person who is a member of the Committee upon application within the relevant financial year.

CHAIRPERSON

The position of Chairperson shall be appointed by a majority vote of the Committee following a call for nominations for the position at the next meeting following an Ordinary Local Government Election and after which Committee delegates have been formally appointed by Council or following the resignation of the Chairperson. A Chairperson may be reappointed.

MEETINGS

The Committee shall meet as circumstances require in order to meet its internal and external auditing requirements (commonly 3-4 times per year) .

Additional meetings shall be convened at the discretion of the Chairperson or by request from a majority of voting members, in consultation with the CEO to ensure the timely preparation of meeting notices, agendas and any other information required for the meeting.

REPORTING

Reports and recommendations of each Committee meeting shall be presented to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The duties and responsibilities of the Committee will be -

- a. Provide guidance and assistance to Council as to carrying out the functions of the local government in relation to audits;
- b. Meet with the auditor once in each year and provide a report to Council on the matters discussed and outcome of those discussions;
- c. Liaise with the CEO to ensure that the local government does everything in its power to –
 - o assist the auditor to conduct the audit and carry out his or her other duties under the *Local Government Act 1995*; and
 - o ensure that audits are conducted successfully and expeditiously;
- d. Examine the reports of the auditor after receiving a report from the CEO on the matters to –
 - o determine if any matters raised require action to be taken by the local government; and
 - o ensure that appropriate action is taken in respect of those matters;
- e. Review the report prepared by the CEO on any actions taken in respect of any matters raised in the report of the auditor and presenting the report to Council for adoption prior to the end of the next financial year or 6 months after the last report prepared by the auditor is received, whichever is the latest in time;
- f. Review the scope of the audit plan and program and its effectiveness;
- g. Review the appropriateness of special internal audit assignments undertaken by an external auditor at the request of Council or Chief Executive Officer;
- h. Review allocation of risk and audit resources in conjunction with the Shire's Risk Profile;
- i. Review the level of resources allocated to internal audit and the scope of its authority;
- j. Review risk management policies, procedures and guidelines;



- k. Review reports of internal audits, external audits and control assurance reviews, monitor the implementation of recommendations made by the audit and review the extent to which Council and management reacts to matters raised;
- l. Facilitate liaison between the internal and external auditor to promote compatibility, to the extent appropriate, between their audit programs;
- m. Review the local government's annual financial report prior to Council receiving the final report for adoption, focusing on –
 - o accounting policies and practices;
 - o changes to accounting policies and practices;
 - o the process used in making significant accounting estimates;
 - o significant adjustments to the financial report (if any) arising from the audit process;
 - o compliance with accounting standards and other reporting requirements; and
 - o significant variances from prior years;
- n. Consider and recommend adoption of the annual financial report to Council. Review any significant changes that may arise subsequent to any such recommendation but before the annual financial report is signed;
- o. Address issues brought to the attention of the Committee, including responding to requests from Council for advice that are within the parameters of the Committee's terms of reference;
- p. Seek information or obtain expert advice through the CEO on matters of concern within the scope of the Committee's terms of reference following authorisation from the Council;
- q. Review the annual Compliance Audit Return and report to Council the results of that review, and
- r. Consider the CEO's reviews of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the local government's systems and procedures in regard to risk management, internal control and legislative compliance, required to be provided to the Committee, and report to Council the results of those reviews.

INTERNAL AUDIT

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

The scope of an internal audit would be determined by the Audit & Risk Committee, with input from the Chief Executive Officer and senior staff, based on the size of the local government's internal operations and the level of compliance to be achieved. The role differs from that of the external auditor who is appointed to report independently on the annual financial statements. The external auditor's primary role is to decide whether the annual financial statements of a local government are free of material misstatement.

There are certain functions of the internal audit that complement the external auditor's role. As the external auditor plans for an effective audit they need to assess and determine whether to include the scope, procedures and outcomes of the internal audit. The CEO must refer all internal audit reports to the Audit & Risk Committee for consideration.

An internal auditor's activities should typically include the following:



- a. review of the internal control structure, monitoring the operations of the information system and internal controls and providing recommendations for improvements;
- b. review relevant internal systems and processes, providing recommendations for efficiency or productivity gains;
- c. a risk assessment with the intention of minimising exposure to all forms of risk on the local government;
- d. examination of financial and operating information that includes detailed testing of transactions, balances and procedures;
- e. a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of operations and services including non-financial controls of a local government;
- f. a review of compliance with management policies and directives and any other internal requirements;
- g. review of the annual Compliance Audit Return;
- h. assist in the CEO's triennial reviews of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the local government's systems and procedures regarding risk management, internal control and legislative compliance; and
- i. specific tasks requested by management.

For local government, an internal auditor should report functionally to the Audit & Risk Committee and administratively to the CEO. It should be remembered that pursuant to section 5.41 of the Act, the CEO is responsible for the day-to-day management of Council activities including the direction of staff and implicitly the internal audit function. The CEO may choose to delegate this responsibility provided always that the delegation does not directly or indirectly interfere with the ability of the Internal Auditor to conduct an internal audit function free from interference.

A clear and properly defined reporting relationship ensures that the internal auditor is empowered to perform their role working with management. The direct reporting line to the Audit & Risk Committee also acts as an adequate safeguard in the event of a serious breakdown in internal controls or internal control culture at senior levels in the organisation.

While it is recognised that smaller Councils may not be able to justify a full-time internal auditor, a small size of operation does not justify forgoing internal audit altogether. If the Audit & Risk Committee or management is of the view that the employment of an independent internal auditor either full-time or part-time is not warranted, it may request the Council to have the internal audit function undertaken as necessary by an external contractor or expand the role of its external auditor.

The internal auditor or his or her professional company should only undertake internal audit functions that complement the internal audit and do not cloud the objectivity and independence of the external audit. An external auditor must not audit information prepared by them or their accounting practice, as this is considered incompatible with the standard of independence.

Local governments that do not establish an internal audit process but require a review of the financial management systems and procedures, may decide to use the services of the external auditor for that purpose. Such reviews are to be undertaken every four years in accordance with regulation 5(2)(c) of the *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996*.



The review of financial management systems and procedures provides the external auditor with greater assurance of systems and procedures used to prepare the annual financial statements, and whether they provide information free of material misstatement.