

CIPFA Better Governance Forum and CIPFA Training

Developing your audit committee

**Training and resources to support audit committees in the
public services**

Spring 2016

Introducing CIPFA's Support for Audit Committees

The audit committee in a public service organisation is an important component of good governance and strong public financial management. Promoting these principles within the public services is at the core of CIPFA and why we are keen to spread good practice.

We have years of experience in supporting audit committees and we understand the pressures and challenges audit committee members face. We know the pace of change in the public services presents new pressures and keeping up to date is difficult, even for finance and governance professionals. It is however vital that audit committees work effectively, making best use of their limited resources to support governance, audit and financial management within their organisations. They provide an important assurance mechanism that the organisation is doing its best to manage its risks and make best use of its resources.

This brochure outlines the range of training, resources and support that is available. Dates for open training and workshops will be advertised on the CIPFA website. For in-house training or facilitation please contact one of our team.

We look forward to working with you and your audit committee.

Diana Melville
Governance Advisor
CIPFA Better Governance Forum

Contact Details

Dates of Events:

For training and workshops visit the events pages of our website. You can see detailed programmes and book online.

www.cipfa.org/training/open-courses

In-house training:

To discuss your requirements please contact inhousetraining@cipfa.org or 0207 543 5702

CIPFA Better Governance Forum:

Visit our homepage www.cipfa.org/Services/Networks/Better-Governance-Forum or contact Diana Melville, diana.melville@cipfa.org or 01722 349398

CIPFA publications:

Details of audit committee publications can be found on the CIPFA website:
www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/publications

Open Training and Workshops

CIPFA runs the following as open events so you can book places as you need them. Having a mix of organisations on the event provides a range of perspectives and a chance for audit committee members to network with others.

Introduction to the audit committee

This training course is aimed at audit committee members who are relatively new to the role. The trainer will guide delegates through the essentials, helping them to make a valuable contribution to their committee from the start.

Key features:

- The purpose of an audit committee and its accountabilities
- Key roles and responsibilities – including reference to the CIPFA position statement
- Effective chairing and support for the committee
- Working with internal and external auditors, including understanding audit reports
- Questioning, challenging and supporting officers and auditors
- An outline of good governance in the public services

Developing the knowledge and skills of the audit committee

This training course will provide more in depth knowledge of the core areas of an audit committee's functions. It will give the audit committee member new insights and develop their skills.

- A topical update of recent developments impacting on audit committee agendas
- Public sector internal audit standards (audit committee role)
- Strategic risk management
- Planning assurance
- Developing skills, especially soft skills and working better together
- Evaluating effectiveness and identifying improvements to make

Improving your audit committee

These workshops are aimed at officers and chairs or experienced members of audit committees who want to assess the effectiveness of the committee. These more focused workshops will involve participation in an evaluation prior to the event and lots of discussion and debate. Due to the highly participative nature of these events delegate numbers will be restricted.

- Assessing strengths and weaknesses
- Diagnosing the problem
- Ideas for solutions or work arounds
- Getting the right focus/ balance
- Assessing knowledge and skills of committee members

Development day for local authority audit committees

These events will provide audit committee members with updates on major governance developments that will impact on the work of the audit committee member. The topics are likely to include:

- Topical update, an overview of recent developments

- The new *Good Governance Framework* for local authorities
- Audit committees in collaborative arrangements, including combined authorities
- Procuring external audit, auditor panels and the audit committee. A look at the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the implications for the audit committee.
- Analysing your effectiveness and identifying ways to develop

Development day for police audit committees

These workshops are delivered jointly by the Police Network and the CIPFA Better Governance Forum. They will build on the events held annually since 2013 to provide updates and guidance to members on Police audit committees. The topics are likely to include:

- Police technical update
- Proposed changes to the *Good Governance Framework* for police
- Topical update, an overview of recent governance developments
- Procuring external audit, auditor panels and the audit committee. A look at the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the implications for the audit committee.
- Analysing your effectiveness

Please note subscribers to the Better Governance Forum can use their pre-paid places on any of the open training or workshops listed in this brochure.

In-house Training

Any of the open events can be delivered in-house for your audit committee. This can be cost-effective and convenient if you wish the whole committee to receive training.

Although the open training and workshops provide a handy package of topics it is also possible to mix and match topics so you get exactly what you need. We can also customise the training to your organisation. For example when we cover risk management we can use your own risk management policy and risk registers.

<p>Role and purpose of the audit committee: Key roles and responsibilities Reviewing the terms of reference and focus of the committee Accountability</p> <p>Core functions: Working with internal and external auditors Public sector internal audit standards Good governance Assurance arrangements Partnership assurance Strategic risk management Analysing your risk appetite Value for money Counter fraud Reviewing the financial statements Treasury management</p>	<p>Skills development: Effective chairing and support for the committee Reviewing audit reports Soft skills</p> <p>Topical updates</p> <p>Evaluating effectiveness Using CIPFA's audit committee guidance and other tools to challenge audit committees to improve</p>
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Reviewing the financial statements

Reviewing the financial statements and recommending their approval is an important but daunting task for the audit committee. We can provide a range of support for audit committees, including the following:

- Purpose of the financial statements
- Role of the audit committee
- Key features of the principal statements
- Types of questions to ask
- Guide to financial policies.

If required these sessions can make use of the organisation's draft financial statements to help the committee navigate their way round the accounts. We have successfully delivered support immediately before the meeting at which accounts are reviewed to help identify questions to ask.

In-house Facilitation and Support

As well as training we can also offer an evaluation and facilitation service. For example we can review your audit committee papers and observe the audit committee in action. We can then feedback our observations on what is working well and what can be improved. We can conduct or guide an assessment of your effectiveness.

Analysing Audit Committee Effectiveness

CIPFA encourages audit committees to undertake a self-evaluation. Materials in the publication or on our training courses will support this. CIPFA is also working on further tools to support the development of the committee and these will be published later in the year.

Other Training and Development Opportunities from CIPFA

We can deliver many of our training events on an on-site basis. For more details visit: our on-site training page www.cipfa.org/training/in-house

There are a range of public courses and conferences that may be of wider interest to audit committee members from board governance training to conferences and seminars. Full details can be found on the website www.cipfa.org/training

Guidance for Audit Committees

For local authority and police audit committees CIPFA has published detailed guidance on good practice for audit committees. The publication *Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police* was published in 2013 and provides both guidance and resources to support the establishment, development and improvement of audit committees and their members. In particular, it contains a number of evaluation tools to help audit committee members challenge themselves to improve.

Keeping Audit Committee Members Up To Date

Organisations belonging to the CIPFA Better Governance Forum have access to the regular briefings, *Audit Committee Update*. New issues are published three times a year and provide insight into new developments or areas of good practice. Each issue also includes a summary of new guidance, legislation, consultations and reports that may be of interest to the audit committee member. Audit committee members can also access other resources on the Better Governance Forum website.

The Better Governance Forum has also published a guide to producing an audit committee annual report and webinars for the use of audit committee members.

To see the latest resources, visit the [Better Governance Forum website](#) or contact Diana Melville.

Our Team of Audit Committee Experts

Diana Melville is the Governance Advisor of the CIPFA Better Governance Forum and the author of the publication *Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police*. She coordinates the *Audit Committee Update* briefings and has delivered training for both open events and in-house. She is a CIPFA qualified accountant who was a head of internal audit at a local authority before joining CIPFA in 2008.

Elizabeth Humphrey is a CIPFA senior associate and has been providing training and support to audit committees since 2007, both in open events and in-house. She is a CIPFA qualified accountant and was head of internal audit at a London borough and at the Rugby Football Union.

Peter Worth is a former Technical Manager with the Audit Commission and has a wealth of experience of reviewing the accounts of local authorities. He is a CIPFA qualified accountant and works with CIPFA as an associate on a range of financial management projects and events.



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