

Report of the Chair of the Joint Audit Panel
22nd July 2024
Annual Report of the Joint Audit Panel

Overview:

The Joint Audit Panel is a key component of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime (the Deputy Mayor) and the Chief Constable's for Greater Manchester corporate governance framework. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of the Panel is to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes in operation within the Chief Constable's Corporation Sole and the GM Mayor's PCC functions.

The Terms of Reference for the Joint Audit Panel requires the Panel to:

- Review its performance against its terms of reference and objectives on an annual basis and report the results of this review to the PCC and the Chief Constable.
- Report to the GMCA Audit Committee on Police Fund activity and assurance
- Publish an annual report on the work of the panel.

This report summarises the work of the Joint Audit Panel for the year 2023/24 against the requirements of its terms of reference.

Detail:

In this report, the Chair of the Joint Audit Panel provides an overview of the activity of the Panel during 2023/24. It is supported by details of the Panel's operation throughout the year and its key areas of focus, aligned to its terms of reference.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to note the report and approve for onward presentation to the GMCA Audit Committee.

Chair's Introduction

The Joint Audit Panel (Police and Crime) comprises 5 independent members. This report covers our work during the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

In my introduction, I am trying to provide a little background and brief illustration of some of the matters that the Panel consider. The main body of the report provides the details.

GMP is continuing to focus on improving the quality of service – doing the basics well. Its regulator's assessment (HMICFRS PEEL) was that it was the most improving force in the country for the second year running. The Chief Constable recognises the need for further improvement and in particular improving effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money.

This is resulting in significant changes being made throughout GMP.

The Audit Panel recognises that change and material change creates risks that need to be managed. These risks can for example be unintended consequences or creating blockages in earlier or later stages of processes. The use of Internal Audit provides assurance and its reports identify areas for improvement which the Panel monitors as a standard item in its meetings.

The Panel also provides a forum to receive the reports of both the Internal and External Auditors and GMP officers on risk management, internal control, value for money and governance issues. It is also keen to see that senior management take appropriate action to implement the agreed actions contained in these reports.

The External Auditor's Opinion on the Chief Constable's Annual Report and Accounts, including the Annual Governance Statement is an important source of assurance for the Panel as is the External Auditor's Value for Money report. The external audit process for all local authorities has been subject to significant delays. For GMP, it's opinion on the accounts and VFM report for 2022/23 were not issued in 23/24. The expectation is that there will be significant catching up in 24/25 by the External Auditor. It is important that this is the case.

I mentioned in my report last year, Baroness Casey's report on the Metropolitan Police Service that reviewed the Met's leadership, recruitment, vetting, training, culture and communications. It recommended how high standards can be routinely met and how high levels of public trust can be restored and maintained. The Panel has had updates on GMP progress in implementing the report's recommendations and it has focussed on the vetting processes.

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The financial environment is very challenging, both for the Force and the people of Greater Manchester.

The Audit Panel has continued to focus on financial risk during the year by seeking assurance that appropriate processes of financial control are in place to ensure the delivery of the Police Service and planned changes can be delivered within the resources available and there are adequate contingencies for unplanned events in the medium term. We will continue to seek assurance on the processes in place next year from GMP and GMCA.

It is also very important that the Governance arrangements are comprehensive, effective, and efficient and again the Panel has sought assurance on the arrangements in place.

As always, it was an active year for the Panel reflecting the significant and broad ranging issues faced by GMP and GMCA.

The breadth and depth of our agendas has helped our development and it has been good that we have been able to put in place a training programme for members of the Panel during the year.

I thank the Panel members for their contributions, enthusiasm, commitment, and willingness to learn and the support we have received from GMP and GMCA.

Peter Morris
Chair of the Joint Audit Panel
22nd July 2024

Introduction

The Joint Audit Panel is a key component of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime (the Deputy Mayor) and the Chief Constable's for Greater Manchester corporate governance framework. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

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Membership

The following individuals were appointed as independent Members of the Panel following an open recruitment exercise and interviews.

The Committee met five times during 2023/24. Attendance at the meetings has been good demonstrating a commitment to the role and the function of independent challenge and assurance.

One member of the Panel stepped down during the year, recruitment to replace that member will be undertaken.

Member	April 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Nov 23	Jan 24	%
Mr Peter Morris (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
Mr Ian Cayton	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	80%
Mr John Starkey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
Ms Foluke Fajumi	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	80%
Ms Hilary Pogson	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	60%

Accountability Arrangements

The minutes of the Joint Audit Panel meetings are provided to the Deputy Mayor and the Chief Constable as well as to the GMCA Audit Committee. In addition, in consultation with GMCA Audit Committee, the Chair of the Joint Audit Panel has started to provide a summary of each Audit Panel meeting and will attend GMCA Audit Committee to present the annual report of the Panel.

The Panel reviews its performance against its terms of reference, the result of which are included in this annual report.

Effectiveness of the Joint Audit Panel

The Joint Audit Panel undertook a training session during the year to reflect on the Panels' overall effectiveness. It took into consideration the CIPFA Guidance that was issued in the year. The objective of the session was to identify the Panel's Strengths and Weaknesses and agree any actions that are needed to improve the influence and impact of the Panel.

Whilst recognising the Panel's strengths (for example in relation to responsibilities around the Annual Governance Statement and Internal Controls), a number of areas of additional focus were identified. One example of this was around IT. The IT support for Internal Audit is provided by an external provider who was invited to present their findings to the Panel on a number of important audits together with external contractors working for GMP. A new Director of IT has been appointed and he has attended 2 panel meetings and set out his initial thoughts on his priorities for the future. The Panel is also considering other options for strengthening its capability and capacity on IT matters. Other actions are included in the Development Plan (Appendix A).

Key Areas of Focus for the the Panel in 2023/24

Governance, Risk and Control

- The Panel reviewed the Annual Governance Statement which is contained within the Chief Constable's Statement of Accounts.
- The Panel received regular updates from the Chief Constable reporting on current priorities and performance
- The Panel reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control, taking account of the findings from internal and external audit reviews. The Panel sought assurance throughout the year from management that control issues identified are being addressed.
- The Panel received quarterly updates on the implementation of internal audit actions. The Panel have paid particular attention to outstanding audit actions in order to satisfy themselves appropriate action is being taken to implement agreed actions.
- The Panel received an update on risk management arrangements and was provided with the Force's corporate risk register.

Internal Audit:

- The Panel approved the 2023/24 internal audit plan in April 2023. At each meeting the Panel received progress reports for the delivery of the internal audit plan. These reports have been reviewed and scrutinised by Members.
- The Panel received regular reports on the implementation of previous audit actions. Particular attention was paid to “historic” audit actions which have been open for more than 12 months past their target implementation date. The Panel commissioned Internal Audit and GMP to work to reduce the number of historic open actions.

External Audit

- The Panel oversaw the work of external audit including the scope and approach to their work, their fees, and independence.
- Throughout the year the external auditors outline the significant risks and key judgement areas identified within the planning process and subsequently in the work they do.
- The Panel received the External Audit Annual Report and Value for Money Report for the financial 2021/22. The external auditor issued an unqualified opinion on the Chief Constable's financial statements.

Financial Reporting

- The Panel reviewed the Chief Constable's Statement of Accounts for 22/23. To assist this review the Panel considered overviews of the key financial statements from management and reports regarding compliance with accounting standards, key judgements made in the preparation of the financial statements and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Conclusion

The Panel has considered a broad range of issues within its agreed terms of reference throughout the year and where appropriate has called for additional information or action to be taken.

As part of its overall responsibility for providing assurance to the Deputy Mayor and the Chief Constable on the internal control environment, it has monitored the work of internal audit and the response to internal audit findings.

Priorities for 2024/25

A review of the membership of the Panel will take place as a number of the Panel Member's tenures are due to finish in December 2024.

The Panel will continue to meet regularly in order to review, scrutinise, challenge and provide assurance over the governance, risk management and internal control arrangements across the Force and Mayoral PCC functions in order to ensure the whole system of governance is effective whilst focus is inevitably placed on addressing the HMICFRS recommendations.

Within this context, the priorities for 2024/25 will be:

- Continued focus on the change programme in place to monitor the progress of programmes, including (but not limited to) the Records Management System (RMS)
- Continued focus on GMPs risk management arrangements, with periodic review of the Corporate Risk Register and associated risk management Policies.
- Participating in Audit Panel training sessions to improve familiarisation of operational activities, the operating environment and strategic risks and to develop where necessary Members' skills.
- To review and scrutinise reports arising from each of the internal Audit reviews undertaken during the year and ensure that appropriate action is taken to address any weaknesses identified.
- Receive updates on counter-fraud activities and outcomes.
- Ensure that the Panel supports the External Audit team in its application of the new Audit Code of Practice.

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Appendix 1 – Joint Audit Panel Development Plan – Actions

#	Description	Survey	Action	Owner	Status (July 23)
1	Continued training on operational areas of GMP/PCC	2019/20, 2020/21	When it is feasible to accommodate visits from Panel members, these will resume.	GMP to be facilitated by GMP Governance	Ongoing
2	Risk deep dives	2020/21, 2021/22	Include risk deep dives 3-4 times per year within training sessions. Panel chooses which risks to focus on at the next training session at/after their previous meeting.	GMP Governance	In progress, risk register now developed and presented to Audit Panel
3	Stakeholder mapping	2020/21	One of the Panel training sessions to include a session on stakeholder mapping	Facilitated by Internal Audit	Complete
4	Member induction	2020/21	Review and gather feedback on current induction processes. Update as needed	GMP Governance	No new members of the Panel therefore induction training not been refreshed. Will be prepared for any new members.
5	Document library for Panel Members	2021/22	Investigate the possibility of setting up a shared repository for documents that can be shared with members. Possibly through MS Teams?	GMP Governance	Outstanding
6	Partnerships and Collaborations register	2022/23	If a register exists, share it with the Panel. If not, provide information on significant partnerships and collaborations to the Panel.	GMP Governance	Outstanding

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7	Emerging Risks	2022/23	Training session on the risk management process to also incorporate how emerging risks are considered.	Corporate Development Branch	Complete
8	Financial risks/performance	2022/23	Current issues as a standing agenda item on each Panel Meeting to be presented by CFO/Treasurer	GMP/GMCA	Complete
9	Capital Programmes	2022/23	Panel to be sighted on the capital programme to understand the breadth and extent of major programmes of work	GMP	Include in training schedule