

**Meeting Assurance Report  
to the Council of Governors held  
on 3 April 2025**

<b>Committee / Group Name</b>	Audit Committee
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	17 March 2025
<b>Chair</b>	Ann Harris, Non-Executive Director
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Louisa Cowell, Chief Finance Officer
<b>Meeting Administrator</b>	Claire Coles, Senior Business Manager, CEO Office

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide in summary an update on the key discussions, outcomes and escalations of the above meeting.

**Agenda items covered at the meeting** [Bullet list agenda items]

- Internal Audit and Counter Fraud
  - 2024/25 Counter Fraud Progress Report
  - 2025/26 Counter Fraud Plan
  - 2024/25 Internal Audit Progress Report
  - 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan
- Integrated Governance, Risk and Assurance
  - Data Quality Steering Group Meeting Assurance Report
  - Risk Management Executive Committee Meeting Assurance Report
  - Board Assurance Framework
- Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25
  - 2024/25 Annual Report Progress Update
  - Draft Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
  - Draft NHS Code of Governance Compliance
  - Draft Audit Committee Disclosure Statement
  - Going Concern
- External Audit
  - 2024/25 External Audit Plan
- Other Activities
  - Policy Review Compliance Update
  - Audit Committee Objectives for 2025/26 and Review of Progress against 2024/25 Objectives

**Documents approved** [State if approval/ratification required from another Committee/Group]

The committee approved:

- The counter fraud plan for 25/26.
- The Internal Audit plan for 25/26.

**Important issues discussed / matters requiring attention such as new risks, new assurance, progress with actions to close gaps in control or assurance and potential areas of non-compliance** [Identify as above and describe any actions and next steps agreed]

Internal Audit – the committee had a good discussion about the current audit plan. While the assurance that the Trust are receiving is encouraging and the follow up actions are still being progressed well, there was some concern over the number of audits yet to be completed before end March. We received assurance from 360 that only 7 audits would be carried forward to next year and all were in planning now, also that the plan for 25/26 would not be held up by the overlap; it would start in April. In discussion 360 took an action to re-plan their audits in a different way in an effort to reduce the elapsed time and delays. We will take stock on how this is working during the next audit year. CFO also agreed to raise with the Executive that there has been some slippage in turnaround time for management responses. A reminder of the 10 days would be helpful.

The audit plan for 25/26 was discussed; all agreed that the end to end process engaged all Exec/Non-Exec community and the plan as presented was a fair representation of where priorities had settled.

The Directorate research audit report deferred from the last meeting was discussed. This was a limited assurance. The lead Executive supported by the Managing Director for Research and Innovation provided assurance that actions were well in hand and that there was also a further audit report due shortly. They could consider further whether any additional action was required but some of the changes needed are cultural and will take some time to embed. All agreed that research planning was in a better place. The risk score for Research and Innovation will be reviewed once further audit work is complete.

The committee reviewed the BAF – while it was agreed that the BAF continues to be improved, reflections from members felt that we had more to do to understand how risk appetite factored in to our thinking, digital risk still feels less than comfortable and needs revisiting. On a more general point, the points was made that the report is quite dense so a request was made for some relevant prompts so that Non-Execs could discuss the higher risk issues. We were reminded that risk tolerance scores were now included as a pilot; this is due to be reviewed. An action was taken to explore other ways of presenting the content.

**Annual Report and Accounts**

The timetable was well laid out so that committee members were made aware of material which would come to them for clearance by correspondence.

The governance statement was presented as a first draft for comment although this was not the only opportunity to discuss. Members could forward detailed comments separately.

The disclosure statement similarly was drafted to prescribed structure, again comments could be sent in separately and this would be recirculated with the complete set of documents before sign off in June.

External Audit – the audit plan was shared in detail. There was little change from past years; this would be the first full year audit of Crucible Pharmacy. On the VFM assessment, there was

a performance improvement observation about outstanding risk actions overdue for 12 months. The report lacked detail. An action was taken to provide background to the Assistant Chief Executive who would follow this up.

KPMG noted that they would be keeping a watching brief on EPR this year.

The policy review compliance report confirmed that progress continues to be made against target. The end date for completion is end March. It was proposed and accepted that a full report would be circulated to the committee after end of the month setting out the final year outcome. Depending on the outcome in the report, proposals for future handling will be considered. It may be appropriate to delegate some of this work to committees. Will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Objectives for the year were reviewed and progress against each agreed.

For next year, it was agreed that Audit Committee should look at a holistic objective of reviewing TOR across committees, aligning these with objectives, reflect good governance consistence and differences where relevant. The committee chairs will discuss further at an up and coming meeting with the Assistant Chief Executive.

**Items referred / escalated to another Committee or Group** [Identify the name of the receiving forum and detail the recommendation made]

None

**Any other matters to highlight**

None

**Recommendation**

The Council of Governors is asked to NOTE the update provided.