

By: Russell Smith – Interim Head of Internal Audit

To: Governance and Audit Committee – 19 May 2026

Subject: **External Quality Assessment Outcome**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This Report summaries the outcomes of the External Quality Assessment (EQA) and the conformance of the Internal Audit Service against the new Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS).

Recommendation:

The Governance and Audit Committee note the outcomes of the External Quality Assessment (EQA) of the Internal Audit Function, and the action plan developed against suggested opportunities for future development.

1. Introduction and background.

- 1.1 The Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) came into effect from January 2025. In December 2024 a UK Public Sector Application Note was issued by the institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), which sets out interpretations and requirements which need to be applied to the GIAS requirements, in order that these form a suitable basis for internal audit practice in the UK public sector.
- 1.2 The standards require an Internal Audit function to be subject to regular internal and external assessments. The purpose of these assessments is to confirm compliance with the standards and to provide assurance to all stakeholders that the Internal Audit function is operating efficiently and effectively. An Internal assessment must be completed at least annually, and External Quality Assessment (EQA) must be completed at least every five years.
- 1.3 The standards require the Chief Audit Executive (Head of Internal Audit) to develop a plan for the EQA and discuss the plan with the governance and audit committee which was undertaken in March 2025 by the previous Head of Internal Audit. It was agreed that for the EQA a **self-assessment validation**, using an independent and

experienced assessor would be the option used. This report outlines the outcomes of the EQA.

- 1.4 The Assessment was undertaken by John Chesshire of JC Training Limited who met all the necessary requirements of enhanced qualification and experience required of an external assessor in the public sector. They are also the current Chairman of the Internal Audit Standards and Advisory Board whose role includes oversight of the development and periodic revision of GIAS.

2. External Quality Assessment Outcome

- 2.1 A full copy of the External Quality Assessment – Final Report is provided (Appendix A), in concluding their conformance opinion, the External Assessor states:

“I am very pleased to report that the Internal Audit Service generally achieves the GIAS, which represents the global benchmark for internal audit quality. The IIA use the term ‘general achievement’ or ‘general conformance’ to indicate that “internal audit activities were performed in general conformance with the Global Standards.”

*“This is an **excellent result**, particularly given the recent launch of the GIAS and the team’s complex nature as both an in-house and external provider of internal audit services. Some internal audit functions are struggling to conform with aspects of the GIAS, and others are not as well advanced in their implementation and maturity. Congratulations to all involved on this outcome.”*

“I am satisfied that the Internal Audit Service appropriately achieves each of the fifteen GIAS Principles. I am very pleased to report that the Internal Audit Service also fully or generally achieves each of the fifty-two Standards. There are no partial conformances, or areas where the team do not conform with any Standards. Some of my conclusions differ marginally to those of the team in their own IQA. This is to be expected. I am also satisfied that the team achieves the expectations of the associated Application Note.”

Summary of IIA Conformance	Standards	Does not Conform	Partially Achieves	Generally Achieves	Fully Achieves	Total
Purpose of Internal Auditing	N/A					N/A
Ethics and Professionalism	13	0	0	1	12	13
Governing the Internal Audit Function	9	0	0	6	3	9

Managing the Internal Audit Function	16	0	0	9	7	16
Performing Internal Audit Services	14	0	0	3	11	14
52	0	0	19	33	52	

2.2 Within **Appendix A** (Paragraph 33) the External Assessor references the key achievements of the service. Some of the areas highlighted by the service have been identified as best practice in which in discussions with the assessor is a term in which they do not use lightly and encouraged sharing of these areas across the Internal audit Profession.

2.3 It is important to note that the External Assessor has made no formal recommendations as part of their assessment, however, the External assessor has made a few suggestions for improvement. The suggestions made by the External assessor have been incorporated into the Action Plan which contains internally identified actions for improvement as a result of the EQA (**Appendix B**). The Action Plan is proactively being taken forward as a platform for continuous improvement of the service.

2. Recommendation

The Governance and Audit Committee note the outcomes of the External Quality Assessment (EQA) of the Internal Audit Function, and the action plan developed against suggested opportunities for future development.

3. Background Documents

Appendix A – External Quality Assessment – Assessor Report

Appendix B – External Quality Assessment – Action Plan

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Appendix A – External Quality Assessment – Assessor Report



External Quality Assessment

INDEPENDENT REVIEW FINAL REPORT

GENERAL ACHIEVEMENT	KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE GENERALLY ACHIEVES THE GLOBAL INTERNAL AUDIT STANDARDS AND THE WIDER INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES FRAMEWORK
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John Chesshire CFIIA CRMA CIA CISA
JC Audit Training Ltd

23 March 2026

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Executive Summary

1. The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) launched their new Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) in January 2024, providing organisations, and their internal audit functions, twelve months to adapt their governance and operational practices to meet the updated benchmark. The UK public sector delayed formal implementation to align with reporting years, and the GIAS became formally effective across this sector from April 2025.
2. The GIAS comprises five Domains, fifteen Principles, and fifty-two Standards. They replaced the IIA's earlier 2016 version of the International Standards and the associated Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
3. Kent County Council commissioned this external quality assessment (EQA) in 2025 to assess their Internal Audit Service against the new GIAS, as the very latest, international internal audit practice. The GIAS requires an EQA at least once every five years. The Internal Audit service last had an EQA in 2021.
4. I am an experienced EQA reviewer, a former Head of Internal Audit and Chief Assurance Officer, and current Audit Committee Chair. I have delivered approximately 60 EQA reviews over the last eight years to a variety of clients of all sectors and sizes, across the UK and overseas. I have already undertaken many of these using the new GIAS.
5. I delivered this EQA by undertaking a formal validation of the Internal Audit Service's own internal quality assessment (IQA) over Q4 2025 and Q1 2026. This included examining the team's approach, ways of working, methodologies, document review and analysis, performing a selection of remote team member and stakeholder interviews from across the client base, reviewing a targeted selection of recent internal audit engagement files, evaluation, and the drafting and communication of this report.
5. I am very pleased to report that the Internal Audit Service **generally achieves** the GIAS, which represents the global benchmark for internal audit quality. The IIA use the term 'general achievement' or 'general conformance' to indicate that "internal audit activities were performed in general conformance with the Global Standards."
6. This is an **excellent result**, particularly given the recent launch of the GIAS and the team's complex nature as both an in-house and external provider of internal audit services. Some internal audit functions are struggling to conform with aspects of the GIAS, and others are not as well advanced in their implementation and maturity. Congratulations to all involved on this outcome.
7. In summary, the Internal Audit Service, and their key stakeholders, have established an effective governance and management framework over their activity that includes:
 - Well-established Governance and Audit Committee oversight, appropriate functional and administrative reporting lines, documented in a recently updated and approved Internal Audit Charter. This aligns to the expectations within the GIAS.

- A respected Interim Head of Internal Audit leads the Internal Audit Service and is growing into the role. They are supported by three Audit Managers, two Deputy Audit Managers, and fourteen team members, including a small IT audit cohort. A separate counter fraud team reports to the Interim Head of Counter Fraud.
 - Key stakeholders are very positive about the Internal Audit Service, and the team's delivery approach and model are working well in practice. The team are trusted, valued and respected for their professionalism and have a diverse range of experience and skills to meet stakeholder expectations and assurance needs.
 - The Internal Audit Service's strategic and operational priorities are guided by regular and constructive engagement with key stakeholders, rolling risk-based internal audit plans, and increasingly effective use of supporting technology.
 - Revised Internal Audit Service working practices, templates, tools, and an updated internal audit methodology aligned with the GIAS, seeks to deliver effective assurance and advisory services to its key stakeholders.
8. From the EQA results, **I am satisfied that the Internal Audit Service appropriately achieves each of the fifteen GIAS Principles. I am very pleased to report that the Internal Audit Service also fully or generally achieves each of the fifty-two Standards.**
 9. I am also very happy to report that there are no Standards that the Internal Audit Service 'partially achieves' or 'does not achieve'. Once again, this is very positive and represents an excellent level of performance against a challenging - and new - set of demanding benchmarks.
 10. Given the Internal Audit Service's high level of performance and achievement with the GIAS, I do not make any formal recommendations in this report. To aid continuous improvement, however, I do make several suggestions for further development, some of which the team themselves identified in their IQA.
 11. I would like to thank everyone who assisted me in this review, most obviously the Interim Head of Internal Audit, their Business Support Officer, for organising everything, the wider Internal Audit Service, their colleagues, and the key stakeholders I interviewed as part of this EQA process. Thank you all for helping to make the process smooth, straightforward and easy to undertake.

Introduction and approach

12. Kent County Council commissioned this External Quality Assessment (EQA) against the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS). The GIAS forms the key part of the broader IIA International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) alongside the new Topical Requirements¹.
13. The Chartered IIA state that the GIAS, “guide the worldwide professional practice of internal auditing and serve as a basis for evaluating and elevating the quality of the internal audit function. At the heart of the Standards are fifteen guiding principles that enable effective internal auditing. Each principle is supported by standards that contain requirements, considerations for implementation, and examples of evidence of conformance. Together, these elements help internal auditors achieve the principles and fulfill the Purpose of Internal Auditing”. The GIAS comprises five Domains, fifteen Principles and fifty-two Standards.
14. The GIAS build upon the previous International Standards and the previous UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). For the UK public sector, the GIAS are also supplemented by the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector Application Note (Application Note).
15. In local government, the CIPFA Code of Practice for the Governance Internal Audit in UK Local Government (CIPFA Code) also applies to address the ‘essential conditions’ for the governance of internal audit set out in Domain III of the GIAS. The Code concerns the roles of senior management and the audit committee regarding internal audit. EQAs must also consider the governance of internal audit, which for local government is set out in this CIPFA Code.
16. Where an internal audit function applies a common approach to its working practices for all its clients (e.g. engagement planning and conduct of audits), like the Internal Audit Service, then the EQA assessor may sample across the client base to verify those aspects of the Standards.
17. Where the internal audit provider has a large client base, this may mean the conduct of internal audit engagements at an authority may not be selected for sample testing. If the EQA assessor is satisfied that the provider adopts a common approach across the clients, then the authority can still be satisfied with the assessor’s conclusion. I have sampled and considered the Internal Audit Service’s work from across its client base and am satisfied that the team adopts a common approach across its clients.
18. The Internal Audit Service comprises an Interim Head of Internal Audit (Chief Audit Executive (CAE)), three Audit Managers, two Deputy Audit Managers, and fourteen team members. The team includes an expanding IT audit capability. A separate counter fraud team reports to the Interim Head of Counter Fraud.

¹ The IIA states that the Topical Requirements “enhance the consistency and quality of internal audit services, increasing the professionalism of internal auditors’ performance. They help strengthen the relevance of internal auditing to address pervasive and evolving risks.” The first Topical Requirement on Cybersecurity became properly effective on February 5, 2026. Other Topical Requirements will follow.

19. The Interim Head of Internal Audit and the team report functionally to the Governance and Audit Committee at Kent County Council (and to equivalent bodies in each of its clients) and administratively to the Corporate Director of Finance.
20. The Internal Audit Service last had an EQA in 2021, undertaken by Business Risk Solutions. The GIAS, and the previous International Standards, mandate these EQAs at least once every five years.
21. Like many internal audit functions, the Internal Audit Service has reviewed its governance, management and operational practices because of the update and implementation of the GIAS. The team undertook their latest internal quality assessment (IQA) against the GIAS in November 2025, and I have validated this through my review.
22. This EQA examined the Internal Audit Service's overall approach, methodology, processes, remote document review and analysis, in-person and remote interviews with the team and stakeholders, a targeted review of a selection of their recent internal audit assurance engagement files, evaluation and the drafting and communication of this report. I include a list of stakeholder interviewees in appendix one, internal audit interviewees at appendix two, and a sample of stakeholder feedback at appendix three.
23. The EQA primarily involved comparison of working practices against the GIAS. The tried and tested process I followed involved:
 - Examining and reflecting upon the requirements of the Purpose of Internal Auditing, the five Domains, the fifteen Principles and the fifty-two Standards. I have also employed the 'Considerations for Implementation' and the 'Examples of Evidence of Conformance'.
 - Assessing the key criteria needed to demonstrate appropriate compliance.
 - Reviewing the team's IQA, corroborating and recording the necessary evidence to demonstrate the Internal Audit Service's conformance status with each Standard. I have undertaken this through documentation review, thorough validation of the Internal Audit Service's self-assessment, a targeted examination of working papers, discussions with team members and selected interviews (et al), as noted above.
 - Comparing the evidence to the key conformance criteria and assessing the degree of conformance. I have employed the standard IIA definitions for this and have provided these in appendix four.

Conformance opinion

24. As noted above, I undertook this EQA review to provide an independent, objective, examination of the Internal Audit Service using the GIAS, as well as considering the team's effectiveness and delivery compared with other internal audit functions, current and emerging good practice(s).

25. **The Internal Audit Service has achieved a very good result of ‘generally achieves’ in this EQA in relation to the GIAS.** The IIA use the term ‘general achievement’ or ‘general conformance’ to indicate that “internal audit activities were performed in general conformance with the Global Standards.”
26. I include a summary of the Internal Audit Service’s conformance to the GIAS, in table one below. Overall, I believe that the team has achieved an excellent result given the breadth and depth of the benchmark established by the new GIAS.
27. **I am satisfied that the Internal Audit Service appropriately achieves each of the fifteen GIAS Principles. I am very pleased to report that the Internal Audit Service also fully or generally achieves each of the fifty-two Standards.** There are no partial conformances, or areas where the team do not conform with any Standards. Some of my conclusions differ marginally to those of the team in their own IQA. This is to be expected. I am also satisfied that the team achieves the expectations of the associated Application Note.

Summary of IIA Conformance	Standards	Does not Conform	Partially Achieves	Generally Achieves	Fully Achieves	Total
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Table One: Summary of the Internal Audit service ’s conformance to the GIAS

28. Given that the GIAS remains ‘comply or explain’ in nature, any internal audit function can reasonably decide that some elements are not necessary to fully achieve, given the team’s nature, size, sector, cost/benefit, value for money considerations, or target maturity level. I summarise the results further with light green showing the ‘generally achieves’ results and dark green colour-coding indicating ‘fully achieves’ outcomes covering each of the 15 Principles:

Principles

1	Demonstrate Integrity
2	
3	Maintain Objectivity
4	
5	Demonstrate Competence
6	Exercise Due Professional Care
7	
8	Maintain Confidentiality
9	
10	Authorised by the Board
11	
12	Positioned Independently
13	
14	Overseen by the Board
15	
16	Plan Strategically
17	
18	Manage Resources
19	
20	Communicate Effectively
21	
22	Enhance Quality
23	
24	Plan Engagements Effectively
25	
26	Conduct Engagement Work
27	
28	Communicate Engagement Conclusions and Monitor Action Plans
29	

29. For the Internal Audit Service’s conformance with the fifty-two Standards, the summary results are:

Standards							
1.1		6.1		9.5		13.2	
1.2		6.2		10.1		13.3	
1.3		6.3		10.2		13.4	
2.1		7.1		10.3		13.5	
2.2		7.2		11.1		13.6	
2.3		8.1		11.2		14.1	
3.1		8.2		11.3		14.2	
3.2		8.3		11.4		14.3	
4.1		8.4		11.5		14.4	
4.2		9.1		12.1		14.5	
4.3		9.2		12.2		14.6	
5.1		9.3		12.3		15.1	
5.2		9.4		13.1		15.2	

Deliverables

30. In addition to this report, I have provided the Internal Audit Service with a briefly annotated version of their own Internal Quality Assessment (IQA) which I have validated through this EQA. This helps succinctly evidence my view and validation of the team’s own IQA.

31. I make several suggestions to help further promote the Internal Audit Service’s ongoing development and continuous improvement. I have included these on pages 10-14 below. I aim these suggestions at Standards that the team already achieve, and some repeat the team’s own

identified actions resulting from their IQA. As these are suggestions rather than formal recommendations relating to areas of non- or partial achievement in respect of particular Standards, I do not seek or expect a formal response to these.

Key achievements

1. I believe that the Internal Audit Service performs effectively in much of its own governance, risk management and internal audit practices. I was particularly impressed with the following:
 - The Internal Audit Service delivers an effective, independent, and objective assurance and advisory service, covering Kent County Council and its other clients' diverse, complex, public sector and commercial business activities.
 - The team's own governance framework is mature, with active Governance and Audit Committee (or equivalent) and senior management engagement, oversight, reporting and regular communications. Regular communication and dialogue add value and enable a more focused service in respect of key priorities.
 - The Internal Audit Service's recently updated and approved Internal Audit Charters align with the good practice detailed in the GIAS. They appropriately detail the team's mandate, purpose, authority, and accountability.
 - A respected Interim Head of Internal Audit leads the team, supported by able colleagues with a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience. The team has clear knowledge of Kent County Council, its sector and context, and has diverse expertise, backgrounds, and capabilities. The team's expertise, awareness and understanding in respect of its diverse clients is expanding.
 - The Internal Audit Service are trusted and respected for their professionalism by key stakeholders. Key Governance and Audit Committee, and senior management value the service, its approach and how it operates in practice. Feedback throughout this review was positive. Quality is primarily about meeting customer needs, and the team achieve this.
 - The team has put considerable effort into developing an overarching skills matrix, supported by individual competency assessments and a service-wide review to identify and address gaps. This represents best practice. Internal Audit Service members undertake an appropriate range of professional learning and continuing professional development (CPD) activities to gain, maintain and enhance knowledge, skills, and experience. Professional certifications, such as the CIA and CISA, have been obtained, are being obtained, and are planned to commence.
 - An Internal Audit Strategy has been drafted for each client and rolling Internal Audit Plans include a diverse range of engagements, These include future engagements based upon key risks, client priorities, other sources of assurance and the team's own views and judgement. The plan template is clear and professional. The Governance and Audit Committee (or equivalent), senior management and other key stakeholders are appropriately involved in the planning and approval process.

- The team have introduced a suite of new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for their work with Kent County Council. These are clear, modern and focused on the delivery of outcomes. This represents best practice.
- Other assurance providers are engaged, and the team have developed another best practice methodology for coordination and reliance that will be properly embedded in the year ahead. The team also maintains a broader Relationship Management Strategy that is effective and adds value.
- The Internal Audit Service employ K10 as their Audit Management Software application and are seeking to further develop its functionality to further underpin service delivery. Use of other technology tools, AI and data analytics to enhance efficiency and effectiveness is expanding. The team has a small, but growing IT Audit capability and contingent to assist in delivering assurance over the challenging technology and cyber risk landscape.
- The Internal Audit Service have updated aspects of their own methodology, procedures, templates and working practices in line with the GIAS. Quality assurance is supported by K10, and the team are formalising a more systematic approach to the periodic internal quality assessments.
- The team's report template and engagement reporting also warrant particular mention. The template has been updated, is effective, fresh and clearly structured. Engagement reports are clearly written and relatively concise.
- It is clear from the EQA that the Internal Audit Service is trusted and valued by key stakeholders. Feedback was positive about the service, its evolution, the quality of work and its overall delivery, both at Kent County Council and for its clients.

Suggestions for further improvement

32. As highlighted above, I make several suggestions to help further promote the Internal Audit Service's ongoing development, performance and continuous improvement, linking these to the relevant elements of the GIAS.
33. These relate to areas that appropriately meet the expectations of the GIAS, and me as the EQA assessor. They **do not** represent shortcomings or failures in respect of conformance with the GIAS. Several have been identified by the team themselves through their recent IQA. These observations and suggestions do not require a formal response.

- The Internal Audit Service fully achieves Standard 1.1 Honesty and Professional Courage, Standard 1.2 Organisation's Ethical Expectations and Standard 4.3 Professional Skepticism.

The Internal Audit Service intends to embed Honesty and Professional courage in 2026/27 Performance Objectives and Evaluations. I support this. Going forward, the team could usefully consider including further practical ethical dilemmas, ethics scenarios or case studies, common challenges and how to deal with them, in future learning and ongoing CPD activity in these areas. This could usefully build upon the session held at the Kent Audit Conference.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 3.1, Competency, and fully achieves Standard 3.2, Continuing Professional Development, and Standard 10.2 Human Resource Management.

While many of the team are highly skilled, knowledgeable and experienced, other team members continue to gain competence and confidence. The team does not always have deep, specialist expertise in everything they may be asked to deliver assurance over, such as AI as a topical example. Staying up to date with IT and cyber security changes and associated developments are a real, but common challenge for any internal audit function.

The Internal Audit Service actively supports team members as they gain experience, has identified overall learning priorities, and has commenced implementing solutions to address these learning needs. I support these initiatives.

The Internal Audit Service's leadership and their stakeholders recognise that additional emphasis on advisory, rather than assurance engagements, may well be needed over the medium term as Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution proceeds. Additional advisory skills and learning across the team may be necessary to help add value, insight and foresight in respect of the likely, associated change and transformation.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 6.2, Internal Audit Charter, and 7.1, Organisational Independence.

The Internal Audit Charter could usefully be updated to more explicitly reference the Interim Head of Internal Audit's counter fraud responsibilities and cover more clearly how assurance may be provided over these. The recent peer review is a good example of how this will be provided.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 6.3, Board and Senior Management Support, and 8.1, Board Interaction.

The team intends to introduce a consistent approach for meeting Governance and Audit Committee members before formal Committee meetings in 2026 to support open communication and reinforce the Committee's role in championing the internal audit

function. I support this. The team could usefully consider implementing similar arrangements with their other clients.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 8.3, Quality.

The team intends to embed the revised Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) and ensure internal quality assessments and reviews are carried out consistently, with the results reported to the Governance and Audit Committee periodically. I support this. The team could usefully consider implementing similar arrangements with their other clients.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 9.2, Internal Audit Strategy and Standard 12.2 Performance Measurement.

The team has agreed a succinct three-year Internal Audit Strategy with each of its main clients, These include a Vision, four or five key priorities, and supporting narrative. The team has also developed an interesting and innovative set of Key Performance Indicators for reporting to the G&A Committee (or equivalent) and senior management,

Going forward, the Internal Audit Service are upgrading these Internal Audit Strategies using the requirements detailed in Standard 9.2. SMART Objectives are defined and appropriate implementation plans developed for each objective. Progress tracking, ideally using relevant KPIs, and reporting on the implementation of improvements to the G&A Committee (or equivalent) and senior management should also occur for each client.

Revisiting the links between the Internal Audit Strategy, priorities, supporting actions, KPIs and stakeholder reporting should add value and demonstrate a clear internal audit golden thread. I am pleased to see this in train and understand the updated Internal Audit Strategy will be presented at the May 2026 Governance and Audit Committee meeting.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 9.4, Internal Audit Plan.

Future Internal Audit Plans must include additional detail – ideally bespoke for each client – on the rationale for not including an assurance engagement in a high-risk area or activity. It is clear in the current plan when a key risk is not being examined by the team, but the rationale for this is less explicit.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 9.5, Coordination and Reliance.

The team are embedding and operationalising their (very well-designed) methodology for coordinating assurance provision across client organisations to improve alignment, reduce duplication, and enhance governance assurance. I support this initiative.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 10.3, Technological Resources.

The team should consider updating their useful Data Analytics Strategy, by developing SMART objectives, and relevant SMART supporting actions. This Strategy could be extended to also encompass use of AI and be linked more explicitly to the Innovative Approaches to Auditing section of the Internal Audit Strategy.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 11.3, Communicating Results and Standard 14.3, Evaluation of Findings

The team are seeking to implement a more systematic approach to identifying and communicating root causes in their internal audit reports. K10 is being used to facilitate this with the inclusion of root cause analysis categories. From the sample of earlier internal audit reports I reviewed, there was a mixed approach undertaken, with some identifying root causes clearly and others not explicitly including them.

In addition, there are further opportunities for the Internal Audit Service to deliver insights into common root cause categories and themes across the assurance and advisory work that they undertake. The results will subsequently support further coverage of common themes in the Interim Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report and related communications. I support this.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 13.2, Engagement Risk Assessment, and Standard 13.6 Work Program

The team have now designed and are implementing a standardised Risk and Control Evaluation Template to enhance consistency and rigor in assessing control design. There are no 'standard' Templates for this promoted by the IIA or other professional bodies for this, so an approach that best suits the team, aligns with the methodology and integrates with K10 feels like the best way forward. This action will be complete once use of the standardised template is properly embedded following additional team training in May 2026.

- The Internal Audit Service generally achieves Standard 13.4, Evaluation Criteria. The Application Note states that Auditors must also be aware of the importance of value for money, alongside other key considerations, when determining appropriate evaluation criteria under GIAS 13.4 (Evaluation Criteria).

The team intends to deliver a targeted training session to reinforce the importance of incorporating value for money considerations into audit scoping and planning, ensuring auditors consistently apply this principle across all engagements. I support this initiative.

Appendix One - Interviewees

Interviewee	Position
Amanda Beer	KCC, Chief Executive
John Betts	KCC, S151
Michael Brown	KCC, Chair of Governance and Audit Committee
Sally Richards	GCSG, Director of Assurance and Quality
Nick Hunter	GCSG, Audit Lead
Ceri Richards	GCSG, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee
Ann Millington	KFRS, Chief Executive
Barrie Fullbrook	KFRS, S151
Vince Maple	KRFS, Chair of Audit Committee
Kathryn Beldon	Canterbury Cathedral, Receiver General
Julie Wood	Canterbury Cathedral, Director of Finance and Planning
Helen Wiseman	Canterbury Cathedral, Chair of Audit Committee
Damian Roberts	TMBC, Chief Executive
Paul Worden	TMBC, S151
Robert Cannon	TMBC, Chair of Audit Committee

Appendix Two – Internal Audit Interviewees

Khailam Anup	Trainee IT Auditor
Hannah Barton	Principal Auditor
Debbie Chisman	Audit Manager
Karen Herbert	Deputy Audit Manager
Lee Jones	Audit Manager
Ewelie Lifanje	Auditor
Daniel Mees	Auditor
Amanda Palmer	Interim Audit Manager
Andy Shade	Principal IT Auditor

Appendix Three - Selected Interview Feedback

“We picked Kent County Council Internal Audit for their sensitivity. They have gained our trust, they are here to help, and I haven’t heard a single complaint about them.”

“The Head of Internal Audit comes across very well at Committee. He has experience and knowledge of our organisation, and we are really happy with the service that we get from them.”

“The internal audit documentation that the Committee receives is very well received and everything is well written and produced.”

“I have found them to be objective, candid and open.”

“They are always well-prepared for the Committee’s questions. They are open, honest and always very willing to engage with members.”

“I am certainly getting sufficient assurance from the internal audit team at the present time.”

“The quality of what we have seen as the Committee is consistently high.”

“Internal audit are pretty well engaged with us and have a good understanding of the nature of our organisation.”

“They always attend our audit committee and are well-prepared. Members are satisfied with the answers they give and the internal audit service as a whole.”

“Internal audit have been very flexible. We have built new audits into the plan and have delayed others, and they coped well with this.”

“The internal audit team are great value for money. They are trying their hardest to present themselves very well and are succeeding.”

“There have been a small number of delayed audits this year, but the team are working to resolve these.”

“They work really well with us now. They are sensible, pragmatic and understand our organisation is different to the County Council. They have worked really hard to learn about us and they add value.”

“They are very professional and very good at showing us what best practice looks like. We are keen to learn from them and to improve.”

“We take internal audit very seriously and internal audit help us survey the whole governance and risk landscape.”

“They are very thorough and always handle themselves very professionally.”

“I have a slight concern about their resourcing and how they keep up with new and evolving areas of risk, particularly around technology.”

“Overall, they are very good and one of the best partnerships we have.”

“Our internal audit contact has a good understanding of the organisation, and we have regular catch ups to keep on top of progress and any changes.”

“The quality of the internal audit reports are very high. We are extremely positive about these, and they have improved considerably over the last three and a half years.”

“The team’s approach is good and helps set a positive culture about internal audit. They are seen as constructive and very much a partner.”

“We have an excellent relationship with internal audit and are able to use internal audit effectively for assurance. They help us look at the things we are really worried about.”

“Internal audit tends to stay fairly quiet in the audit committee meetings. Sometimes we have to ask them for their opinion.”

“Internal audit now is much better than it was when we first brought them onboard. I can definitely say that we get a good service from internal audit and they are very collaborative.”

“They are learning to be more agile and are flexible when we do want to change things.”

“Pre-engagement meetings help ensure that the scopes are properly shaped and achievable.”

“They have listened to feedback, definitely improved and are very collaborative – I’d strongly recommend them.”

“Overall, I am extremely satisfied with the internal audit service that we get.”

“There has been turnover within their team, but today I’m very happy. The level of engagement is very positive. They have a good mix of skills given the capacity of being a larger team.”

“They push back when it is right to do so and their service compares very well compared to my experiences elsewhere.”

“I like the fact that the internal auditors are enthusiastic and like to make a positive difference.”

“The advisory help is always welcome and encourages a high degree of openness and trust.”

“The quality of information they provide is good and the quality of audit work is good too.”

“When it comes to delivering the programme of work, they have always been clear and transparent about the reason for any delays.”

“They are really good and have developed an excellent rapport with officers and members. I have nothing bad to say about them!”

Appendix Four - External Quality Assessment Ratings

Quality Rating	Total Opinion	Principle Opinion	Standard Opinion
Full achievement The HIA can state that all internal audit activities were performed in full conformance with the Global Standards.	The internal audit function is fully achieving all 15 principles and the Purpose of Internal Auditing.	The internal audit function is fully achieving all the Standards related to the Principle and the Principle's intent.	The internal audit function is fully conforming with all requirements of the Standard and the Standard's intent.
General achievement The HIA can state that internal audit activities were performed in general conformance with the Global Standards.	The internal audit function is achieving the Purpose of Internal Auditing however it is not fully achieving at least one Principle or aspect of Domain I.	The internal audit function is achieving the Principle's intent. However, it is not fully achieving at least one Standard.	The internal audit function is achieving the intent of the Standard but not fully conforming with at least one requirement of the Standard.
Partial achievement The HOIA may not state that all internal audit activities were performed in conformance with the Standards but may be able to depending on the activity.	The internal audit function achieves some Principles. However, it is not fully achieving at least one Principle and one aspect of Domain I and the impact is significant enough to rate the function's overall achievement as partially achieving.	The internal audit function achieves some Standards. However, it is not fully conforming with at least one Standard, and the impact is significant enough to rate the function as Partially achieving the principle.	The internal audit function achieves some requirements of the Standard. However, it is not fully conforming with at least one requirement, and the impact is significant enough to rate conformance with the Standard as partially conforming.
Nonachievement The HIA may not state that internal audit activities were performed in conformance with the Standards.	The internal audit function fully achieves some Principles; however, it is not fully achieving more than one aspect of Domain I and the impact is significant enough to rate the function's overall achievement as not achieving.	The internal audit function is not fully conforming with more than one Standard, and the impact is significant enough to rate the function as not achieving the Principle's intent.	The internal audit function is not fully conforming with more than one requirement, and the impact is significant enough to rate conformance with the standard as not achieving the Standard's intent.

Appendix B – EQA Action Plan Summary

Title	Actions	Estimated Date	Status
Improve Audit Charter	EQA2, EQA3, EQA4, EQA21	30/06/2026	3 Complete 1 in Progress
Reporting Improvements	EQA1, EQA31, EQA32, EQA35, EQA36, EQA37	30/09/2026	1 Complete 4 in Progress 1 Not Started
Stakeholder Engagement	EQA9, EQA10, EQA16, EQA19, EQA33, EQA34	30/09/2026	1 Complete 4 in Progress 1 Not Started
Auditor Objectives, Competencies & Training	EQA7, EQA12, EQA17, EQA23, EQA25, EQA26	30/06/2026	5 in Progress 1 Not Started
Audit Methodology	EQA5, EQA8, EQA11, EQA20,	30/09/2026	2 Complete 2 in Progress
System & IT	EQA6, EQA22, EQA27, EQA28	30/06/2026	1 Complete 3 in Progress
Risk Assessments / Assurance Mapping	EQA13, EQA14, EQA15	30/06/2026	3 in Progress
Strategy	EQA24, EQA30	30/06/2026	2 in Progress
Quality Assurance	EQA18, EQA2	30/09/2026	1 in progress 1 Not Started