

Appendix E Core Skills

This appendix provides a high-level review that incorporates the key principles set out in CIPFA's Position Statement and this publication. Where an audit committee has a high degree of performance against the good practice principles, then it is an indicator that the committee is soundly based and has in place a knowledgeable membership. These are the essential factors in developing an effective audit committee.

A regular self-assessment can be used to support the planning of the audit committee work programme and training plans. It can also inform an annual report.

This Appendix covers

- A) Key areas around purpose and governance
- B) Knowledge and skills matrices
- C) Effectiveness checklist

Audit committee members – knowledge and skills framework

CORE SKILLS

Skills	Key elements	How the audit committee member is able to apply the skill	Comments/any further training required?
Strategic thinking and understanding of materiality	Able to focus on material issues and overall position, rather than being side tracked by detail	When reviewing audit reports, findings will include areas of higher risk or materiality to the organisation, but may also	

		highlight more minor errors or control failures. The audit committee member will need to pitch their review at an appropriate level to avoid spending too much time on detail	
Questioning and constructive challenge	Able to frame questions that draw out relevant facts and explanations Challenging performance and seeking explanations while avoiding hostility or grandstanding	The audit committee will review reports and recommendations to address weaknesses in internal control. The audit committee member will seek to understand the reasons for weaknesses and ensure a solution is found	
Focus on improvement	Ensuring there is a clear plan of action and allocation of responsibility	The outcome of the audit committee will be to secure improvements to the governance, risk management or control of the organisation, including clearly defined actions and responsibilities Where errors or control failures have occurred, then the audit committee should seek assurances that appropriate action has been taken	

Able to balance practicality against theory	Able to understand the practical implications of recommendations to understand how they might work in practice	The audit committee should seek assurances that planned actions are practical and realistic	
Clear communication skills and focus on the needs of users	Support the use of plain English in communications, avoiding jargon, acronyms, etc	The audit committee will seek to ensure that external documents such as the AGS and the narrative report in the accounts are well written for a non-expert audience	
Objectivity	Evaluate information on the basis of evidence presented and avoiding bias or subjectivity	The audit committee will receive assurance reports and review risk registers. There may be differences of opinion about the significance of risk and the appropriate control responses and the committee member will need to weigh up differing views	
Meeting management skills	Chair the meetings effectively: summarise issues raised,	These skills are essential for the audit committee chair to	

	ensure all participants are able to contribute, focus on the outcome and actions from the meeting	help ensure that meetings stay on track and address the items on the agenda. The skills are desirable for all other members	
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