



Assurance framework update

Date of meeting 21 February 2025

Date of report 21 January 2025

Report by Chief Executive

1. Object of report

To provide the committee with an update report on the assurance framework within SPT from internal and external sources and recommend that the Committee notes the current position.

2. Background to report

Definition

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) defines an assurance framework in the following ways:

'The means by which leaders, managers and decision makers can have confidence that the governance arrangements that they have approved are being implemented, operating as intended, and remain fit for purpose.'

'Assurance is a statement intended to give confidence about conditions compared to criteria.'

'Assurance helps ensure that the organisation's governance arrangements continue to support their objectives. It can strengthen accountability and transparency within the organisation and provides robust information for public accountability, for example, the annual review underpinning the Annual Governance statement'.

Assurance framework

The assurance framework was last presented to the Audit & Standards committee at its meeting of 23 February 2024.

Assurance requirements

SPT is subject to statute, standards, regulations, governance codes, and statements of good practice and must have effective arrangements in place for demonstrating adherence.

The provision of assurance is an essential element of SPT's accountability.

The 'three lines of assurance'

Assurance is provided through the 'three lines of assurance':

First line: assurances from management designed controls and that these controls are being implemented on a day-to-day basis, including the framework of policies, procedures, processes and controls in place (i.e. system of internal controls);

Second line: assurances from the risk management arrangements and compliance functions, including oversight functions (e.g. Health & Safety) within SPT that co-ordinate, facilitate and provide assurance over the risk and control environment;

Third line: assurance from Internal Audit, which provides independent assurance in respect of the effectiveness of governance, management controls and risk management arrangements, including activities carried out by the first and second lines.

External assurance providers: SPT also receives assurance from external bodies, including the external auditors, and health and safety regulators. Internal assurance functions may draw on the work of external assurers in determining the level of assurance work that is required. Conversely, external assurance providers are encouraged to place reliance on the work of internal assurance providers, where appropriate, in order to ensure that assurance is provided efficiently.

Roles and responsibilities

Strategy Group: it is the responsibility of the leadership team to put in place and to own and effective assurance framework.

Management: establish assurance mechanisms over the management of risks and controls in their specific areas of responsibility.

Internal Audit: deliver independent assurance from engagements which collect information and assess the robustness of internal controls.

Audit & Standards committee: on behalf of the Partnership (those charged with governance), the committee is *'to be satisfied that the Partnership's assurance statements, including the Statement on the System of Internal Financial Control, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it.'*

Assurance mapping

Assurance mapping uses visual representation of assurance activities to demonstrate how they apply to a specific risk or set of compliance requirements.

The assurance map incorporates the following risk areas:

- the corporate/strategic risks of the organisation;
- sub-sets of these risks (e.g. health and safety risks);
- compliance requirements (with statute or regulations).

Assurance mapping takes the 'risk-set', or 'compliance-set' identified and details:

- the assurance provision for each of the risks or compliance requirements;
- the date of the most recent independent review on these assurances.

Assurance mapping identifies key areas of service delivery, assurance providers, and review dates.

3. Outline of proposals

SPT reviews its assurance position and assurance map on an ongoing basis updating where additional assurance activities are introduced or reviewed. The assurance framework map, as at January 2025, is attached as Appendix 1 for members' consideration.

4. Committee action

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and the assurance framework map, as at January 2025.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>The assurance framework mitigates risk by mapping the sources of assurance for each risk area and by focusing resource allocation.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>None.</i>

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Assurance Framework

Risk areas, assurance providers and assessment as at January 2025



Risk and mitigation			Assurance provider				External assessment (where applicable)		
Risk Area	Service Delivery Objective	Internal controls	Management (First line)	Oversight function (Second line)	Independent assurance (Third line)	External Sources	Date of last review	Assurance sufficient (Yes/No, review)	Source of Assessment
Budget	Deliver value for money services	Financial Regulations; Standing Orders Relating to Contracts; Budget Monitoring; Financial Statements; Treasury Management Strategy.	Systems of internal control (i.e. segregation of duties, authorisation levels, etc.)	Finance Management controls	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	External Auditors	Sep-24	Yes	Independent Auditors report
Fraud and Error	Deliver value for money services	Financial Regulations, Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, Operational Procedures, Training, Counter Fraud Strategy.	Systems of internal control (i.e. segregation of duties, authorisation levels, etc.)	Financial Management controls, Counter Fraud Strategy	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	External Auditors/ National Fraud Initiative (NFI)	Sep-24	Yes	Independent Auditors report
Governance	Principles of Good Governance	Governance manual, Service standards, Policy, Procedures, Training, Line Management.	Systems of internal control (i.e. segregation of duties, authorisation levels, etc.)	Local Code of Corporate Governance	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	External Auditors	Sep-24	Yes	Independent Auditors report
Cyber and Information Security	Deliver high standards of data integrity and reliability	Policies and procedures; Information Governance; Incident reporting systems; Training.	Systems of internal control (i.e. segregation of duties, authorisation levels, etc.)	Digital management overview of applications, networks, processes and systems; Cyber Resilience Framework	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	External Digital service providers			
Customer Service	Excellent level of service to our customers	Service standards, Procedures, Training, Line Management.	Processes and procedures	Surveys and Complaints Handling Procedure	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	Scottish Public Services Ombusman (SPSO)			
Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme (SCTS)	Deliver value for money services	Notes and guidance to operators on the SCTS	Systems of internal control (i.e. segregation of duties, authorisation levels, etc.)	Surveys and Complaints Handling Procedure; Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee (SCTSJC)	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	External Auditors/ Certificates of Assurance from operators	Sep-24	Yes	Independent Auditors report
Bus Services	Provide accessible public transport to communities	Service standards, Policy, Procedures, Training, Line Management.	Systems of internal control (i.e. segregation of duties, authorisation levels, etc.)	Compliance inspectors; Health & Safety; Vehicle Examiners	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	DVLA, Traffic Commissioner			
Project delivery	Improve transport connections	Project management processes, Project board, Stakeholder reporting.	Project management reporting	Project board(s); Steering group(s); Annual report and Transport Outcome Reports	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	Partner authorities/ Transport Scotland			
Subway service	Provide Subway service to the public	Service standards, Policy, Procedures, Training, Line Management.	Systems of internal control (i.e. segregation of duties, authorisation levels, etc.)	Engineering Assurance, Health & Safety, Independent Competent Person	Internal Audit plan 2024/2025	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)	Dec-24	Yes	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)

Note: the risk areas are identified in Risk Registers