



**Burwood** <sup>Inc.1874</sup>

Burwood . Burwood Heights . Croydon . Croydon Park . Enfield . Strathfield

## **AUDIT, RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE CHARTER**

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## Context

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Burwood Council has established its Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee in compliance with section 428A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) and relevant supporting clauses of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*. This Charter set out the Committee's objectives, authority, composition and tenure, roles and responsibilities, reporting and administrative arrangements.

## Objective

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The objective of the Burwood Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is to provide independent assurance to Burwood Council. This is done by monitoring, reviewing and providing advice about the Burwood Council's governance processes, compliance, risk management and control frameworks, external accountability obligations and overall performance.

## Independence

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The Committee is to be independent to ensure it has no real or perceived bias or conflicts of interest that may interfere with its ability to:

- act independently, and
- provide Burwood Council with robust, objective and unbiased advice and assurance.

The Committee is to provide an advisory and assurance role only. It is to have no administrative functions, delegated financial responsibilities or any management functions of Burwood Council.

The Committee will provide independent advice to Burwood Council that is informed by:

- the Council's internal audit and risk management activities, and
- information and advice provided by officers of Council, relevant external bodies and subject matter experts.

The Committee must at all times ensure that it maintains a direct reporting line to and from Burwood Council's internal audit function. It must also act as a mechanism for internal audit to report to the governing body of Burwood Council and the General Manager on matters affecting the performance of the internal audit function.

## Authority

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Burwood Council authorises the Committee, for the purposes of exercising its role and responsibilities, to:

- access any information it reasonably needs from Burwood Council
- use any Burwood Council resource it reasonably needs
- have direct and unrestricted access to the General Manager and senior management of the Council
- seek the General Manager's permission to meet with any other council officers i.e. employees and delegates (including volunteers, consultants, contractors or any other service provider involved in exercising a Council function)
- discuss any matters with the external auditor or other external parties
- request the attendance of any employee or delegate at committee meetings, and
- obtain external legal or other professional advice in accordance with the prevailing procurement practices and budgetary arrangements of Council.

Information and documents pertaining to the Committee are confidential and are not to be made publicly available. The Committee may only release Council information to external parties that are assisting the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities with the approval of the General Manager.

Exceptions to the prohibition on information release to external parties are:

- where it is being provided to an external investigative or oversight agency for the purpose of informing that agency of a matter that may warrant its attention, and / or
- meeting any overriding release obligations compelled by statute, or
- meeting release obligations under Council policy, where this does not compromise the integrity and confidentiality of the work of the Committee or the internal audit function of Council.

## Composition and tenure

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The Committee consists of one independent voting chair, two independent voting members and one optional non-voting councillor member, in accordance with the *Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit in Local Councils in NSW*. As required by the Guidelines, the Mayor is ineligible to be a Councillor Member. Council may appoint a councillor as an Alternate non-voting member to attend in the event the appointed councillor is unavailable.

The governing body is to appoint the Chair and members of the Committee.

All new committee members are to meet the independence and eligibility criteria prescribed in the *Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit in Local Councils in NSW*.

Chairs and Independent Members are appointed for a 4-year term, unless they are appointed to fill a vacancy that occurs mid-term, in which case an appointment may be made for a shorter period, being the remainder of the term for the role that has been vacated.

Members can be reappointed for a further term, but the total period of continuous membership cannot exceed eight years. This includes any term as Chair of the Committee. Members who have served an eight-year term (either as Member or Chair) must have a two-year break from serving on the Committee before being appointed again. To preserve the Committee's knowledge of Burwood Council, ideally, no more than one member should leave the Committee because of rotation on any one year.

The terms and conditions of each member's appointment are to be disclosed in a letter of appointment. New members will be thoroughly inducted to their role and receive relevant information and briefings on their appointment to assist them to meet their committee responsibilities.

Prior to approving the reappointment or extension of the term of a Chair or an Independent Member, the governing body of Burwood Council is to undertake an assessment of that person's performance. Reappointment of the Chair and Independent Members is also to be subject to the individual still meeting the independence and eligibility requirements.

Members of the Committee must possess and maintain a broad range of skills, knowledge and experience relevant to the operations, governance and financial management of Burwood Council, the environment in which Burwood Council operates, and the contribution that the Committee makes to the Council. At least one member of the Committee must have accounting or related financial management experience with an understanding of accounting and auditing standards in a local government environment. All members should have sufficient understanding of Burwood Council's financial reporting responsibilities to be able to contribute to the Committee's consideration of the Council's annual financial statements.

## Role

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In accordance with section 428A of the Act, the role of the Committee is to review and provide independent advice to the Council regarding the following aspects of Council's operations:

- compliance
- risk management
- fraud control
- financial management
- governance
- implementation of the strategic plan, delivery program and strategies
- service reviews
- collection of performance measurement data by Burwood Council and
- internal audit.

The Committee must also provide information to the Council for the purpose of improving Council's performance of its functions.

The Committee's specific audit, risk and improvement responsibilities under section 428A of the Act are outlined in Schedule 1 of this Charter.

The Committee will act as a forum for the Council's internal audit function and oversee its planning, monitoring and reporting to ensure that it operates effectively.

The Committee will have no power to direct external audit or the way it is planned or undertaken, but will act as a forum for the consideration of external audit findings.

The Committee is directly responsible and accountable to the governing body of Burwood Council for the exercise of its responsibilities. In carrying out its responsibilities, the Committee must at all times recognise that primary responsibility for management of the Council rests with the governing body of Burwood Council and the General Manager.

The responsibilities of the Committee may be revised or expanded in consultation with, or as requested by, the governing body of Burwood Council from time to time.

## Responsibilities of members

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### Independent members

The Chair and members of the Committee are expected to understand and observe the requirements of the *Guidelines for risk management and internal audit for local government in NSW*. Members are also expected to:

- make themselves available as required to attend and participate in meetings
- contribute the time needed to review and understand information provided to it
- apply good analytical skills, objectivity and judgement
- act in the best interests of Burwood Council
- have the personal courage to raise and deal with tough issues, express opinions frankly, ask questions that go to the fundamental core of the issue and pursue independent lines of inquiry
- maintain effective working relationships with Burwood Council
- have strong leadership qualities (Chair)
- lead effective Committee meetings (Chair), and
- oversee the Council's internal audit function (Chair).

### **Councillor Member**

To preserve the independence of the Committee, the Councillor Member of the Committee is a non-voting member. Their role is to:

- relay to the Committee any concerns the governing body may have regarding the Council and issues being considered by the Committee
- provide insights into local issues and the strategic priorities of Burwood Council that would add value to the Committee's consideration of agenda items
- advise the governing body (as necessary) of the work of the Committee and any issues arising from it, and
- assist the governing body to review the performance of the Committee.

Issues or information the Councillor Member raises with or provides to the Committee must relate to the matters listed in Schedule 1 of this Charter and issues being considered by the Committee.

The Councillor Member of the Committee must conduct themselves in a non-partisan and professional manner. The Councillor Member of the Committee must not engage in any conduct that seeks to politicise the activities of the Committee or the internal audit function, or that could be seen to do so.

If the Councillor Member of the Committee engages in such conduct or in any other conduct that may bring the Committee and its work into disrepute, the Chair of the Committee may recommend to the Council that the Councillor Member be removed from membership of the Committee. Where the Council does not agree to the Committee Chair's recommendation, the Council must give reasons for its decision in writing to the Chair.

### **Conduct**

Independent members are required to comply with the *Code of Conduct for Council Committee Members, Delegates of Council, Council Advisers, Volunteers, Contractors and Members of Wholly Advisory Committees* (the *Code of Conduct*).

Complaints or breaches of *Code of Conduct* by an independent committee member are to be dealt with in accordance with the *Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct*. The General Manager must consult with the governing body before taking any disciplinary action against an independent committee member in response to a breach of the *Code of Conduct*.

### **Conflicts of interest**

Once a year, Committee members will provide written declarations to the Council stating that they do not have any conflicts of interest that would preclude them from being members of the Committee.

Independent members are 'designated persons' within the meaning of the Act and must also complete and submit returns of their interests.

Committee members and observers must declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary conflicts of interest they may have at the start of each meeting or as soon as they become aware of the conflict of interest. Where a committee member or observer declares a pecuniary or a significant non-pecuniary conflict of interest, they must remove themselves from Committee deliberations on the issue. Details of any conflicts of interest must also be appropriately minuted.

### **Standards**

Committee members are to conduct their work in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards (issued by the Institute of Internal Auditors) and current Australian risk management standards, where applicable.

## Work plans

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The work of the Committee is to be thoroughly planned and executed. The Committee must develop a strategic plan every four years to ensure that all matters listed in Schedule 1 of this Charter are reviewed by the Committee and the internal audit function. The strategic work plan must be reviewed at least annually to ensure it remains appropriate.

The Committee may, in consultation with the governing body, vary the strategic work plan at any time to address new or emerging risks. The governing body may also, by resolution, request the Committee to approve a variation to the strategic work plan. However, any decision to vary the strategic work plan must be made by the Committee.

The Committee must also develop an annual work plan to guide its work, and the work of the Governance & Risk unit of Council in managing the internal audit function, over the forward year.

The Committee may, in consultation with the governing body, vary the annual work plan to address new or emerging risks. The governing body may also, by resolution, request the Committee to approve a variation to the annual work plan. However, any decision to vary the annual work plan must be made by the Committee.

When considering whether to vary the strategic or annual work plans, the Committee must consider the impact of the variation on the internal audit function's existing workload and the completion of pre-existing priorities and activities identified under the work plan.

## Assurance reporting

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The Committee must regularly report to the Council to ensure it is kept informed of matters considered by the Committee and any emerging issues that may influence the strategic direction of the Council, or the achievement of the Council's goals and objectives.

The Committee will provide an update to the governing body and the General Manager of its activities and opinions after every Committee meeting. Generally, this will be achieved by sharing the approved Minutes of the meeting with the governing body through the confidential Councillor Portal.

The Committee will provide an annual assessment to the governing body and the General Manager each year on the Committee's work and its opinion on how the Council is performing.

The Committee will provide a comprehensive assessment every council term of all the matters listed in Schedule 1 to the governing body and General Manager.

The Committee may at any time report to the governing body or the General Manager on any other matter it deems of sufficient importance to warrant their attention. The Mayor and Chair of the Committee may also meet at any time to discuss issues relating to the work of the Committee.

Should the governing body require additional information, a request for the information may be made to the Chair by resolution. The Chair is only required to provide the information requested by the governing body where the Chair is satisfied that it is reasonably necessary for the governing body to receive the information for the purposes of performing its functions under the Act. Individual councillors are not entitled to request or receive information from the Committee.

## Administrative arrangements

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### Meetings

The Committee will meet at least five times per year, including a special meeting to review the Council's financial statements.

The Committee can hold additional meetings when significant unexpected issues arise, or if the Chair is asked to hold an additional meeting by a committee member, the General Manager or the governing body.

Committee meetings can be held in person, by telephone, by videoconference or via a hybrid of the aforementioned methods. Proxies are not permitted to attend meetings, if a member cannot attend.

A quorum will consist of a majority of independent voting members. Where the vote is tied, the Chair has the casting vote.

The Chair of the Committee will decide the agenda for each committee meeting. Each Committee meeting is to be minuted to preserve a record of the issues considered and the actions and decisions taken by the Committee.

The General Manager, Director Corporate Services and Head of Internal Audit (being the Manager Risk & Governance, who has been given that responsibility in line with their role description) are to attend committee meetings as non-voting observers. The external auditor (or their representative) is to be invited to each Committee meeting as an independent observer. The Chair can request the Council's Finance Manager, Coordinator Enterprise Risk, other Director, any councillors, any managers or other officers of the Council and any subject matter expert to attend Committee meetings. Where requested to attend a meeting, those persons must attend the meeting where possible and provide any information requested. Observers have no voting rights and can be excluded from a meeting by the Chair at any time.

The Committee can hold closed meetings whenever it needs to discuss confidential or sensitive issues with only voting members of the Committee present.

The Committee may request to meet separately with the Head of Internal Audit and the Council's external auditor.

### Dispute resolution

Members of the Committee and the Council's Leadership Team should maintain an effective working relationship and seek to resolve any differences they may have in an amicable and professional way by discussion and negotiation.

In the event of a disagreement between the Committee and the General Manager or Directors, the dispute is to be resolved by the governing body.

Unresolved disputes regarding compliance with statutory or other requirements are to be referred to the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment in writing.

### Secretariat

The General Manager will nominate an officer to provide secretariat support to the Committee. The secretariat will ensure the agenda for each meeting and supporting papers are circulated after approval from the Chair at least one week before the meeting and ensure that minutes of meetings are prepared and maintained. Minutes must be approved by the Chair and circulated within two weeks to each member.

### **Resignation and dismissal of members**

Where the Chair or a Committee member is unable to complete their term, or does not intend to seek reappointment after the expiry of their term, they should give six weeks notice to the Chair and the governing body prior to their resignation to enable the Council to ensure a smooth transition to a new Chair or Committee member.

The governing body can terminate via resolution the engagement of any Chair or independent committee member before the expiry of their term where the individual has:

- breached the *Code of Conduct*
- performed unsatisfactorily or not to expectations
- declared, or is found to be in, a position of a conflict of interest that is unresolvable
- been declared bankrupt or found to be insolvent
- experienced an adverse change in business status
- been proven to be in a serious breach of their obligations under any legislation, or
- experienced an adverse change in capacity or capability.

The position of a Councillor Member on the Committee can be terminated at any time by the governing body by resolution.

### **Review arrangements**

At least once every council term the governing body must conduct an external review of the effectiveness of the Committee.

This Charter is to be reviewed annually by the Committee and once each council term by the elected body of Burwood Council. Any substantive changes are to be approved by the governing body.

## **Further information**

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For further information on the Burwood Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee contact the Manager Governance & Risk by email at [Governance@burwood.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Governance@burwood.nsw.gov.au) or by phone on +61 2 9911 9911.

Reviewed by Chair of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee: 21 November 2024

Reviewed by Burwood Council in accordance with a resolution of the governing body: 26 November 2024 (Min. No. 104/24)

Next review date: October 2025



**Schedule 1****Burwood Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee responsibilities**

Responsibilities of the Committee related to each matter listed in section 428A of the Act are detailed in this schedule.

**Audit****Internal audit**

- Provide overall strategic oversight of internal audit activities
- Act as a forum for communication between the governing body, the General Manager, Leadership Team, the internal audit function and external audit
- Coordinate, as far as is practicable, the work programs of internal audit and other assurance and review functions
- Review and advise Burwood Council:
  - on whether the Council is providing the resources necessary to successfully deliver the internal audit function
  - if the Council is complying with internal audit requirements, including conformance with the *Global Internal Audit Standards* of the Institute of Internal Auditors
  - if the Council's *Internal Audit Charter* is appropriate and whether the internal audit policies and procedures and audit / risk methodologies used by the Council are suitable
  - of the strategic four-year plan and annual work plan of internal audits to be undertaken by the Council's internal audit function
  - if Council's internal audit activities are effective, including the performance of the head of the internal audit function and the internal audit function
  - of the findings and recommendations of internal audits conducted, and corrective actions needed to address issues raised
  - of the implementation by Council of these corrective actions
  - on the appointment of the head of the internal audit function and external providers, and
  - if the internal audit function is structured appropriately and is supported with sufficient skills and expertise to meet its responsibilities

**External audit**

- Act as a forum for communication between the governing body, General Manager, Leadership Team, the internal audit function and external audit
- Coordinate, as far as is practicable, the work programs of internal audit and external audit
- Provide input and feedback on the financial statement and performance audit coverage proposed by external audit and provide feedback on the audit services provided
- Review all external plans and reports in respect of planned or completed audits and monitor council's implementation of audit recommendations
- Provide advice to the governing body and / or the General Manager on action taken on significant issues raised in relevant external audit reports and better practice guides

## Risk

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### Risk management

Review and advise the Council on:

- if the Council has in place a current and appropriate risk management framework that is consistent with prevailing Australian risk management standards
- whether the Council is providing the resources necessary to successfully implement its risk management framework
- whether the Council's risk management framework is adequate and effective for identifying and managing the risks the Council faces - including those associated individual projects, programs and other activities
- if risk management is integrated across all levels of the Council and across all processes, operations, services, decision-making, functions and reporting
- of the adequacy of risk reports and documentation, for example, the Council's risk register and risk profile
- whether a sound approach has been followed in developing risk management plans for major projects or undertakings
- whether appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the management and exercise of delegations
- if Council has taken steps to embed a culture that is committed to ethical and lawful behaviour
- if there is a positive risk culture within the Council and strong leadership that supports effective risk management
- of the adequacy of staff training and induction in risk management
- how the Council's risk management approach impacts on the Council's insurance arrangements
- of the effectiveness of Council management of its assets, and
- of the effectiveness of business continuity arrangements, including business continuity plans, disaster recovery plans and the periodic testing of these plans.

### Internal controls

Review and advise the Council on:

- whether Council's approach to maintaining an effective internal audit framework, including over external parties such as contractors and advisors, is sound and effective
- whether Council has in place relevant policies and procedures and that these are periodically reviewed and updated
- whether appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the management and exercise of delegations
- whether staff are informed of their responsibilities and processes and procedures to implement controls are complied with
- if the Council's monitoring and review of controls is sufficient, and
- if internal and external audit recommendations to correct internal control weaknesses are implemented appropriately

### Compliance

Review and advise the Council of the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's compliance framework, including:

- if the Council has appropriately considered legal and compliance risks as part of the Council's risk management framework
- how the Council manages its compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, procedures, codes, and contractual arrangements, and
- whether appropriate processes are in place to assess compliance.

### **Fraud and corruption**

Review and advise the Council of the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's fraud and corruption prevention framework and activities, including whether the Council has appropriate processes and systems in place to capture and effectively investigate fraud-related information.

### **Financial management**

Review and advise the Council:

- if the Council is complying with accounting standards and external accountability requirements
- of the appropriateness of the Council's accounting policies and disclosures
- of the implications for Council of the findings of external audits and performance audits and Council's responses and implementation of recommendations
- whether the Council's financial statement preparation procedures and timelines are sound
- the accuracy of the Council's annual financial statements prior to external audit, including:
  - management compliance / representations
  - significant accounting and reporting issues
  - the methods used by the Council to account for significant or unusual transactions and areas of significant estimates or judgements
  - appropriate management signoff on the statements
- if effective processes are in place to ensure financial information included in the Council's annual report is consistent with signed financial statements
- if the Council's financial management processes are adequate
- the adequacy of cash management policies and procedures
- if there are adequate controls over financial processes, for example:
  - appropriate authorisation and approval of payments and transactions
  - adequate segregation of duties
  - timely reconciliation of accounts and balances
  - review of unusual and high value purchases
- if policies and procedures for management review and consideration of the financial position and performance of the Council are adequate
- if Council's grants and tied funding policies and procedures are sound.

### **Governance**

Review and advise the Council regarding its governance framework, including the Council's:

- decision-making processes
- implementation of governance policies and procedures
- reporting lines and accountability
- assignment of key role and responsibilities
- committee structure
- management oversight responsibilities
- human resources and performance management activities
- reporting and communication activities
- information and communications technology (ICT) governance, and
- management and governance of the use of data, information and knowledge.

## **Improvement**

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### **Strategic planning**

Review and advise the Council:

- of the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) processes

- if appropriate reporting and monitoring mechanisms are in place to measure progress against objectives, and
- whether the Council is successfully implementing and achieving its IP&R objectives and strategies.

#### **Service reviews and business improvement**

- Act as a forum for communication and monitoring of any audits conducted by external bodies and the implementation of corrective actions (for example, NSW government agencies, Commonwealth government agencies, insurance bodies)
- Review and advise the Council:
  - if the Council has robust systems to set objectives and goals to determine and deliver appropriate levels of service to the community and business performance
  - if appropriate reporting and monitoring mechanisms are in place to measure service delivery to the community and overall performance, and
  - how the Council can improve its service delivery and the Council's performance of its business and functions generally.

#### **Performance data and measurement**

Review and advise the Council:

- if the Council has a robust system to determine appropriate performance indicators to measure the achievement of its strategic objectives
- if the performance indicators that Council uses are effective, and
- of the adequacy of performance data collection and reporting.