

REPORT CLASSIFICATION	✓	CATEGORY OF PAPER	✓
Official		Proposes specific action	
Official: Sensitive Commercial	✓	Provides assurance	✓
Official: Sensitive Personal		For information only	

BOARD

29 JULY 2025

Report Title:

Audit Committee Highlight Report

Purpose of report

To provide the Board with the key highlights from the Audit Committee meeting held on 24 July 2025 along with the confirmed minutes from the meetings held on 26 February 2025, 10 April 2025, 23 April 2025 and 12 June 2025.

Key points

The Audit Committee is chaired by David Stout, Non-Executive member of the Board, and provides oversight and assurance to the Board on the adequacy of governance, risk management and internal control processes within the ICB.

The Committee confirmed minutes for the extraordinary meetings held on:

- 26 February 2025 are attached in **Appendix 1**
- 23 April 2025 are attached in **Appendix 2**
- 12 June 2025 are attached in **Appendix 3**.

The Committee confirmed minutes for the meeting held on 10 April 2025 are attached in **Appendix 4**.

Highlights from the Meeting held on 24 July 2025

The Committee considered the following key items at the meeting held on 10 April 2025 including

- Risk Management and Board Assurance Framework report
- Information Governance Assurance Report
- Fit and Proper Person Test Compliance Report
- Finance Update
- Internal Audit Progress Report
- External Audit Progress Report
- Counter Fraud Progress Report
- ICB Freedom to Speak Up Update

The key points of information from each item are noted below:

Risk Management Report and Board Assurance Framework

The Committee received the latest risk management report, corporate risk register and board assurance framework for review and assurance for quarter 1 of 2025/26. The report included information on the BAF, Corporate Risk Register, and highlighting any new risks identified within the Corporate Risk Register. Once there is further clarity on the governance arrangements, further work will commence to align the risk management processes with the new structure.

Information Governance Assurance Report

The Committee received an overview of the information governance assurance report for the work undertaken for the period 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and governance activity during quarter 1

2025/26. The updates included Data Protection and Security Toolkit submission, Data Security Incidents, Freedom of Information requests along with the SIRO Report compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection regulations.

Fit and Proper Person Test Compliance Report

The Committee were provided with an overview and assurance on the ICBs compliance in accordance with NHSE guidance of the annual requirements of the Fit and Proper Person Test (FPPT). The report detailed the ICB compliance in line with the fit and proper test requirements with all annual checks conducted, including completion of all Board member appraisals with submission of NHSE return on 24 June 2025.

Finance Update

The Committee received an update on the ICB's financial position and essential financial governance matters covering financial performance, losses and special payments, tender waivers and aged debtors and creditors approved in line with the ICB financial delegations.

Three Deep Dive visits were conducted by NHSE in the NENC ICB which reviewed efficiency plans and financial risks. The review focussed on three areas Maturity and Robustness of Plans, Resources and Addressing the Gap and provided recommendations or areas for improvement.

Internal Audit Progress Report

A progress report was shared for information and assurance highlighting the progress and outcomes from internal audit activity, along with the request for approval of the Internal Audit Charter for 2025/26. The report included information on the introduction of a new methodology for audit reporting which will no longer include recommendations. This change will result in the identification of more feasible improvement actions and realistic implementation. Auditors will liaise with the individuals to facilitate the new process.

External Audit Progress Report

The Committee received the external audit Auditors Annual Report for 2024/25 which contains the auditor's commentary on value for money (VFM) arrangements. This report provided assurance to confirm there are no significant risks or weaknesses in the ICB arrangements and highlighted the scale of the ICB challenges to the efficiencies required in 2025/26.

Counter Fraud Progress Report

The Committee was provided with a progress report providing an update on the work undertaken for the period 18 March 2025 to 17 June 2025. The report included the 2025/26 Counter Fraud draft work plan along with the NHSCFA local proactive exercise (LPE) statistics report for quarter 4. The report contained information on the conflicts of interest and the positive outcome of the 2024/25 annual report.

ICB Freedom to Speak Up (FSTU) Update

The Committee Chair provided an update on behalf of the ICB Chief Medical Nurse to the ongoing recruitment process of the FSTU guardian. Any recent issues and concerns raised continue to be addressed and sign posted where necessary by the ICB.

Risks and issues

N/A

Assurances and supporting documentation

- To note the meeting notes from the meeting on 24 July 2025 will be submitted to Board on 25 November 2025.
- To note the extension of the Non-Executive Director role in support of the Audit Committee extended to September 2025.
- To note the tenure of the Chair has been extended in support of the Audit Committee for a further three years.

Recommendation/action required

The Board is asked to:

- Receive the approved minutes for the extraordinary Audit Committee meetings held on 26 February 2025 (Appendix 1) and 23 April 2025 (Appendix 2) and 12 June 2025 (Appendix 3) for assurance.
- Receive the approved minutes for the Audit Committee meeting held on 10 April 2025 (Appendix 4) for assurance.
- Note the key highlights from the Audit Committee meeting held on 24 July 2025.

Acronyms and abbreviations explained

ICB – Integrated Care Board FPPT – Fit and Proper Person Test VMF – Value for Money LPE – Local Proactive Exercise FTSU – Freedom to Speak Up SIRO – Senior Information Risk Owner						
Sponsor/Approving Executive Director	C Riley, Chief Corporate Services Officer David Stout, Audit Chair and Independent Non-Executive Member					
Date approved by Executive Director	24 July 2025					
Report author	L Hutchinson, Head of Corporate Governance					
Link to ICP strategy priorities (please tick all that apply)						
Longer and Healthier Lives	✓					
Fairer Outcomes for All	✓					
Better Health and Care Services	✓					
Giving Children and Young People the Best Start in Life	✓					
Relevant legal/statutory issues						
Note any relevant Acts, regulations, national guidelines etc						
Any potential/actual conflicts of interest associated with the paper? (please tick)	Yes		No		N/A	✓
Equality analysis completed (please tick)	Yes		No		N/A	✓
If there is an expected impact on patient outcomes and/or experience, has a quality impact assessment been undertaken? (please tick)	Yes		No		N/A	✓
Essential considerations (must be completed)						
Financial implications and considerations	N/A					
Contracting and Procurement	N/A					
Local Delivery Team	N/A					
Digital implications	N/A					
Clinical involvement	N/A					
Health inequalities	N/A					
Patient and public involvement	N/A					
Partner and/or other stakeholder engagement	N/A					
Other resources	N/A					