**Executive Summary**

It is good practice to review the business of corporate committees annually. The annual report (attached) outlines the work of the Audit Committee over the year 2014/15.

**Strategic Priorities**

1. **Quality and Safety**
   - Reduce harm, deliver best clinical outcomes and improve patient experience.
   - Address the existing capacity shortfall and process issues to consistently deliver national healthcare standards.
   - Develop a clinical strategy that ensures the safety and short term sustainability of our clinical services pending the outcome of the Future Fit Programme.
   - To undertake a review of all current services at specialty level to inform future service and business decisions.
   - Develop a sustainable long term clinical services strategy for the Trust to deliver our vision of future healthcare services through our Future Fit Programme.

2. **People**
   - Through our People Strategy develop, support and engage with our workforce to make our organisation a great place to work.

3. **Innovation**
   - Support service transformation and increased productivity through technology and continuous improvement strategies.

4. **Community and Partnership**
   - Develop the principle of ‘agency’ in our community to support a prevention agenda and improve the health and well-being of the population.
   - Embed a customer focussed approach and improve relationships through our stakeholder engagement strategies.

5. **Financial Strength: Sustainable Future**
   - Develop a transition plan that ensures financial sustainability and addresses liquidity issues pending the outcome of the Future Fit Programme.

**Board Assurance Framework (BAF) Risks**

- If we do not deliver **safe care** then patients may suffer avoidable harm and poor clinical outcomes and experience.
- If the local health and social care economy does not reduce the **Fit To Transfer** (FTT) waiting list from its current unacceptable levels then patients may suffer serious harm.
- Risk to **sustainability** of clinical services due to potential shortages of key clinical staff.
- If we do not achieve safe and efficient **patient flow** and improve our processes and capacity and demand planning then we will fail the national quality and performance standards.
- If we do not get good levels of **staff engagement** to get a culture of continuous improvement then staff morale and patient outcomes may not improve.
- If we do not have a clear **clinical service vision** then we may not deliver the best services to patients.
- If we are unable to resolve our (historic) shortfall in **liquidity** and the structural imbalance in the Trust’s **Income & Expenditure** position then we will not be able to fulfil our financial duties and address the modernisation of our ageing estate and equipment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Care Quality Commission (CQC) Domains</th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Caring</th>
<th>Responsive</th>
<th>Well led</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receive</th>
<th>Review</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Approve</th>
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**Recommendation**
The Trust Board is asked to NOTE Audit Committee Annual Report.
1. Introduction

The Audit Committee’s chief function is to advise the Board on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Trust’s systems of internal control and its arrangements for risk management, control and governance processes and securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money).

In order to discharge this function the Audit Committee has approved an Annual Report for the Board and Accountable Officer. This Report includes information provided by Internal Audit, External Audit and other Assurance Providers, including the Trust’s Risk Committee.

2. The Role and Operation of the Audit Committee

2.1 Membership of the Committee

The Audit Committee is the senior Board committee taking a wide responsibility for scrutinising the risks and controls which affect all aspects of the organisation’s business. The Audit Committee met 5 times during 2014/15. It is chaired by a Non-Executive Director. The members of the Committee disclosed their interests, which included the following, in the Trust’s register of interests:

- Mr Robin Hooper (Chair)
  Director of Hollyhead Estates Ltd
  Director of Hollyhead Estates Wrenbury Ltd
  Director of Oak Street Property Ltd
  Director of Oak Street Wimblighton Ltd
  Director of Planning Group Ltd
  Director of Verity House Ltd
  Director of Enterprise Prospects Ltd
  Director of Enterprise Global Solutions Ltd
  Director of Sports Booker Ltd
  Trustee of Shrewsbury Drapers Ltd
  Chief Executive of Eden District Council
  Director of Hooper Burrowes Legal Ltd

- Dr Simon Walford
  Trustee, Wolverhampton Grammar School.
  Chair, University of Wolverhampton
  Director, Wolverhampton Academies Trust
  In receipt of an NHS Pension

- Mr Dennis Jones
  None

Other Non-Executive directors are able to attend this meeting and key senior Trust personnel and Internal and External Audit are also in attendance. The Finance Director, and Director of Corporate Governance normally attend the Committee.

The Director of Corporate Governance provides support to the Chair and Committee members.
2.2 Meetings and Attendance

The Committee is required to meet at least three times a year. Five meetings took place during this period and were attended by members as shown overleaf:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Robin Hooper</th>
<th>Simon Walford</th>
<th>Dennis Jones</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>8 May 2014*</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>5/5</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
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<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Hooper</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Walford</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Jones</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Other attendees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>%</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Corporate Governance</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>Finance Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head of Assurance</td>
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<td>5/5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Audit</td>
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<tr>
<td>External Audit</td>
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<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter Fraud</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key – ✓ (Present) / ✗ (Absent) from meeting / D = Deputy attended

*The May 8 meeting was a special meeting held to review the annual accounts and the draft Annual Governance Statement.

2.3 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were reviewed and adopted in September 2014. No changes were made as the Terms of Reference are in line with those recommended in the NHS Audit Committee Handbook.

2.4 Reporting from the Committee

An outcome summary of the Audit Committee is formally reported to the public session of the Trust Board. (contained in the Information pack). In addition, the Chair of the Audit Committee summarises the key issues following each meeting in an update to the following Trust Board. Examples of issues brought to the attention of the Board during the year are shown below.

The Audit Committee:

- Received the draft Local Counter Fraud Specialist (LCFS) Annual Report and was pleased to note the overall performance of the LCFS met the four Key Principles of the NHS Protect Standards for Providers: Fraud, Bribery and Corruption.

- Noted that External Audit will issue an ‘except for’ opinion in respect of the Value for Money (VFM) conclusion relating to financial resilience.
- We're pleased to note the ‘substantial assurance’ opinion given by Internal Audit on the Board Assurance Framework. This is the third consecutive annual positive opinion.

- Recommended that a letter be submitted to the NTDA highlighting concerns about the cash flow pressures impacting on small suppliers, which the Finance Director agreed to compose on behalf of the Chair.

- Noted the first report on declarations of interest and gifts and hospitality in line with the Trust's revised Standards of Business Conduct Policy (HR52). The Committee were pleased to note the good response rate but asked for confirmation that a failure to respond could result in further action.

- Discussed the External Audit’s annual year end audit reporting process. They will take highlight key audit risks and emerging risks which may affect their 2014/15 year end audit, taking into account the VFM conclusion guidance recently issued by the Audit Committee. It was suggested that it would be helpful to comment on the likely effect on performance and finance if activity in 2014/15 had been within plan.

- Discussed the junior doctor’s sickness management audit and were concerned that SaTH’s Return to Work interview compliance was the worst performance in the 10 Trusts audited by Deloitte. The Committee expressed concern that as well as the impact this had on locum costs, there was also a very important issue around the welfare of the doctor if we were not managing this robustly, as often sickness absence can be a signal of concerns around other aspects of performance and wellbeing. It was noted that Workforce Committee will be providing assurance to the Board on progress and that Medical Staffing will be developing closer links with the HR Department to ensure consistency of approach across all professional groups.

- Discussed the data Quality Audit. The importance of accurate data in terms of both ensuring that care was delivered efficiently and that finances were safeguarded was noted. The importance of health-related IT solutions across the whole of Shropshire were also discussed and the importance of linkages between the different elements. It was noted that the Finance Committee had been tasked to provide assurance to the Board, through Internal Audit, that all appropriate measures were in place.

- The Committee also discussed the Trust’s recognised financial consequences of duplication of clinical services and welcomed the early Board-level discussions with partners in the Local Health Economy to minimise these.

- Thanked the Finance Team and support from Internal Audit in arriving at long-term solution to historic structural financial position.

- Noted that Internal Audit have made recommendation that there should be more Non-Executive Director (NED) oversight of significant discussions about the Trust’s long term funding options. The Audit Committee recommended that the Board seek confirmation from NEDs that they are content with current involvement in the Trust’s negotiations to secure permanent funding solutions. This was discussed at the next Board meeting and members felt that there was sufficient involvement.

- Noted that reasonable progress has been made in relation to the Board Governance Assurance Framework. There are two ‘red flags’. One is the requirement to have an independent evaluation of Board effectiveness and the committee structure within two years. It has been agreed that this review will not take place until the Chief Executive has been in post for a year. The second red flag concerns Board succession planning. The Committee recommended that a Skill Matrix and Equality and Diversity self-assessment is used.
o The Committee were pleased to receive assurance from Internal audit that in terms of Recommendation Tracking and Declarations of Interest/Code of Business Conduct the Trust was out-performing some flagship FT clients

o The Workforce Pay Controls Audit, requested by the Board, was brought back to Audit Committee. There was discussion around the current nursing template and the plan to externally benchmark SaTH's position with peers, whilst recognizing that this issue and that of Nurse Agency was a national issue. It was noted that Workforce Committee will be providing assurance to the Board on progress and that any recommendations that needed to be revised would be agreed in this forum

o Noted that Internal Audit has raised the ongoing problems in relation to timely signing of commissioner contracts. This is likely to be an even more protracted process this year as there are problems around the tariff. The Contracts Team were asked to provide assurance to Audit Committee around the processes in place.

2.5 Reporting to the Committee

In line with the terms of reference there are a number of standing items on each Committee agenda.

The following were presented at each meeting
- Audit Recommendation Tracking

The following were presented at each meeting with the exception of the meeting in June
- Internal Audit Update
- Counter Fraud update

The following reports were also presented to the Committee:
- External Audit Update (Jun, Sept and Dec 14)
- Board Assurance Framework (Jun, Sept and Dec 14, Feb 15)
- Security Annual Report (Jun 14)
- Risk Committee Annual Report (Jun 14)
- Annual Accounts (May and Jun 14)
- Annual Report (Jun 14)
- Annual Governance Statement (May, Jun 13 and Feb 15)
- Audit Committee Annual Report (May 14)
- Audit Committee Self Assessment (Dec 14 and Feb 15)
- Department of Health Consultation on Audit Committees (Sept 14)
- Board Governance Assurance Framework (Dec 14 and Feb 15)
- Standards of Business Conduct – declarations of interest (Sept 14 and Feb 15)
- Appointment of new External Auditors (Feb 15)

3. Audit Committee’s opinion

Members of the Board should recognise that assurance given can never be absolute, but the Board is still responsible for ensuring there are robust systems in place. The highest level of assurance that can be provided to the Board is a reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in the Trust’s risk management, control and governance processes.

The opinion of the Committee is that with the exception of the internal control issues set out in section 4 below, the Trust has a generally sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives and those control issues have been or are being addressed.
4. Information supporting opinion

Summarised below is the key information/sources of assurance that the Committee has relied upon when formulating their opinion.

4.1 Internal Audit

4.1.1 Head of Internal Audit’s Opinion

The Head of Internal Audit’s Opinion is based on the work undertaken in 2014/15. During the year, Internal Audit reported on nine core audits and three performance audits. Internal Audit issued substantial assurance ratings for five of the core audits, moderate assurance ratings for two core audits and a limited assurance rating for two core audits. The moderate assurance ratings relate to budgetary control and data quality. The limited assurance ratings relate to the audit of workforce budget controls where four high priority recommendations were made; and IT controls where one high priority recommendation was made.

The overall opinion is that:

“Moderate assurance can be given as there is a generally sound system of internal control, designed to meet the organisation’s objectives, but the level of non-compliance in certain areas puts some system objectives at risk. There is a basically sound system of internal control for other system objectives”

4.1.2 Internal Audit Reports and recommendations

The Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2014/15 was approved by the Audit Committee on 5th March 2014. The Trust received the following opinions during 2014/15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Assurance</th>
<th>Substantial Assurance</th>
<th>Moderate Assurance</th>
<th>Limited Assurance</th>
<th>No Assurance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Audits</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance reviews</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two additional performance reviews were originally in the plan but were removed in year. These were a contract review and a follow up of RTT. An audit of RTT is being carried out by External Audit as part of their review of the year.

A summary of topics is attached at Appendix 1.

Whilst positive opinions were issued in respect of the majority of audits for the period, limited opinions were provided in two core audits:

- **Workforce budget controls**: Four high priority, seven medium priority, and four low priority recommendations made. The high priority recommendations related to developing upfront visibility of the cost when booking bank / agency staff; developing a ‘confirm and challenge’ around e-rostering; setting budgets in e-rostering; and reducing dependency on bank and agency staff.
- **IT controls**: One high priority recommendation was made which related to the need to complete a formal assessment of the Trust’s cooling controls.

Formal actions plans have been agreed to address all the control weaknesses in these areas. There have been no common weaknesses identified through Internal Audit reviews.
There have been 94 recommendations made by Internal Audit. 74 of these recommendations were completely accepted by management and two high, nine medium and three low priority recommendations were partially accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Priority</th>
<th>Medium Priority</th>
<th>Low Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Audits</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance reviews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Trust has a system of recommendation tracking to follow-up all internal and external audit recommendations. All outstanding recommendations are discussed with Executive Directors prior to presentation to the Audit Committee to ensure full ownership of recommendation implementation across the Trust. Only one recommendation was overdue at year end.

### 4.1.3 Internal Audit Performance
Deloitte are the Trust’s Internal Auditors and have provided progress reports at each meeting which included:
- Draft and final reports issued to ensure delivery to timescale
- Overall assurance by report

In 2012/13, which was the first year of the current Internal Audit contract, the Committee expressed concern about the number of reports which were submitted at the end of the financial year. This improved significantly in the 2013/14 audit plan, and performance was maintained in 2014/15 with all audits completed and reported in line with the plan.

### 4.2 External Audit
The refreshed Audit Plan was presented to the Audit Committee in June 2014. There were no areas of high audit risk identified for the year going forward.

#### 4.2.1 External Audit Performance Indicators
The main performance indicator for external audit is performance against the Audit Plan. All issues are met in line with the Plan. In addition the Audit Commission submits a satisfaction survey to clients to enable them to comment on performance.

### 4.3 Audit Performance
This Committee considers that there are no issues with Internal and External Audit that affect their ability to support this Committee in discharging its duties.

The Committee has met in private (management excluded) with auditors to enable any other issues of concern to be raised by either party but no such issues have been raised in addition to the matters discussed in open meetings.

### 4.4 Other Assurance Providers

#### 4.4.1 Other Committees
The Audit Committee also receives assurance from the Risk Committee. The Risk Committee is chaired by the Chief Executive. It met quarterly to review and update the Board Assurance Framework. It also has an overview of the most significant risks on the Trust risk registers to ensure there are robust controls and mitigation actions in place.
4.4.2 Local Counter Fraud Service (LCFS)

In line with the Secretary of State’s Directions to NHS Bodies on Counter Fraud Measures, the LCFS has produced a written report on the activities undertaken during 2014/15. This includes the activities agreed with the LCFS and Finance Director at the beginning of 2014/15. It covers the seven generic areas of counter fraud activity set out in the NHS Counter Fraud and Corruption Manual. It also includes an analysis of the Trust’s compliance with the Secretary of State’s Directions, which has not revealed any significant areas of non-compliance.

The key activities carried out over 2014/15 by the LCFS were:

- Given presentations to groups of staff working in areas where they need to be particularly vigilant to the possibility of fraud.
- Proactive exercises to detect potential fraud including an examination of fraud red flags in sickness absence; consultant job planning, and centralised recruitment.
- Reviewed a number of policies and identified some areas where best practice guidance could enable the policies to be enhanced to reflect counter fraud arrangements.
- Carried out work on the data matches provided by the National Fraud Initiative.

4.4.3 Management

The Audit Committee also received assurance through the Trust’s audit recommendation tracking system. All internal and external audit recommendations are followed-up with the lead manager through the Director of Corporate Governance before each Audit Committee meeting to ensure progress against implementation is monitored. All responses and non-responses are shared with the relevant Executive Director so they can ensure that appropriate management action is taken. The Audit Committee receives a full report on the recommendations and progress to implement the identified improvements, with particular attention paid to any outstanding actions. The Trust has implemented a web-based recommendation tracking system. A heat map highlights areas where implementation of recommendations is delayed.

This approach has seen the sustained improvement in the timely implementation of recommendations, with only one recommendation overdue at year end.

The Executive Directors have agreed a robust approach to recommendation tracking which includes high priority audit recommendations being reviewed by the Executive Directors.

4.5 Assurance Framework

The Assurance Framework was reported regularly to the Audit Committee in 2014/15 and is thoroughly scrutinised by the Committee. The Committee’s view is that the Framework identifies the key risks, controls and sources of assurance. Each Director is responsible for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the Framework in relation to Trust objectives.

The Audit Committee reviewed the framework at meetings in June, September, and December 2014 and February 2015. In line with year-end reporting requirements, the Audit Committee reviewed the final version of the 2014/15 assurance framework at its May 2015 meeting.

Internal Audit reviewed the Assurance Framework and related processes and gave an opinion of substantial assurance. They noted “The Board Assurance Framework is a High Priority area in the Internal Audit Plan. The current year assurance level is substantial, which is in line with the prior year. We have not raised any High Priority recommendations in the current or prior year. The recommendations raised in the current year are Low Priority items which should nevertheless be addressed by management. The current year recommendations relate to the completeness of risk.
management documentation in the 4risk risk management system and the consistency of wording between 4risk and the Trust’s Risk Policy.”

The Audit Committee has relied on the Assurance Framework to provide assurance that systems, policies and people are in place to drive the delivery of objectives by focusing on minimising risk. The Audit Committee believes that the Assurance Framework provides a comprehensive method for the effective and focused management of the principal risks to meeting objectives and provides a structure for evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement.

4.6 Corporate Risk Register
The Corporate Risk Register and the associated controls and assurances have been overseen by the Risk Committee throughout the year.

5. Conclusions
Based on information presented and discussed at the Audit Committee meetings during the year we have concluded the following:

5.1 Risk Management
The Audit Committee concludes that the Trust’s system of risk identification, recording, reporting arrangements are adequate. The Trust has a comprehensive organisation-wide risk register that records clinical risk, organisational risks and financial risks. The risk register provides evidence that the Trust is using a common methodology to evaluate risk for both strategic and operational risks. It also maps to the Integrated Business Plan and Performance Report.

Risk assessments are carried out on an ongoing basis within the Centres, and whenever a process change is about to occur, or a new hazard is identified. Quality Impact Assessments are carried out for all cost improvement schemes. Risk Management processes link the highest risk issues to the strategic objectives, and the Care Quality Commission’s fundamental standards.

5.2 Assurance Framework
The Audit Committee have reviewed the Assurance Framework throughout the year and consider it fit for purpose. It reflects the key risks facing the organisation and all assurances over the controls mitigating the risks have been considered and any significant gaps in either the assurances or in controls have been addressed.

5.3 Governance Arrangements
The Audit Committee believe that the Trust’s governance arrangements are robust. There are a number of different components of governance, in particular corporate governance, clinical governance, research governance, information governance and financial governance and the Audit Committee scrutinises the processes to ensure they are effective.

The Quality and Safety Committee has key responsibilities in relation to providing assurance to the Board on clinical quality and safety; and driving an improvement culture to promote excellence in patient care. To facilitate close working between the committees, one member of the Audit Committee is also a member of the Quality and Safety Committee.

5.4 Annual Governance Statement
The draft Annual Governance Statement was considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting in April 2015 and its contents were consistent with the conclusions above. It considers that the Assurance Framework sets out the Trust’s objectives and provides a clear template to identify any risks to achieving those objectives and a clear framework against which to measure progress.
It also recognises that there is a Risk Management Strategy in place, endorsed by the Trust Board. It clearly defines the risk management structures, accountabilities and responsibilities throughout the Trust. It also incorporates consideration of the Trust’s stakeholders.

There are three significant issues highlighted in the Annual Governance Statement.

- **Fit To Transfer List**
  The Fit to Transfer [FTT] list is a list of patients who are deemed medically fit enough to leave to the hospital but require ongoing care in another setting, or an assessment to determine what care may be required. This was identified as a new risk in the Board Assurance Framework. The volume of patients on the FTT list is large, resulting in up to 23% of the inpatient adult medical bed base being unavailable for acutely ill patients at any one time. The impact of the FTT list has been non-achievement of the A&E and RTT targets at year end.

- **Income and Expenditure**
  The Trust is currently forecasting a deficit for the following two years returning into in-year balance from 2017/18. This forecast relies on us managing the risks to our financial position whilst also seeking transitional support whilst the whole health system agrees a radical and affordable vision for the future with patients at its heart.

- **Public consultation on future of clinical services**
  The Trust continues to experience day-to-day difficulties in medically staffing some key areas and whilst most gaps are covered this is becoming an increasing struggle and often relies on factors such as consultants "working down" to provide the full level of medical support needed within acute hospitals. These issues form part of the case for change for the NHS Future Fit programme. Although proposals have been developed the consultation has been delayed until Autumn 2015.

### 6. Recommendations

Given the issues identified in Section 4 and our conclusions in Section 5, we recommend that the Board acknowledges that:

- With the exception of the internal control issues described in this document, the Trust has a generally sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives and those control issues have been or are being addressed

- It has a system in place that identifies any actions that need to be taken to remedy either gaps in control/assurance but this needs to be constantly reviewed

- Continue the processes for recommendation tracking to ensure timely completion of action plans following audit.

*Robin Hooper*

*Audit Committee Chairman*
## Appendix 1: Summary of Audit Reviews 2014/15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Report Title</th>
<th>Assurance</th>
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<th>Date to Audit Committee</th>
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<tr>
<td>IA14/15CR01</td>
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<td>19/08/2014</td>
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<td>07/04/2015</td>
<td>Apr-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>IA14/15PR004</td>
<td>Financial planning arrangements</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>07/04/2015</td>
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