Internal Audit Plan 2026/27

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

Internal Audit

Internal audit is a mandatory requirement for public sector bodies as well as Housing Associations such as Freebridge. It's purpose is to provide independent assurance and advice on how well organisations manage their risks, governance, and internal controls.

Key Objectives

- Improve Governance: Check that leadership makes decisions legally, fairly, and transparently.
- Manage Risk: Find and fix weak spots before problems occur.
- Strengthen Controls: Make sure rules and financial processes work properly to stop fraud and waste.
- Ensure Value for Money: Help organisations use its funds efficiently and effectively.

At the end of the audit year, an annual opinion is provided by the Head of Internal Audit on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of Freebridge Community Housing's framework of governance, risk management and control. This is then incorporated into the financial statements as part of the Statement on Internal Control.

Freebridge's internal audit service is provided by TIAA, an independent organisation which specialises in providing audit services across the Housing sector as well as public sector organisations. Their approach complies with the IIA Global Internal Audit Standards the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS).

Audit Strategy Methodology

The Internal audit plan seeks understand Freebridge Community Housing's operating environment and risk profile as well as any emerging or heightened risks that are facing the sector. This is to ensure that the work of internal audit remains appropriately prioritised and focused.

Internal Audit Strategy and Plan

The Annual Plan at Appendix 1 sets out the assignments that will be carried out in 2026/27, the planned times and the high-level scopes for each of these assignments.

The Annual Plan will be subject to ongoing review and could change as the risks change for the organisation; this will be formally reviewed with senior management and the Audit and Risk Committee throughout the year.

TIAA has a contract with Freebridge Community Housing. As a result, it accepts no responsibility to any third party. TIAA neither owes nor accepts any duty of care to any other party and specifically disclaims any liability for loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature, which is caused by their reliance on their work.

The plan was approved by the Audit and Risk Committee at their meeting in January 2026 with subsequent amendments to the timings of the audits agreed at its meeting June 2026.

APPENDIX 1: Annual Internal Audit Plan 2026/27

Quarter	Review	High-level scope
1	**Cyber Security Maturity Assessment**	**Rationale** Cybersecurity threats are evolving rapidly, and housing providers hold sensitive personal and financial data that must be protected. A maturity assessment helps the organisation understand its current capability to prevent, detect, and respond to cyber risks. **Scope** The review will assess the management processes in place to reduce the likelihood and impact of a cyber-incident. The National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) 10 Steps to Cyber Resilience include: Cyber Risk Management, Asset Management, Engagement and Training, Architecture and Configuration, Vulnerability Management, Identity and access management, Data Security, Logging and Monitoring, Incident Management, Supply Chain Security.
3	**Customer Engagement**	**Rationale** Resident involvement is a key requirement under the Social Housing Regulation Bill. From April 2023, housing providers must report against new resident satisfaction KPIs. Effective engagement ensures compliance and supports transparency and accountability. **Scope** The review will assess how the organisation meets the Consumer Standard by considering: • Processes for collecting and validating data on resident satisfaction KPIs. • Accuracy and completeness of reporting against the KPI suite. • Timeliness of reporting to ensure compliance with regulatory deadlines. • Actions and improvement plans developed where KPI targets are not met. • Reporting arrangements to the Board, including clarity, frequency, and evidence of oversight.

Quarter	Review	High-level scope
3	Safeguarding	**Rationale** Safeguarding is a statutory and regulatory requirement for housing providers. The Board must ensure that effective governance, policies, and oversight arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable individuals and manage safeguarding risks. **Scope** This review will provide assurance that the arrangements in place for safeguarding are robust and operating as intended. The review will assess: • The existence and adequacy of safeguarding policies and procedures. • Governance and oversight arrangements, including Board-level reporting and challenge. • Roles and responsibilities for safeguarding across the organisation. • Training and awareness for staff and contractors. • Monitoring and escalation processes for safeguarding concerns.
3	Contract Management	**Rationale** Effective contract management is critical to ensure that services and goods are delivered as agreed, risks are managed, and value for money is achieved. It also supports compliance with procurement regulations and strengthens governance over supplier relationships. **Scope** The review will look at whether the organisation has clear policies and procedures for managing contracts, whether roles and responsibilities are defined, and whether there is evidence of monitoring supplier performance and addressing issues promptly. It will also consider how variations, extensions, and terminations are handled and whether reporting to senior management provides sufficient oversight.
3	Anti-Social Behaviour	**Rationale** Anti-social behaviour management is a key service area for housing providers and directly impacts tenant safety and community wellbeing. **Scope** The review will assess progress against all recommendations from the previous audit, focusing on whether improvements have been embedded in policies, procedures, and operational practice.

Quarter	Review	High-level scope
3	**Budget Management including forecasting**	**Rationale** Effective budget management is essential for financial sustainability and compliance with governance requirements. Accurate forecasting supports informed decision-making, enables proactive management of variances, and ensures resources are allocated efficiently. This review will provide assurance that the organisation has robust processes for setting, monitoring, and forecasting budgets. **Scope** The review will consider whether budgets are prepared in line with approved policies and strategic objectives, whether forecasting processes are accurate and timely, and whether variances are monitored and reported effectively. It will also examine the adequacy of controls over budget adjustments, the reliability of data used for forecasting, and the clarity of reporting to senior management and the Board.
3	**Aids and Adaptations**	**Rationale** Aids and adaptations services are essential for supporting tenants with disabilities or mobility needs and ensuring compliance with equality and housing standards. Effective management of these services helps maintain tenant safety, wellbeing, and timely delivery of adaptations within budget and policy requirements. **Scope** The review will assess whether policies and procedures for aids and adaptations are clear and consistently applied, whether requests are processed promptly, and whether approvals and funding decisions comply with delegated authority and regulatory requirements. It will also consider monitoring arrangements for delivery timescales, cost control, and reporting to senior management and the Board.
3	**Tenant Health and Safety: Fire Safety**	**Rationale** The review will assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls for ensuring statutory compliance with fire safety requirements. It will confirm that fire risk assessments are completed at required intervals and that remedial actions are implemented promptly to address risks and recommendations. **Scope** The audit will review whether policies and procedures for fire safety are current and aligned with legislation, whether governance arrangements ensure risk assessments are undertaken on time, and whether risks from non-compliance are identified and mitigated. It will consider how compliance and breaches are monitored and reported to senior management and the Board, the process for implementing remedial actions, the allocation of resources to maintain compliance, and the adequacy of training and monitoring arrangements.

Quarter	Review	High-level scope
3	**Tenant Health and Safety: Asbestos**	**Rationale** Asbestos management is a statutory requirement under health and safety legislation. Last year's audit provided Limited Assurance, highlighting weaknesses in compliance and control. This follow-up review will provide assurance that agreed actions have been implemented and that arrangements now ensure compliance with legal obligations and internal policy. **Scope** The review will focus on whether policies and procedures for asbestos management are current and aligned with legislation, whether asbestos surveys and risk assessments are completed at required intervals, and whether remedial actions identified are tracked and implemented. It will also consider governance arrangements, reporting to senior management and the Board, and monitoring processes to ensure ongoing statutory compliance.
4	**Void Management**	**Rationale** Void management ensures properties are prepared and re-let efficiently, supporting income recovery and compliance with housing standards. The review will provide assurance that processes are in place to manage voids effectively and in line with policy. **Scope** The audit will look at whether policies and procedures for void management are clear and applied consistently, whether properties are inspected and repaired within target timescales, and whether monitoring and reporting arrangements provide oversight of performance and compliance with health and safety requirements during the void process.
4	**Development partnership**	**Rationale** Development partnerships involve significant financial commitments and governance responsibilities. Strong controls are required to ensure compliance with financial regulations and delegated authority, particularly where costs change after tender. This review will provide assurance that approvals and authorisations are obtained at the correct stages and that governance arrangements support transparency and accountability. **Scope** The audit will examine a sample of development schemes to confirm that initial approvals were secured, cost changes were authorised appropriately, and documentation supports compliance with financial regulations and delegated authority. It will also consider whether processes and guidance ensure schemes return for approval when thresholds are exceeded.

Quarter	Review	High-level scope
1-4	Follow-up	Follow-up of implementation of agreed priorities one and two actions from audit reports, ensuring the Housing Association are implementing recommendations, and providing reports to the Audit Committee.