



Fareham Borough Council Audit planning report

Year ended 31 March 2022

June 2022

Appendix A



Members of the Audit and Governance Committee

Fareham Borough Council
Civic Offices
Civic Way
Hampshire
PO16 7AZ

27 June 2022

Dear Audit and Governance Committee Members

Outline audit planning report

We are pleased to attach our Outline Audit Plan which sets out how we intend to carry out our responsibilities as auditor. The purpose of this report is to provide you with a basis to review our approach and scope for the 2021/22 audit, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's new 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the auditing standards and other professional requirements. It also aims to ensure that our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

This plan summarises our initial assessment of the key risks driving the development of an effective audit for the Council, and outlines our planned audit strategy in response to those risks.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit and Governance Committee and management, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you on 26 September 2022 as well as understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Suter

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Contents



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)" issued by the PSAA (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/terms-of-appointment/terms-of-appointment-and-further-guidance-1-july-2021/>) sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Fareham Borough Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Fareham Borough Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Fareham Borough Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01

Overview of our 2021/22 audit strategy



Overview of our 2021/22 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus.	Under ISA240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper recognition of revenue. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10, issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition. Our judgement is the significant risk at the Council relates to the improper capitalisation of revenue expenditure.
Misstatements due to fraud or error	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus.	As identified in ISA240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that would otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this risk on every engagement.
Valuation of Investment Property (IP) and Land and Buildings (L&B)	Inherent risk	Risk reduced this year for IP. No change in risk or focus for L&B	The value of Investment Properties and Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) represents a significant balances in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and market fluctuations. Management is required to make material judgements and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.
Accounting treatment for infrastructure assets	Inherent risk	New area of focus for 21/22	The gross cost of infrastructure non-current assets are material in the financial statements. Once an item of property, plant and equipment has been recognised and capitalized, an authority may incur further costs on that asset at a later date. The accounting treatment requires such subsequent expenditure to be capitalized to the value of the asset where these costs meet the recognition criteria. Where the subsequent expenditure represents the replacement of a component, the old component must be written out of the Balance Sheet. There is a need for the Council to ensure that it is has recognised and accounted for such subsequent expenditure appropriately. CIPFA are currently consulting on potential amendments to the Code of Accounting Practice in this area.

Overview of our 2021/22 audit strategy

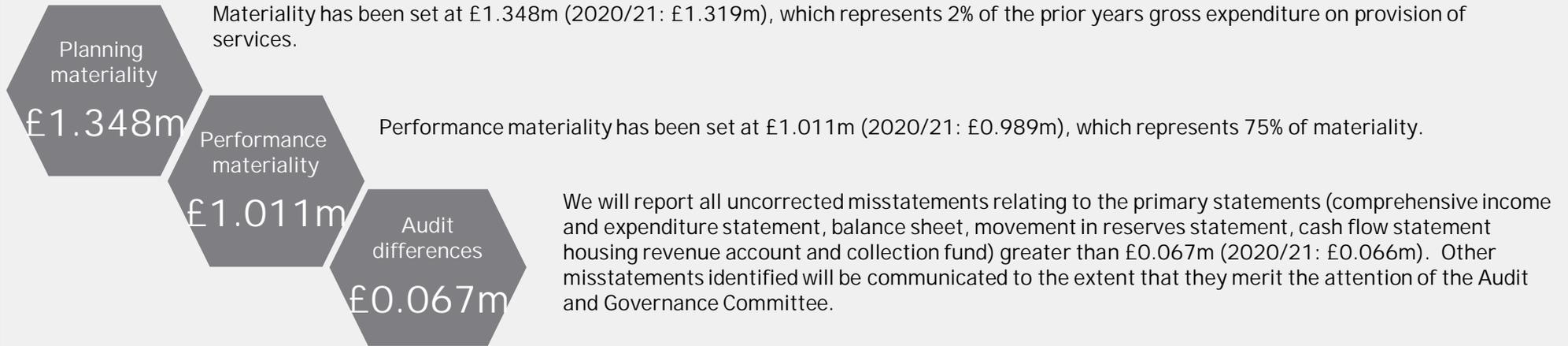
The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
NDR Appeals Provision Valuation	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus.	The Non Domestic Rates Appeals Provision is a material balance in the financial statements which requires a number of assumptions and judgements.
Pension Liability Valuation	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus.	<p>The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Hampshire County Council.</p> <p>The Council's pension fund liability is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet. The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the County Council.</p> <p>Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.</p>
New finance system	Inherent risk	New area of focus for 21/22	The Council has implemented a new finance system from 1 April 2022 which it will use to prepare the 2021/22 financial statements.

Overview of our 2021/22 audit strategy

Materiality



Overview of our 2021/22 audit strategy

Audit scope

This Audit Plan covers the work that we plan to perform to provide you with:

- Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of Fareham Borough Council give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2022 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- Our commentary on your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources for the relevant period. We include further details on VFM in Section 03.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO), to the extent and in the form required by them, on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- The quality of systems and processes;
- Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and,
- Management's views on all of the above.

By considering these inputs, our audit is focused on the areas that matter and our feedback is more likely to be relevant to the Council.

Taking the above into account, and as articulated in this audit plan, our professional responsibilities require us to independently assess the risks associated with providing an audit opinion and undertake appropriate procedures in response to that. Our Terms of Appointment with PSAA allow them to vary the fee dependent on "the auditors assessment of risk and the work needed to meet their professional responsibilities". PSAA are aware that the setting of scale fees has not kept pace with the changing requirements of external audit with increased focus on, for example, the valuations of land and buildings, the auditing of groups, the valuation of pension obligations, the introduction of new accounting standards such as IFRS 9 and 15 in recent years as well as the expansion of factors impacting the ISA 540 (revised) and the value for money conclusion. Therefore to the extent any of these or any other risks are relevant in the context of Fareham Borough Council's audit, we will discuss these with management as to the impact on the scale fee.

Effects of climate-related matters on financial statements and Value for Money arrangements

Public interest in climate change is increasing. We are mindful that climate-related risks may have a long timeframe and therefore while risks exist, the impact on the current period financial statements may not be immediately material to an entity. It is nevertheless important to understand the relevant risks to make this evaluation. In addition, understanding climate-related risks may be relevant in the context of qualitative disclosures in the notes to the financial statements and value for money arrangements.

We make inquiries regarding climate-related risks on every audit as part of understanding the entity and its environment. As we re-evaluate our risk assessments throughout the audit, we continually consider the information that we have obtained to help us assess the level of inherent risk.

Overview of our 2021/22 audit strategy

Value for money conclusion

We include details in Section 03 but in summary:

- We are required to consider whether the Council has made 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources.
- Planning on value for money and the associated risk assessment is focused on gathering sufficient evidence to enable us to document our evaluation of the Council's arrangements, to enable us to draft a commentary under three reporting criteria (see below). This includes identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations.
- We will provide a commentary on the Council's arrangements against three reporting criteria:
 - Financial sustainability - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
 - Governance - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
 - Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.
- The commentary on VFM arrangements will be included in the Auditor's Annual Report.

Timeline

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government established regulations to extend the target date for publishing audited local authority accounts from 31 July to 30 September, for a period of two years (i.e. covering the audit of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 accounting years).

In December 2021, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced proposals to extend the deadline for the publication of audited accounts to 30 November for 2021/22.



02

Audit risks



Audit risks

Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

	What is the risk?	What will we do?
<p data-bbox="120 443 488 504">Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure</p> <p data-bbox="120 783 472 810">Financial statement impact</p> <p data-bbox="112 836 544 1153">Misstatements that occur in relation to the risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition could affect the income and expenditure accounts. We are focussing our testing on capital additions (£11.8m in 2020/21) and potentially on revenue expenditure funded by capital under statute (REFCUS) if material in 2021/22.</p>	<p data-bbox="580 461 1167 715">Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.</p> <p data-bbox="580 735 1160 957">We have identified an opportunity and incentive to capitalise expenditure under the accounting framework, to remove it from the general fund. This would result in funding expenditure that should properly be defined as revenue, through inappropriate sources such as capital receipts, capital grants, or borrowing.</p> <p data-bbox="580 978 1133 1066">The manipulation of capitalising expenditure could occur through management override of controls.</p>	<p data-bbox="1207 461 1536 488">Our approach will focus on:</p> <ul data-bbox="1207 496 2114 831" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1207 496 2007 555">• Journals testing – we will use our testing of journals to identify transactions moved from revenue to capital.<li data-bbox="1207 568 2114 691">• For significant additions we will examine invoices, capital expenditure authorisations, leases and other data that support these additions. We review the sample selected against the definition of capital expenditure in IAS 16.<li data-bbox="1207 703 2096 831">• Testing REFCUS, if material, to ensure that it is appropriate for the revenue expenditure incurred to be financed from ringfenced capital resources. Based on our work at the planning stage of the audit we do not expect there to be material REFCUS in the year

Our response to significant risks (continued)

Misstatements due to fraud or error

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.

As identified in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.

We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What will we do?

We will undertake our standard procedures to address fraud risk, which include:

- Inquiry of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks.
- Understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud.
- Consideration of the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud.
- Determining an appropriate strategy to address those identified risks of fraud.
- Performing mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including:
 - Testing of journal entries and other adjustments in the preparation of the financial statements;
 - Considering accounting estimates for management bias; and
 - Reviewing the basis for any identified significant unusual transactions.

Other areas of audit focus

What is the risk/area of focus?

Valuation of Investment Property and Land and Buildings

The value of Investment Properties and Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) represents a significant balance in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgements and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.

Accounting for infrastructure assets

The gross cost of infrastructure non-current assets are material in the financial statements. Once an item of property, plant and equipment has been recognised and capitalized, an authority may incur further costs on that asset at a later date. The accounting treatment requires such subsequent expenditure to be capitalized to the value of the asset where these costs meet the recognition criteria. Where the subsequent expenditure represents the replacement of a component, the Code requires the old component to be written out of the Balance Sheet. There is a need for the Council to ensure that it has recognised and accounted for such subsequent expenditure appropriately.

CIPFA are currently consulting on potential changes to this area of the Code. Our audit procedures may have to be varied if the consultation does result in changes.

What will we do?

We will:

- Consider the work performed by the Council's valuer, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work;
- Sample test key asset information used by the valuers in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support valuations based on price per square metre) and challenge the key assumptions used by the valuer;
- For PPE, consider the annual cycle of valuations to ensure that assets have been valued within a 5 year rolling programme as required by the Code for PPE.
- For PPE, review assets not subject to valuation in 2021/22 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated; and
- Test accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements.
- If we deem necessary, obtain input from EY Real Estates, our internal specialists on asset valuations for Investment Properties, including inputs on market sentiment and how it has been reflected in the estimated rental values/yields.

We will:

- Discuss the procedures applied by the Council to ensure the subsequent capital spend is recognised in accordance with the Code, i.e., where the subsequent expenditure concerns the replacement of a part/component, what procedures are performed to identify and derecognise the carrying amount of the old part/component (and any associated accumulated depreciation).
- Obtain evidence to match the subsequent expenditure to the carrying amount of the replaced part or component that is being derecognised.
- If the carrying amount of the replaced part or component cannot be identified, test the Council's use of the cost of the replacement as a proxy for the deemed carrying amount of the replaced part, ensuring the calculation appropriately adjusts the cost for depreciation and impairment.
- Test accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements.

Other areas of audit focus

What is the risk/area of focus?

NNDR Appeals Provision

The Non Domestic Rates Appeals Provision is a material balance in the financial statements which requires a number of assumptions and judgements.

In prior years we have identified errors above our audit differences threshold.

Pension Liability Valuation

The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Hampshire County Council.

The Council's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet. At 31 March 2021 this totalled £71.076m.

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the County Council.

Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

What will we do?

We will:

- Review the calculation of the provision for accuracy.
- Consider the work performed by the Council expert, Analyse Local and understand the assumptions used in their calculation.
- Perform post year-end review of appeals settled to determine whether the revised rateable value and effective date of the appeal are in line with the provision.
- Ensure the Council has amended the provision for any Business Rate reliefs awarded.
- Ensure that the Council has considered local appeal rates and outstanding appeals when calculating its provision for business rates appeals.

We will:

- Liaise with the auditors of Hampshire Pension Fund to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to Hampshire County Council.
- Assess the work of the Pension Fund actuary (AON Hewitt) including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by Public Sector Auditor Appointments for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team; and
- Review and test the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

We will consider outturn information available at the time we undertake our work after production of the Council's draft financial statements, for example the year-end actual valuation of pension fund assets. We will use this to inform our assessment of the accuracy of estimated information included in the financial statements and whether any adjustments are required.

We will engage with our internal pensions specialists to undertake an auditor's estimate of the gross liability.

Audit risks

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures and therefore may be key audit matters we will include in our audit report.

What is the risk/area of focus?

New finance system

The Council has moved to a new finance system from 1 April 2022 which it will use to prepare the 2021/22 financial statements.

What will we do?

We will:

- Review the Council's reconciliation of the data on the previous finance system to the new finance system to confirm that data transfer is complete and accurate; and
- Consider the Council's investigation into any variances between the two systems.
- Assess the mapping of the new system to the financial statements.



03

Value for Money Risks





Council's responsibilities for value for money

The Council is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

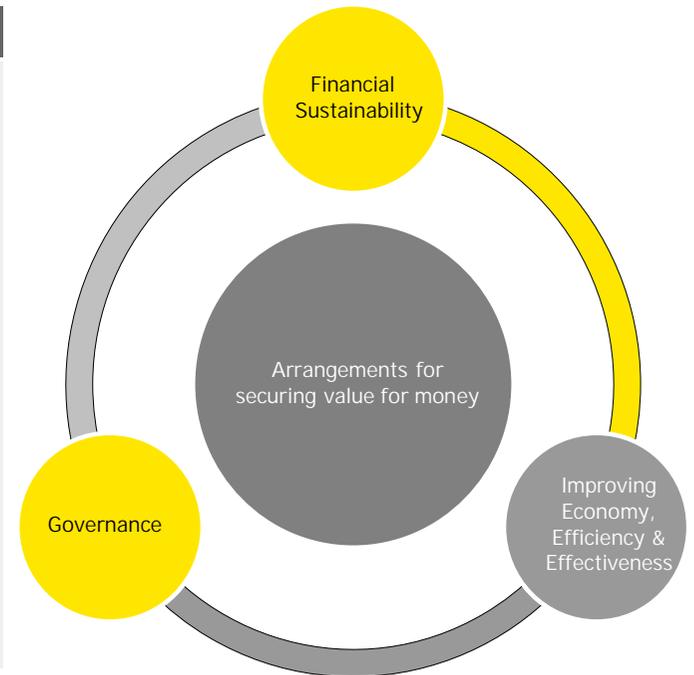
As part of the material published with the financial statements, the Council is required to bring together commentary on the governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing the governance statement, the Council tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the relevant accounting and reporting framework and having regard to any guidance issued in support of that framework. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on arrangements for securing value for money from the use of resources.

Auditor responsibilities

Under the NAO Code of Audit Practice we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. The Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Council a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Council has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- Financial sustainability - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.
- Governance - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.





Planning and identifying risks of significant weakness in VFM arrangements

The NAO's guidance notes requires us to carry out a risk assessment which gathers sufficient evidence to enable us to document our evaluation of the Council's arrangements, in order to enable us to draft a commentary under the three reporting criteria. This includes identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations.

In considering the Council's arrangements, we are required to consider:

- The Council's governance statement;
- Evidence that the Council's arrangements were in place during the reporting period;
- Evidence obtained from our work on the accounts;
- The work of inspectorates and other bodies; and
- Any other evidence source that we regard as necessary to facilitate the performance of our statutory duties.

We then consider whether there is evidence to suggest that there are significant weaknesses in arrangements. The NAO's guidance is clear that the assessment of what constitutes a significant weakness and the amount of additional audit work required to adequately respond to the risk of a significant weakness in arrangements is a matter of professional judgement. However, the NAO states that a weakness may be said to be significant if it:

- Exposes – or could reasonably be expected to expose – the Council to significant financial loss or risk;
- Leads to – or could reasonably be expected to lead to – significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service or on the Council's reputation;
- Leads to – or could reasonably be expected to lead to – unlawful actions; or
- Identifies a failure to take action to address a previously identified significant weakness, such as failure to implement or achieve planned progress on action/improvement plans.

We should also be informed by a consideration of:

- The magnitude of the issue in relation to the size of the Council;
- Financial consequences in comparison to, for example, levels of income or expenditure, levels of reserves (where applicable), or impact on budgets or cashflow forecasts;
- The impact of the weakness on the Council's reported performance;
- Whether the issue has been identified by the Council's own internal arrangements and what corrective action has been taken or planned;
- Whether any legal judgements have been made including judicial review;
- Whether there has been any intervention by a regulator or Secretary of State;
- Whether the weakness could be considered significant when assessed against the nature, visibility or sensitivity of the issue;
- The impact on delivery of services to local taxpayers; and
- The length of time the Council has had to respond to the issue.



Value for Money

Responding to identified risks of significant weakness

Where our planning work has identified a risk of significant weakness, the NAO's guidance requires us to consider what additional evidence is needed to determine whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements and undertake additional procedures as necessary, including where appropriate, challenge of management's assumptions. We are required to report our planned procedures to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Reporting on VFM

Where we are not satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources the Code requires that we should refer to this by exception in the audit report on the financial statements.

In addition, the Code requires us to include the commentary on arrangements in the Auditor's Annual Report. The Code states that the commentary should be clear, readily understandable and highlight any issues we wish to draw to the Council's attention or the wider public. This should include details of any recommendations arising from the audit and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with our view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily.

Status of our 2021/22 VFM planning

Our assessment for the Council of the risk of significant weaknesses in the arrangements supporting each of the specified reporting criteria is still in progress. Our assessment to date has focused on a combination of:

- Cumulative audit knowledge and experience.
- Review of Council committee reports,
- Review of other documentary evidence available on the Council's website.
- Consideration of financial and performance reporting and outcomes for the year.
- Regular engagement with Council management.

To date we have not identified a risk of significant weakness.



04

Audit materiality



Materiality

Materiality

For planning purposes, materiality for 2021/22 has been set at £1.348m. This represents 2% of the Council's prior year gross expenditure on provision of services. It will be reassessed throughout the audit process. We have provided supplemental information about audit materiality in Appendix C.



We request that the Audit and Governance Committee confirm its understanding of, and agreement to, these materiality and reporting levels.

Key definitions

Planning materiality – the amount over which we anticipate misstatements would influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements.

Performance materiality – the amount we use to determine the extent of our audit procedures. We have set performance materiality at £1.011m which represents 75% of planning materiality.

Audit difference threshold – we propose that misstatements identified below this threshold are deemed clearly trivial. We will report to you all uncorrected misstatements over this amount relating to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement, balance sheet, housing revenue account and collection fund that have an effect on income or that relate to other comprehensive income.

Other uncorrected misstatements, such as reclassifications and misstatements in the cashflow statement and movement in reserves statement or disclosures, and corrected misstatements will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee, or are important from a qualitative perspective.

Materiality

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all the circumstances that might ultimately influence our judgement. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the financial statements, including the total effect of any audit misstatements, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

We also identify areas where misstatement at a lower level than our overall materiality level might influence the reader and develop an audit strategy specific to these areas, including:

- Remuneration disclosures including councillor allowances: we will agree all disclosures back to source data, and councillor allowances to the agreed and approved amounts.
- Related party transactions we will test the completeness of related party disclosures and the accuracy of all disclosures by checking back to supporting evidence.



05

Scope of our audit



Our Audit Process and Strategy

Objective and Scope of our Audit scoping

Under the Code of Audit Practice, our principal objectives are to undertake work to support the provision of our audit report to the audited body and to satisfy ourselves that the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources to the extent required by the relevant legislation and the requirements of the Code.

We issue an audit report that covers:

1. Financial statement audit

Our opinion on the financial statements:

- whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the audited body and its expenditure and income for the period in question; and
- whether the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework as set out in legislation, applicable accounting standards or other direction.

Our opinion on other matters:

- whether other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements; and
- where required, whether the part of the remuneration report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework.

Other procedures required by the Code:

- Examine and report on the consistency of the Whole of Government Accounts schedules or returns with the body's audited financial statements for the relevant reporting period in line with the instructions issued by the NAO

2. Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money)

As outlined in Section 03, we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources and report a commentary on those arrangements.

Our Audit Process and Strategy (continued)

Audit Process Overview

Our audit involves:

- Identifying and understanding the key processes and internal controls; and
- Substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts.

For 2021/22 we plan to follow a substantive approach to the audit as we have concluded this is the most efficient way to obtain the level of audit assurance required to conclude that the financial statements are not materially misstated.

Analytics:

We will use our computer-based analytics tools to enable us to capture whole populations of your financial data, in particular journal entries. These tools:

- Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be subject to more traditional substantive audit tests; and
- Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than random sampling techniques.

We will report the findings from our process and analytics work, including any significant weaknesses or inefficiencies identified and recommendations for improvement, to management and the Audit and Governance Committee.

Internal audit:

We will regularly meet with the Head of Finance and Audit, and review internal audit plans and the results of their work. We will reflect the findings from these reports, together with reports from any other work completed in the year, in our detailed audit plan, where they raise issues that could have an impact on the financial statements.



06

Audit team



Audit team

Audit team structure:

Kevin Suter
Associate Partner*

Jason Jones
Manager

Yi Ong
Senior

Specialists (as required)

- EY Real Estates
- Actuaries

* Key Audit Partner

Use of specialists

When auditing key judgements, we are often required to rely on the input and advice provided by specialists who have qualifications and expertise not possessed by the core audit team. The area where either EY or third party specialists provide input for the current year audit is:

Area	Specialists
Valuation of Land and Buildings	EY Valuations Team
Pensions disclosure	EY Actuaries

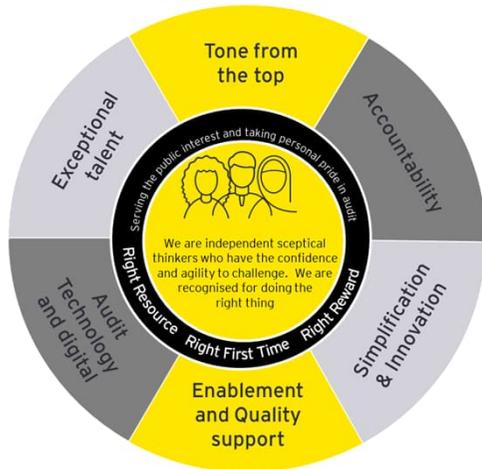
In accordance with Auditing Standards, we will evaluate each specialist's professional competence and objectivity, considering their qualifications, experience and available resources, together with the independence of the individuals performing the work.

We also consider the work performed by the specialist in light of our knowledge of the Council's business and processes and our assessment of audit risk in the particular area. For example, we would typically perform the following procedures:

- Analyse source data and make inquiries as to the procedures used by the specialist to establish whether the source data is relevant and reliable;
- Assess the reasonableness of the assumptions and methods used;
- Consider the appropriateness of the timing of when the specialist carried out the work; and
- Assess whether the substance of the specialist's findings are properly reflected in the financial statements.

Developing the right Audit Culture

In July 2021, EY established a UK Audit Board (UKAB) with a majority of independent Audit Non-Executives (ANEs). The UKAB will support our focus on delivering high-quality audits by strengthening governance and oversight over the culture of the audit business. This focus is critical given that audit quality starts with having the right culture embedded in the business.

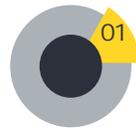


Our audit culture is the cement that binds together the building blocks and foundation of our audit strategy. We have been thoughtful in articulating a culture that is right for us: one that recognises we are part of a wider, global firm and is clear about whose interests our audits serve.

There are three elements underpinning our culture:

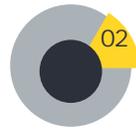
1. Our people are focused on a common purpose. It is vital we foster and nurture the values, attitudes and behaviours that lead our people to do the right thing.
2. The essential attributes of our audit business are:
 - Right resources – We team with competent people, investing in audit technology, methodology and support
 - Right first time – Our teams execute and review their work, consulting where required to meet the required standard
 - Right reward – We align our reward and recognition to reinforce the right behaviours

3. The six pillars of Sustainable Audit Quality are implemented.



Tone at the top

The internal and external messages sent by EY leadership, including audit partners, set a clear tone at the top - they establish and encourage a commitment to audit quality



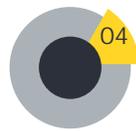
Exceptional talent

Specific initiatives support EY auditors in devoting time to perform quality work, including recruitment, retention, development and workload management



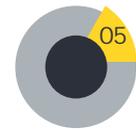
Accountability

The systems and processes in place help EY people take responsibility for carrying out high-quality work at all times, including their reward and recognition



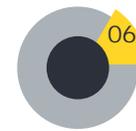
Audit technology and digital

The EY Digital Audit is evolving to set the standard for the digital-first way of approaching audit, combining leading-edge digital tools, stakeholder focus and a commitment to quality



Simplification and innovation

We are simplifying and standardising the approach used by EY auditors and embracing emerging technologies to improve the quality, consistency and efficiency of the audit



Enablement and quality support

How EY teams are internally supported to manage their responsibility to provide high audit quality

A critical part of this culture is that our people are encouraged and empowered to challenge and exercise professional scepticism across all our audits. However, we recognise that creating a culture requires more than just words from leaders. It has to be reflected in the lived experience of all our people each and every day enabling them to challenge themselves and the companies we audit.

Each year we complete an audit quality culture assessment to obtain feedback from our people on the values and behaviours they experience, and those they consider to be fundamental to our audit quality culture of the future. We action points that arise to ensure our culture continues to evolve appropriately.

2021 Audit Culture Survey result

A cultural health score of 78% (73%) was achieved for our UK Audit Business

We bring our culture alive by investing in three priority workstreams:

- Audit Culture with a focus on professional scepticism
- Adopting the digital audit
- Standardisation

This investment has led to a number of successful outputs covering training, tools, techniques and additional sources. Specific highlights include:

- Audit Purpose Barometer
- Active Scepticism Framework
- Increased access to external sector forecasts
- Forensic risk assessment pilots
- Refreshed PLOT training and support materials, including embedding in new hire and trainee courses
- Digital audit training for all ranks
- Increased hot file reviews and improved escalation processes
- New work programmes issued on auditing going concern, climate, impairment, expected credit losses, cashflow statements and conducting effective group oversight
- Development of bite size, available on demand, task specific tutorial videos

"A series of company collapses linked to unhealthy cultures....have demonstrated why cultivating a healthy culture, underpinned by the right tone from the top, is fundamental to business success."

Sir John Thompson
Chief Executive of the FRC



07

Audit timeline





Audit timeline

Timetable of communication and deliverables

Timeline

Below is a timetable showing the key stages of the audit and the deliverables we have agreed to provide to you through the audit cycle in 2021/22. The final timetable will depend on our ability to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support our audit opinion

From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the Audit and Governance Committee and we will discuss them with the Audit and Governance Committee Chair as appropriate. We will also provide updates on corporate governance and regulatory matters as necessary.

Audit phase	Timetable	Audit committee timetable	Deliverables
	March		
Planning: Risk assessment and setting of scopes. Walkthrough of key systems and processes	March	Audit and Governance Committee	None
	April		
	May		
	June/July	Audit and Governance Committee	Outline Audit Plan
	August/September		
Year end audit Audit Completion procedures	October/November		
	December	Audit and Governance Committee	Audit Results Report Audit opinions and completion certificates Annual Auditor's Report including commentary on VFM



08

Independence



Introduction

The FRC Ethical Standard and ISA (UK) 260 “Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance”, requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications

Planning stage	Final stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us; ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review; ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards; ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed; ▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto; ▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us; ▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy; ▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Kevin Suter, your audit engagement partner and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in the Council. Examples include where we have an investment in the Council; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

When the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4.

There are no other self interest threats at the date of this report.

Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of the Council. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.

EY Transparency Report 2021

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained. Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2021:

https://www.ey.com/en_uk/about-us/transparency-report-2021



09

Appendices



Appendix A

Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

	Planned fee 2021/22	Scale fee 2021/22	Final Fee 2020/21
	£	£	£
PSAA Scale Fee	37,137	37,137	37,137
Additional work required for going concern and Covid-19 considerations (1)	2,000	N/A	5,613
Additional work required for PPE valuation (1)	6,000	N/A	7,081
Additional specific work in relation to Pension Fund IAS 19 data submission procedures undertaken for admitted bodies as well as other IAS 19 procedures (1)	1,500	N/A	1,798
Additional work on aspects of housing benefit income and expenditure which would previously have been performed as part of HB certification.	N/A	N/A	478
Errors and amendments			1,173
Additional fee for VFM and ISA540 (3)	8,500	N/A	8,929
New financial system (4)	tbc	N/A	N/A
<i>Scale fee plus in-year variations</i>	<i>55,137</i>	<i>37,137</i>	<i>62,209</i>
Scale fee rebasing (2)	25,416	25,416	25,416
Total fees	80,553	57,058	87,625

Notes:

See over page

In addition, we are driving greater innovation in the audit through the use of technology. The significant investment costs in this global technology continue to rise as we seek to provide enhanced assurance and insight in the audit.

The agreed fee presented is based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ The production of materially accurate draft accounts
- ▶ Our audit report being unqualified;
- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Council; and
- ▶ The Council has an effective control environment.

The outline timetable on page 31 is contingent on the above factors

If any of the above assumptions prove to be unfounded, we will seek a variation to the agreed fee. This will be discussed with the Council in advance.

Fees for the auditor's consideration of correspondence from the public and formal objections will be charged in addition to the scale fee.



Appendix A

Notes to fee table

- (1) The 2020/21 Code work includes an additional fee of £25,072, for additional work undertaken to address specific risks identified. This additional fee is subject to approval from PSAA. For 2021/22 we have included an estimate of this fee where we expect similar additional work to be performed.
- (2) We remain in discussion with PSAA about increasing the 2021/22 scale fee to reflect the additional work auditors are required to do to meet regulatory requirements. This was previously communicated in 2019/20, and in our 2020/21 Auditors Annual Report.
- (3) PSAA communicated a range of fees in August 2021 for the new requirements of the 2020 Code of Audit Practice, and the revised International Standard of Auditing 540 on Estimates. In the absence of further information, we have rolled this forward for 2021/22 at the bottom of the communicated range.
- (4) Fee variation for the new financial system to be quantified.

Appendix B

Required communications with the Audit Committee

We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the Audit and Governance Committee.



Our Reporting to you

Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Audit and Governance Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified.	Audit planning report – June 2022
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures • Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit • Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management • Written representations that we are seeking • Expected modifications to the audit report • Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit results report – December 2022 Auditor's Annual Report – December 2022

Required communications with the Audit Committee (continued)

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity’s ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty • Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements • The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	Audit results report – December 2022
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation • The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods • A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected • Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit results report – December 2022
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiries of the audit committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements 	Audit results report – December 2022
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiries of the Audit and Governance Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity • Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist • Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements • The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected • Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit and Governance Committee responsibility 	Audit results report – December 2022

Appendix B

Required communications with the Audit Committee (continued)

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable: • Non-disclosure by management • Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions • Disagreement over disclosures • Non-compliance with laws and regulations • Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	Audit results report – December 2022
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principal threats • Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness • An overall assessment of threats and safeguards • Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communication whenever significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	Audit Planning Report June 2022 and Audit Results Report December 2022

Appendix B

Required communications with the Audit Committee (continued)

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management's refusal for us to request confirmations Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures 	Audit results report – December 2022
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur Enquiry of the Audit and Governance Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Audit and Governance Committee may be aware of 	Audit results report – December 2022
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit 	Audit results report – December 2022
Representations	Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	Audit results report – December 2022
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	Audit results report – December 2022
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit results report – December 2022 Auditor's Annual Report – December 2022
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakdown of fee information when the audit plan is agreed Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit Any non-audit work 	Audit Planning Report June 2022 and Audit Results Report December 2022
Value for Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risks of significant weakness identified in planning work Commentary against specified reporting criteria on the VFM arrangements, including any exception report on significant weaknesses. 	Audit planning report June 2022 Audit results report – December 2022 Auditor's Annual Report – December 2022

Additional audit information

Objective of our audit

Our objective is to form an opinion on the Council's financial statements under International Standards on Auditing (UK) as prepared by you in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the EU, and as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

Our responsibilities in relation to the financial statement audit are set out in the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies. We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of the Audit Committee. The audit does not relieve management or the Audit Committee of their responsibilities.

Other required procedures during the course of the audit

In addition to the key areas of audit focus outlined in section 2, we have to perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards and other regulations. We outline the procedures below that we will undertake during the course of our audit.

Our responsibilities required by auditing standards

- Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.
- Obtaining an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control.
- Evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Concluding on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting.
- Evaluating the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Obtaining sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the Council to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. Reading other information contained in the financial statements, the Audit and Governance Committee reporting appropriately addresses matters communicated by us to the Audit and Governance Committee and reporting whether it is materially inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements; and
- Maintaining auditor independence.

Additional audit information (continued)

Other required procedures during the course of the audit (continued)

Procedures required by the Audit Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing, and reporting on as appropriate, other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement. • Examining and reporting on the consistency of consolidation schedules or returns with the Council’s audited financial statements for the relevant reporting period
Other procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are required to discharge our statutory duties and responsibilities as established by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Code of Audit Practice

We have included in Appendix B a list of matters that we are required to communicate to you under professional standards.

Purpose and evaluation of materiality

For the purposes of determining whether the accounts are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in the aggregate, in light of the surrounding circumstances, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation of it requires professional judgement and necessarily takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implicit in the definition. We would be happy to discuss with you your expectations regarding our detection of misstatements in the financial statements.

Materiality determines the level of work performed on individual account balances and financial statement disclosures.

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all of the circumstances that may ultimately influence our judgement about materiality. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the accounts, including the total effect of the audit misstatements we identify, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

EY | Assurance | Tax | Transactions | Advisory

About EY

EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients and for our communities.

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