

The Audit Plan for North Somerset Council

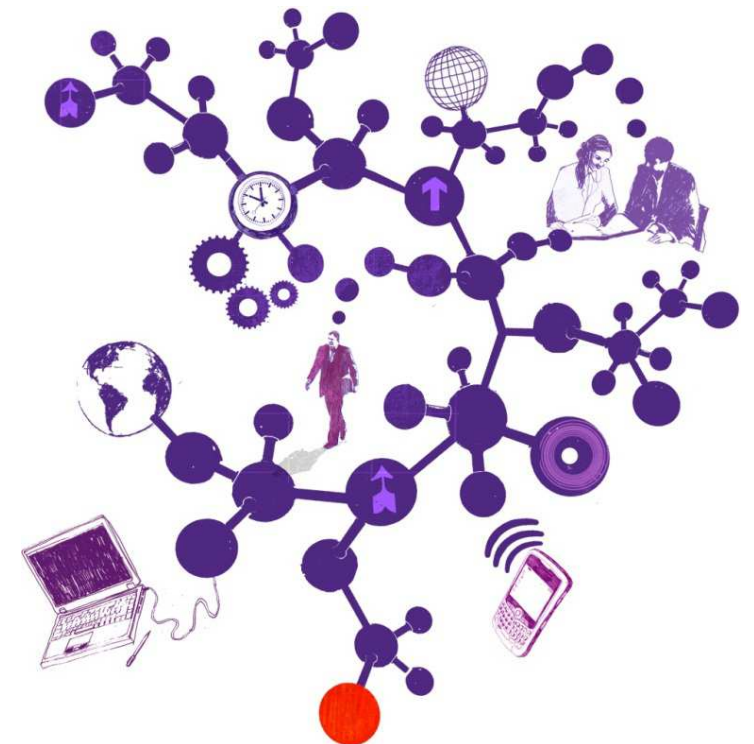
Year ending 31 March 2016

3 March 2016

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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or any weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

North Somerset Council
Town Hall
Walliscote Grove Road
Weston-Super-Mare
BS23 1UJ

3 March 2016

Dear Members of the Audit Committee

Audit Plan for North Somerset Council for the year ending 31 March 2016

This Audit Plan sets out for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of North Somerset Council, the Audit Committee), an overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260. This document is to help you understand the consequences of our work, discuss issues of risk and the concept of materiality with us, and identify any areas where you may request us to undertake additional procedures. It also helps us gain a better understanding of the Council and your environment. The contents of the Plan have been discussed with management.

We are required to perform our audit in line with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2015.

Our responsibilities under the Code are to:

- give an opinion on the Council's financial statements
- satisfy ourselves the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

Yours sincerely

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Understanding your business

In planning our audit we need to understand the challenges and opportunities the Council is facing. We set out a summary of our understanding below.

Challenges/opportunities

1. Autumn Statement 2015 and financial health

- The Chancellor proposed that local government would have greater control over its finances, although this was accompanied by a 30% reduction in Revenue Support Grant between 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- Despite the increased ownership, the financial health of the sector is likely to become increasingly challenging.
- The Autumn Statement 2015 also included proposals to devolve further powers to localities. Working with other Local Authorities, the Council submitted a devolution bid for the 'West of England' in September 2015.

2. Economic Development

- The Council's draft Corporate Plan for 2015-19 lists 'Prosperity and Opportunity' as an outcome with an ambition of driving growth in the North Somerset economy and local jobs.

3. Collaborative working

- The Council continues to develop collaborations with other local authorities, including the City Deal, Business Rates Retention scheme and the joint local transport plan (Rapid Transport Project).

4. Integration with health sector

- Developments such as the increased scope of the Better Care Fund (BCF) and transfer of responsibility for public health to local government are intended to increase integration between health and social care.
- The Council is the host authority for the BCF in North Somerset.

5. Earlier closedown of accounts

- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require councils to bring forward the approval and audit of financial statements to 31 May and 31 July respectively by the 2017/18 financial year.



Our response

- We will consider the Council's plans for addressing its financial position as part of our work to reach our VFM conclusion.
- We will consider your plans for the local devolution agenda as part of our work in reaching our VFM conclusion.
- We are able to provide support and challenge to your plans based on our knowledge of devolution elsewhere in the country.

- We will consider how the Council plans to achieve this outcome at part of our Vfm conclusion.

- We continue to liaise with colleagues auditing the other West of England councils for consistency and efficiency
- We will share our knowledge of how other Councils are responding to these changes.

- We ran a free seminar on 13 January 2016 considering the accounting issues around the BCF and Pooled Budgets. It was attended by 35 finance officers from councils and CCGs in the South West including North Somerset Council and North Somerset CCG.
- We will consider how the Council has reflected changes to its responsibilities in relation to public health and how it is working with partners, as part of our work in reaching our Vfm conclusion.
- We will review the Council's treatment of entries relating to the Better Care Fund in its financial statements.

- We will work with you to identify areas of your accounts production where you can learn from good practice in other authorities.
- We aim to complete all substantive work in our audit of your financial statements by 31 August 2016 as a 'dry run'

Developments and other requirements relevant to your audit

In planning our audit we also consider the impact of key developments in the sector and take account of national audit requirements as set out in the Code of Audit Practice and associated guidance.

Developments and other requirements

1. Fair value accounting

- A new accounting standard on fair value (IFRS 13) has been adopted and applies for the first time in 2015/16.
- This will have a particular impact on the valuation of surplus assets within property, plant and equipment which are now required to be valued at fair value in line with IFRS 13 rather than the existing use value of the asset.
- Investment property assets are required to be carried at fair value as in previous years.
- There are a number of additional disclosure requirements of IFRS 13.

2. Corporate governance

- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require local authorities to produce a Narrative Statement, which reports on your financial performance and use of resources in the year, and replaces the explanatory foreword.
- You are required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) as part of your financial statements.

3. Highways Network Assets

- Although you are not required to include Highways Network Assets until 2016/17, this will be a significant change to your financial statements and you will need to carry out valuation work this year.

4. Other requirements

- The Council is required to submit a Whole of Government accounts pack on which we provide an audit opinion.
- The Council completes grant claims and returns on which audit certification is required



Our response

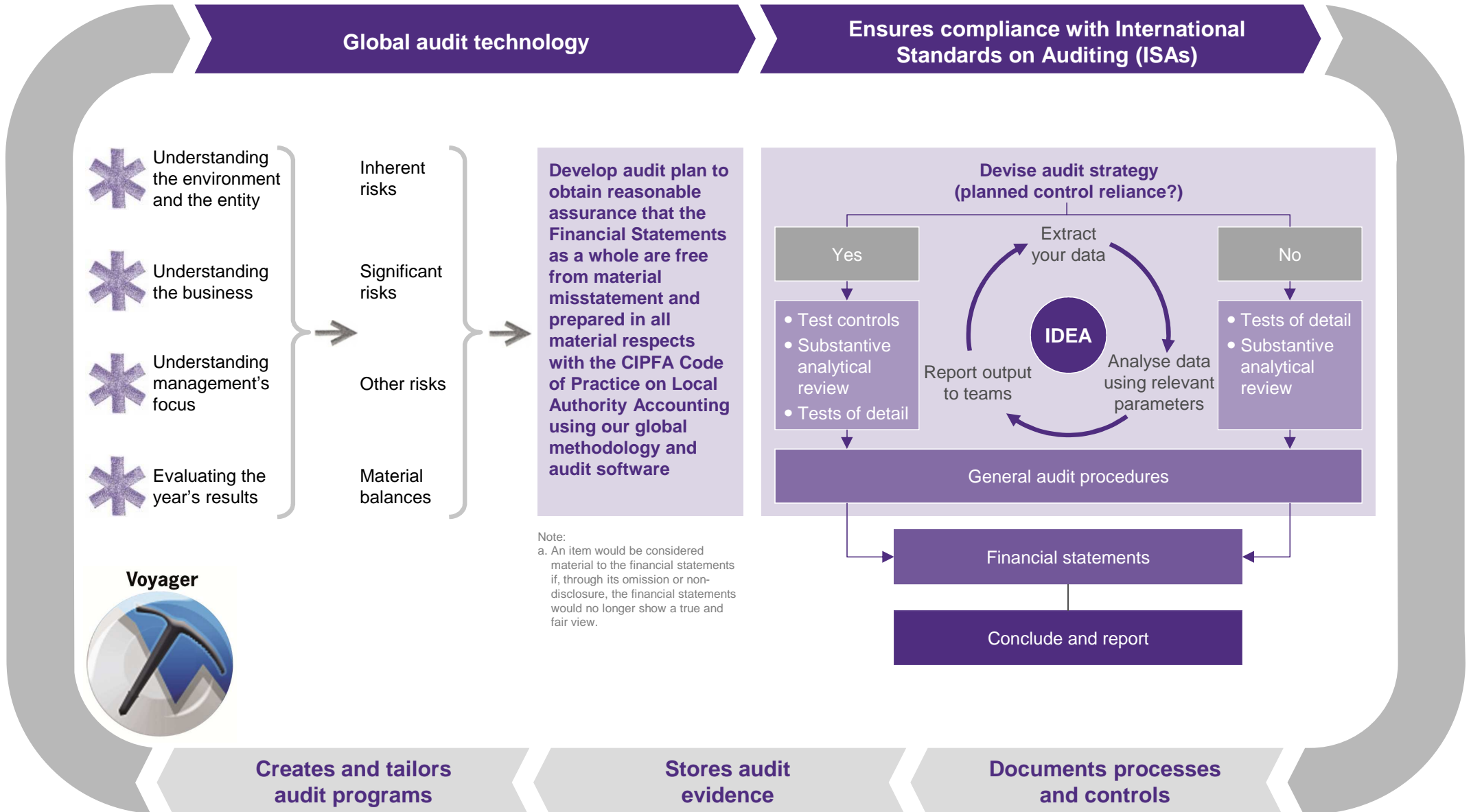
- We will keep the Council informed of changes to the financial reporting requirements for 2015/16 through ongoing discussions and invitations to our technical update workshops.
- We will discuss this with you at an early stage, including reviewing the basis of valuation of your surplus assets and investment property assets to ensure they are valued on the correct basis.
- We will review your draft financial statements to ensure you have complied with the disclosure requirements of IFRS 13.

- We will review your Narrative Statement to ensure it reflects the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice when this is updated, and make recommendations for improvement.
- We will review your arrangements for producing the AGS and consider whether it is consistent with our knowledge of the Council and the requirements of CIPFA guidance.

- We will discuss your plans for valuation of these assets at an early stage to gain an understanding of your approach and suggest areas for improvement.

- We will carry out work on the WGA pack in accordance with requirements
- We will certify the housing benefit subsidy claim in accordance with the requirements specified by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd.
- We will review any other claims and returns as requested by the Council.

Our audit approach



Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit.

The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As is usual in public sector entities, we have determined materiality for the statements as a whole as a proportion of the gross revenue expenditure of the Council. For purposes of planning the audit we have determined overall materiality to be £8.9 million (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure). We will consider whether this level is appropriate during the course of the audit and will advise you if we revise this.

In the previous year, we determined materiality to be £8.9 million (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure).

Under ISA 450, auditors also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulation of such amounts would have a material effect on the financial statements. "Trivial" matters are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any criteria of size, nature or circumstances. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £0.4 million.

ISA 320 also requires auditors to determine separate, lower, materiality levels where there are 'particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures for which misstatements of lesser amounts than materiality for the financial statements as a whole could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users'.

We have identified the following items where separate materiality levels are appropriate.

Balance/transaction/disclosure	Explanation	Materiality level
Disclosures of officers' remuneration, salary bandings and exit packages in notes to the statements.	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	£5k
Disclosures of members allowances in the notes to the statements	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	£5k
Disclosure of the audit fee in the notes to the statements	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	£5k

Significant risks identified

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty" (ISA 315). In this section we outline the significant risks of material misstatement which we have identified. There are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards (International Standards on Auditing - ISAs) which are listed below:

Significant risk	Description	Substantive audit procedures
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions	<p>Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at North Somerset Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including North Somerset Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.
Management over-ride of controls	<p>Under ISA 240 it is presumed that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management • Testing of journal entries • Review of unusual significant transactions <p>Further work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of assurances from the Audit Committee and management in relation to fraud, law and regulations • Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management • Testing of journal entries • Review of unusual significant transactions

Significant risks identified (continued)

Significant risk	Description	Substantive audit procedures
<p>Valuation of property, plant and equipment and Investment property</p>	<p>The Council revalues its PPE assets on a rolling basis with assets revalued at least every five years . The Code requires that the Council ensures that the carrying value at the balance sheet date is not materially different from current value. This represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements.</p> <p>The CIPFA Code of Practice has implemented IFRS 13 for the 2015/16 financial statements. The Council is required to include Investment property its financial statements at fair value, as defined by IFRS13. The basis on which fair value is defined for investment property is different to that used in previous years. This represents a significant change in the basis for estimation of these balances in the financial statements.</p> <p>There are also extensive disclosure requirements under IFRS 13 which the Council needs to comply with.</p>	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate. <p>Further work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will identify the controls put in place by management to ensure that the carrying values of property, plant ant equipment, and investment property, are not materially different from fair value at the year end. We will also assess whether these controls were implemented as expected, and whether they are sufficient to mitigate the risk of material mis-statement. • Review of the competence, expertise and objectivity of any management experts used. • Review of the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work • Discussions with valuer about the basis on which the valuation is carried out and challenge of the key assumptions. • Review and challenge of the information used by the valuer to ensure it is robust and consistent with our understanding • Review and challenge the reasonableness of the proposed revaluations, including reference to national trends • Testing of revaluations made during the year to ensure they are input correctly into the Council's asset register • Evaluation of the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not materially different to current value • Review of the disclosures made by the Council in its financial statements to ensure they are in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice and IFRS 13.

Significant risks identified (continued)

Significant risk	Description	Substantive audit procedures
Valuation of pension fund net liability	The Council's pension fund asset and liability as reflected in its balance sheet represent significant estimates in the financial statements.	<p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will identify the controls put in place by management to ensure that the pension fund liability is not materially misstated. We will also assess whether these controls were implemented as expected and whether they are sufficient to mitigate the risk of material misstatement. We will review the competence, expertise and objectivity of the actuary who carried out your pension fund valuation. We will gain an understanding of the basis on which the valuation is carried out. We will undertake procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made. We will review the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in notes to the financial statements with the actuarial report from your actuary.
Accounting for the Better Care Fund (BCF)	<p>The accounts are due to include new, material pooled budget disclosure, and underlying transactions re BCF. Judgement is required in assessing the required accounting treatment. Risks identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the Council entered into appropriate arrangements to account for BCF monies? Does the Council have appropriate processes in place to obtain the information it needs to reflect the correct transactions, balances and disclosures in its accounts? Are the judgements made by the Council in assessing its control over the funds reasonable, and hence has it adopted the correct accounting treatment in the accounts? Do BCF transactions, balances, and disclosures in the accounts agree to underlying evidence? 	<p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will identify the controls put in place by management to ensure that the BCF accounting entries and disclosures are not materially misstated. We will also assess whether these controls were implemented as expected, and whether they are sufficient to mitigate the risk of material misstatement. We will review to ensure signed s75 agreements in place for all BCF transactions covered by pooled budget accounting. We will review the Council's processes for obtaining the information it needs to reflect the correct transactions, balances and disclosures in its accounts. We will review the reasonableness of the Council's judgements in assessing the Council's control over the funds, and hence adopted the correct accounting treatment in the accounts We will review to ensure that BCF transactions, balances, and disclosures in the accounts agree to underlying evidence.

Other risks identified

"The auditor should evaluate the design and determine the implementation of the entity's controls, including relevant control activities, over those risks for which, in the auditor's judgment, it is not possible or practicable to reduce the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level to an acceptably low level with audit evidence obtained only from substantive procedures"(ISA (UK & Ireland) 315).

In this section we outline the other risks of material misstatement which we have identified as a result of our planning.

Other risks	Description	Audit approach
Operating expenses	Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period (Operating expenses understated)	<p>Work completed to date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle • Undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls are designed effectively <p>Further work planned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation of the operating expenses figure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (and supporting notes) to the general ledger and the subsidiary creditor payments system • Review of year end Creditors control account reconciliations • Review for unrecorded liabilities through, for example, review of payments made after the year end • Gaining an understanding of the year end accruals process, and sample testing of accruals to ensure calculated on a reasonable basis.
Employee remuneration	Employee remuneration accruals understated (Remuneration expenses not correct)	<p>Work completed to date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle • Undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls are designed effectively <p>Further work planned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation of the payroll figure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (and supporting notes) to the general ledger and payroll subsidiary system • Undertaking a trend analysis of monthly payroll data, to identify and unusual variances on which additional audit procedures may be required • Review of pensions disclosures and agreement to underlying evidence for completeness and accuracy • Review of senior managers remuneration, salary banding and exit packages disclosures, for completeness and accuracy.

Other risks identified (continued)

Other material balances and transactions

Under International Standards on Auditing, "irrespective of the assessed risks of material misstatement, the auditor shall design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transactions, account balance and disclosure". All other material balances and transaction streams will therefore be audited. However, the procedures will not be as extensive as the procedures adopted for the risks identified in the previous section but will include:

- Investments (long term and short term)
- Cash and cash equivalents
- Borrowing and other liabilities (long term and short term)
- Provisions
- Usable and unusable reserves
- Movement in Reserves Statement and associated notes
- Statement of cash flows and associated notes
- Financing and investment income and expenditure
- Taxation and non-specific grants
- Segmental reporting note
- Officers' remuneration note
- Leases note
- Related party transactions note
- Capital expenditure and capital financing note
- Financial instruments note
- Collection Fund and associated notes

Other audit responsibilities

- We will undertake work to satisfy ourselves that disclosures made in the Annual Governance Statement are in line with CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and consistent with our knowledge of the Council.
- We will read the Narrative Statement and check that it is consistent with the statements on which we give an opinion and disclosures are in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice.
- We will carry out work on consolidation schedules for the Whole of Government Accounts process in accordance with NAO instructions to auditors.
- We will give electors the opportunity to raise questions about the accounts and consider and decide upon objections received in relation to the accounts

Value for Money

Background

The Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act') and the NAO Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') require us to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VfM) conclusion.

The National Audit Office (NAO) issued its guidance for auditors on value for money work in November 2015 [here](#).

The Act and NAO guidance state that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has put proper arrangements in place.

The guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

This is supported by three sub-criteria as set out below:

Sub-criteria	Detail
Informed decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting in the public interest, through demonstrating and applying the principles and values of good governance Understanding and using appropriate cost and performance information to support informed decision making and performance management Reliable and timely financial reporting that supports the delivery of strategic priorities Managing risks effectively and maintaining a sound system of internal control
Sustainable resource deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and maintain statutory functions Managing assets effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities Planning, organising and developing the workforce effectively to deliver strategic priorities.
Working with partners and other third parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with third parties effectively to deliver strategic priorities Commissioning services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities Procuring supplies and services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities.

Value for Money (continued)

Risk assessment

We completed an initial risk assessment based on the NAO's guidance. In our initial risk assessment, we considered:

- our cumulative knowledge of the Council, including work performed in previous years in respect of the VfM conclusion and the opinion on the financial statements.
- the findings of other inspectorates and review agencies, including the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted.
- any illustrative significant risks identified and communicated by the NAO in its Supporting Information.
- any other evidence which we consider necessary to conclude on your arrangements.

We have identified one significant risk which we are required to communicate to you. The NAO's Code of Audit Practice defines 'significant' as follows:

A matter is significant if, in the auditor's professional view, it is reasonable to conclude that the matter would be of interest to the audited body or the wider public. Significance has both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

We have set out overleaf the risk we have identified, how it relates to the Code sub-criteria, and the work we propose to undertake to address this risk.

Value for money (continued)

We set out below the significant risk we have identified as a result of our initial risk assessment and the work we propose to address this risk.

Significant risk	Link to sub-criteria	Work proposed to address
<p>Strategic Financial Planning</p> <p>In February 2016 the Council revised its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in light of the settlement figure announced on 17 December 2015 as this left the Council with an increased funding gap. The revised MTFP highlights a balanced budget for 2016/17, but a savings target of £8.6 million. In addition, the Council have updated the Corporate Plan to sit alongside the revised MTFP and highlights numerous projects and initiatives the Council wish to undertake. The Council therefore continues to face challenges in securing the funding, achieving the savings and delivering a balanced budget.</p>	<p>This links to the Council's arrangements for planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and maintain statutory functions and managing and utilising assets effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities.</p>	<p>We will review the assumptions behind the MTFP and the Corporate Plan.</p>

Reporting

The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter.

We will include our conclusion as part of our report on your financial statements which we will give by 30 September 2016.

Results of interim audit work

The findings of our interim audit work, and the impact of our findings on the accounts audit approach, are summarised in the table below:

	Work performed	Conclusion
Entity level controls	<p>We have obtained an understanding of the overall control environment relevant to the preparation of the financial statements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values • Commitment to competence • Participation by those charged with governance • Management's philosophy and operating style • Organisational structure • Assignment of authority and responsibility • Human resource policies and practices 	<p>Our work has identified no material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's financial statements.</p>
Walkthrough testing	<p>We have completed walkthrough tests of the Council's controls operating in areas where we consider that there is a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements.</p> <p>Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. Internal controls have been implemented by the Council in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>

Results of interim audit work (continued)

	Work performed	Conclusion
Journal entry controls	<p>We have reviewed the Council's journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy and have not identified any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's control environment or financial statements.</p> <p>To date we have undertaken detailed testing on journal transactions recorded for the first eight months of the financial year, by extracting 'unusual' entries for further review.</p>	<p>Our work has identified no material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's financial statements.</p> <p>Our testing of journals identified no issues that we wish to highlight for your attention.</p> <p>We will complete our review of journals as part of our year end testing.</p>
Early substantive testing	<p>We have started our work substantive testing on payroll, revenue expenditure, and fees and charges income to ensure these transactions are valid and correctly coded.</p> <p>We also agreed opening balances brought , and comparators forward into the current year's accounts as consistent with the previous year's accounts.</p>	<p>No issues have been identified at this stage that require reporting.</p> <p>We will complete this work after the year end during the final accounts audit.</p>

Key dates



Date	Activity
December 2015	Planning
January 2016	Interim site visit
March 2016	Presentation of audit plan to Audit Committee
June – August 2016	Year end fieldwork
August 2016	Audit findings clearance meeting with Head of Property and Finance
September 2016	Report audit findings to those charged with governance (Audit Committee)
September 2016	Sign financial statements opinion

Fees and independence

Fees

	£
Council audit	111,975
Grant certification	* 13,962
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	125,947

* Fee remains indicative until work is agreed and completed

Our fee assumptions include:

- Supporting schedules to all figures in the accounts are supplied by the agreed dates and in accordance with the agreed upon information request list.
- The scope of the audit, and the Council and its activities, have not changed significantly.
- The Council will make available management and accounting staff to help us locate information and to provide explanations.
- The accounts presented for audit are materially accurate, supporting working papers and evidence agree to the accounts, and all audit queries are resolved promptly.

Grant certification

- Our fees for grant certification cover only housing benefit subsidy certification, which falls under the remit of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited
- Fees in respect of other grant work, such as reasonable assurance reports, are shown under 'Fees for other services'.

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
Audit related services: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant certification – Teachers Pensions Return	* 4,200

Fees for other services

Fees for other services reflect those agreed at the time of issuing our Audit Plan. Any changes will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Full details of all fees charged for audit and non-audit services will be included in our Audit Findings Report at the conclusion of the audit.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while The Audit Findings Report will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to the Council.

Respective responsibilities

This plan has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Council's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged. Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to the auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓



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