



The Audit Plan for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

This version of the report is a draft. Its contents and subject matter remain under review and its contents may change and be expanded as part of the finalisation of the report.

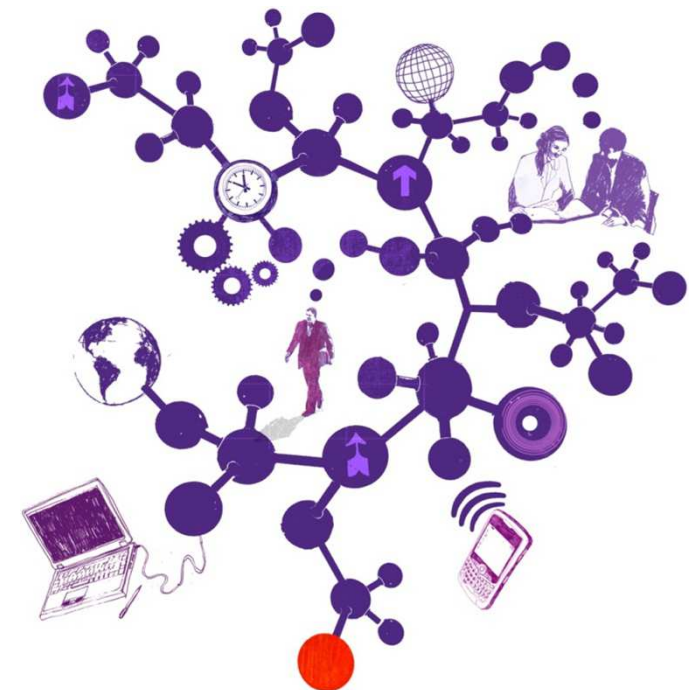
Year ended 31 March 2014

April 2014

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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.

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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. Annual Efficiency savings

- 2012/13 was the second year of a two year budget strategy that saw the Council achieve £38.4 million of savings.
- The Council plans to deliver a balanced budget in 2013/14 and needs to achieve a further £13.1 million of savings by March 2014.

2. Medium term financial planning

- The Council has recently revised the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) 2014 – 17. The MTFS reflects the budget savings required in 2014/15 and 2015/16 based on guidance published to date. It sets out that further savings of £19 million are required by XXXX
- The strategy includes financial modelling for 2016/17 where the Council anticipates that savings of between £5.3 million and £10.9 million will be required based on the likely and worst case scenario

3. Responding to changes or transfers of responsibilities to Local Government

- From 1 April 2013 the Council took on new responsibilities including Public Health, Business Rates Retention and Local Council Tax Support. These changes present both opportunities and challenges for the Council.

4. Delivering regeneration projects

- The Council has invested in a number of significant capital projects to help boost economic growth in recent years.
- 2013/14 has seen the launch of the £30 million Cathedral Quarter development where the Council is a key partner in an ambitious scheme to help transform the town centre.
- The Council is the accountable body for all the major funding streams and is still considering funding options.



Our response

- Review of the 2013/14 revenue budget outturn and audit of the 2013/14 financial statements.
- We will monitor the forecast outturn and financial position of the Council for the 2013/14 year to inform our VFM conclusion.

- We will review the progress made by the Council to deliver the required savings.
- We will also assess the mechanisms the Council has put in place to update its Medium Term Financial Strategy to accurately project the savings that will need to be found in future years.

- Watching brief over the changes to the Council's arrangements.
- Review of the joint plan prepared by the Council with Blackburn & Darwen CCG and the Health and Wellbeing Board for the transformation of adult health and social care services through the Better Care Fund as part of the VFM conclusion .

- We will continue to consider the progress made by the Council in delivering planned regeneration projects and monitor future plans.
- We will assess future financial appraisals and consider the accounting requirements and governance arrangements underpinning the projects.

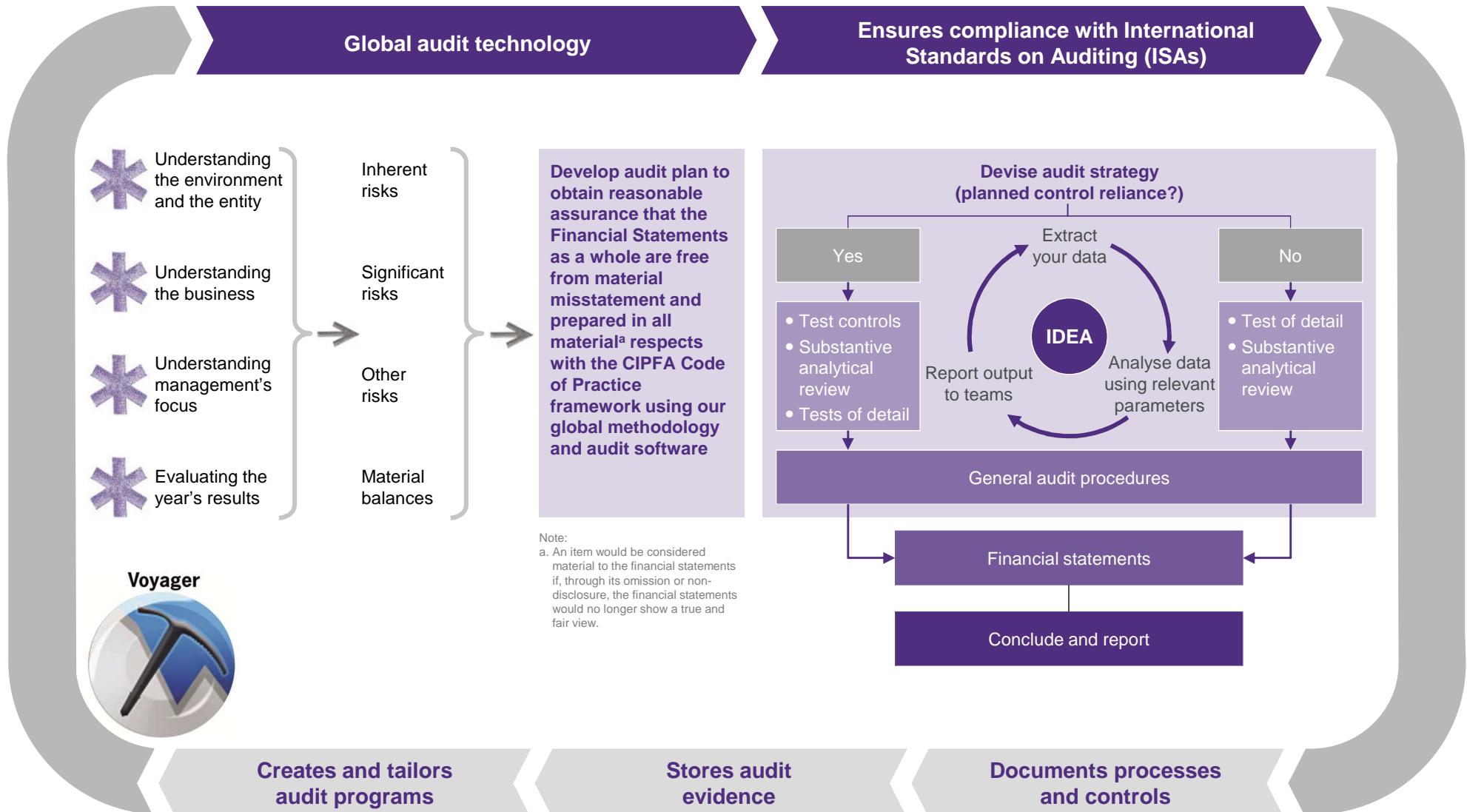
Developments relevant to your business and the audit

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 ('the code') and associated guidance.

| Developments and other requirements | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>1. Financial reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the CIPFA Code of Practice • Clarification of Code requirements around PPE valuations • Changes to NDR accounting and provisions for business rate appeals • Transfer of assets to Academies | <p>2. Legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Finance settlement • Welfare reform Act 2012 | <p>3. Corporate governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Governance Statement (AGS) • Explanatory foreword | <p>4. Pensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of 2013/14 changes to the Local Government pension Scheme (LGPS) | <p>5. Financial Pressures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing service provision with less resource • Progress against savings plans | <p>6. Other requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| <p>We will ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council complies with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice and business rate appeals through discussions with management and our substantive testing • schools are accounted for correctly and in line with the latest guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will discuss the impact of the legislative changes with the Council through our regular meetings with senior management and those charged with governance, providing a view where appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the arrangements the Council has in place for the production of the AGS • We will review the AGS and the explanatory foreword to consider whether they are consistent with our knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review how the Council dealt with the impact of the 2013/14 changes through our meetings with senior management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the Council's performance against the 2013/14 budget, including consideration of performance against the savings plan • We will review the Council's Financial Resilience as part of our VFM conclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will carry out work on the WGA pack in accordance with requirements • We will certify grant claims and returns in accordance with Audit Commission requirements |

Our audit approach



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 | Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue. | Work completed to date <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review and testing of revenue recognition policies Audit Coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Testing of material revenue streams |
| Management over-ride of controls | Under ISA 240 there is a presumption that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities. | Work completed to date <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by managementDiscussion of potential unusual significant transactions Audit Coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Testing of journal entriesFurther review of any unusual significant transactions |

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 315).

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

| Other reasonably possible risks | Description | Work completed during interim visit | Further work planned |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Operating expenses | Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented and identified the processes and key controls in the operating expenses cycle Walkthrough of controls to confirm our understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed review and testing of year end accruals and creditor balances including confirmation that balances due have been settled after the year-end "Cut – off" testing to obtain assurance that creditors have been accounted for in the correct financial year |
| Employee remuneration | Employee remuneration accrual understated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented and identified the processes and key controls in the employee remuneration cycle Walkthrough of controls to confirm our understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of payroll reconciliations including at the year end Substantive testing of payments made to employees in the 2013-14 financial year Use of analytical techniques to compare expected payroll costs with actual |
| Welfare Expenditure | Welfare benefit expenditure improperly computed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented and identified the processes and key controls in the Welfare expenditure cycle Walkthrough of controls to confirm our understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement to accounts and supporting notes. Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim testing using Audit Commission HBCOUNT approach. |
| Property, Plant & Equipment (PPE) | PPE activity not valid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented and identified the processes and key controls for property, plant and equipment transactions Walkthrough of controls to confirm our understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample testing of PPE movements during the year. Sample test of PPE additions and disposals, including compliance with capitalisation requirements. Testing of capital expenditure to confirm adherence to the Authority's accounting policies and accurate disclosure in the financial statements. |

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 315).

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

| Other reasonably possible risks | Description | Work to be completed during interim visit | Further work planned at post statements visit |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Property, Plant & Equipment | Revaluation measurement not correct | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review of the arrangements made by management to commission an appropriate valuation of the Authority's asset base. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review of steps taken to ensure that valuations obtained are correctly reflected in the Authority's asset register and accounted for in the financial statements.Review of the analysis which demonstrates that the value of assets in the Council's balance sheet is not materially different from the amount that would be given by a full valuation carried out on 31 March 2014.Detailed testing of accounting entries posted to reflect valuations obtained. |

Value for money

Value for money

The Code requires us to issue a conclusion on 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.

Our VfM conclusion is based on the following criteria specified by the Audit Commission:

| VfM criteria | Focus of the criteria |
|---|--|
| The organisation has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience | The organisation has robust systems and processes to manage financial risks and opportunities effectively, and to secure a stable financial position that enables it to continue to operate for the foreseeable future |
| The organisation has proper arrangements for challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness | The organisation is prioritising its resources within tighter budgets, for example by achieving cost reductions and by improving efficiency and productivity |

We have undertaken a risk assessment to identify areas of risk to our VfM conclusion. We will undertake work in the following areas to address the risks identified:

- Assessment of the updates to revenue budgets and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014 – 2017 in light of the most recent local government finance settlement and the comprehensive spending review
- Review the Council's joint working arrangements with its partners to implement the Better Care Fund.

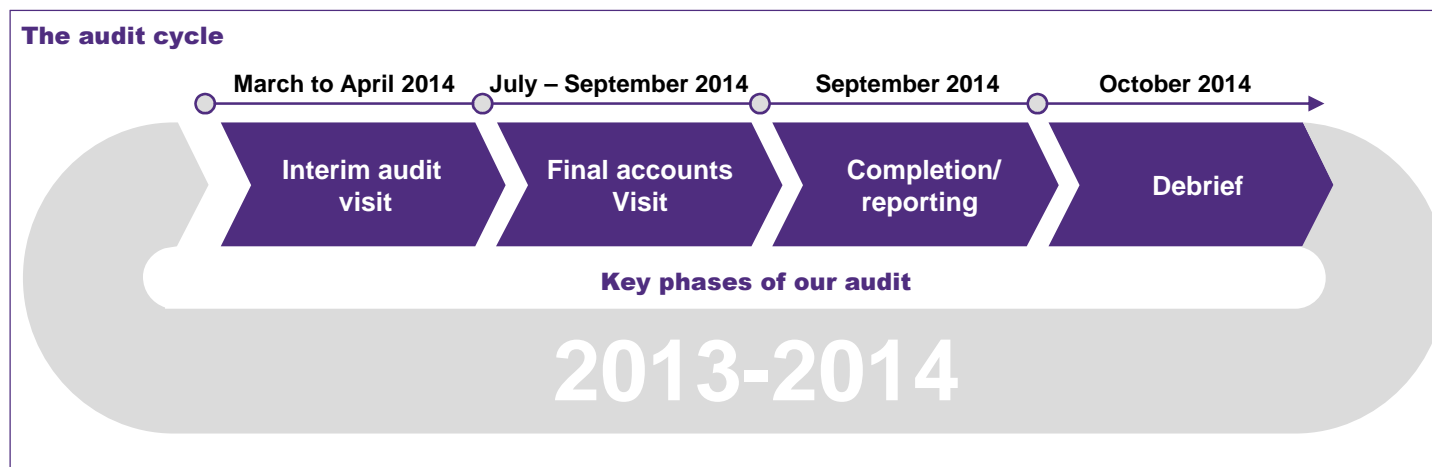
The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings report and in the Annual Audit Letter.

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 with findings | Conclusion |
|--|--|--|
| Internal audit | <p>We have reviewed internal audit's overall arrangements in accordance with auditing standards. Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p> <p>We also considered internal audit's work on the Council's key financial systems to date. We have not identified any significant weaknesses impacting on our responsibilities.</p> | <p>Overall, we have concluded that the internal audit service continues to provide an independent and satisfactory service to the Council and that internal audit work contributes to an effective internal control environment at the Council.</p> <p>Our review of internal audit work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p> |
| Walkthrough testing | <p>We are completing walkthrough tests of controls operating in areas where we consider that there is a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements.</p> <p>Our work to date has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. Internal controls have been implemented in accordance with our documented understanding.</p> | <p>Our work to date has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p> |
| Review of information technology controls | <p>Our information systems specialist will perform a high level review of the general IT control environment, as part of the overall review of the internal controls system. We have also performed a follow up of the issues that were raised last year.</p> | <p>We will report to management and to a future Audit Committee if our work identifies any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's financial statements.</p> |
| Journal entry controls | <p>We are reviewing the Council's journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy.</p> | <p>Our work to date has not identified any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's control environment or financial statements.</p> |

Key dates



| Date | Activity |
|-----------------------|--|
| January - March 2014 | Planning |
| March - April 2014 | Interim site visit |
| April 2014 | Presentation of audit plan to Audit Committee |
| July – September 2014 | Year end fieldwork |
| September 2014 | Audit findings clearance meeting with Director of Finance |
| September 2014 | Report audit findings to those charged with governance Audit Committee |
| September 2014 | Sign financial statements opinion |

Fees and independence

Fees

| | £ |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Council audit | 136,049 |
| Grant certification | 25,000 |
| Total fees (excluding VAT) | 161,049 |

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

Fees for other services

| Service | Fees £ |
|---|---|
| Regional Growth Fund (Accelerated Business Growth & FUSE) | £TO BE UPDATED – About to raise bill |

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 requirement of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing (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 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 the Audit Commission (www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

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. 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 Audit Commission and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work. 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 issue 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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