

The Audit Plan for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Year ended 31 March 2017

April 2017

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Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council,
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11 April 2017

Dear Members of the Audit Committee,

Audit Plan for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council for the year ending 31 March 2017

This Audit Plan sets out for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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 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; and
- 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 which give a true and fair view.

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 planning process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change. In particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or all weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit. 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.

We look forward to working with you during the course of the audit.

Yours sincerely

Karen Murray

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Understanding your business and key developments

Developments

Highways network asset (HNA)

On the 14 November, 2016 CIPFA/LASAAC announced a deferral of measuring the Highways Network Asset at Depreciated Replacement Cost in local authority financial statements for 2016/17. This deferral is due to delays in obtaining updated central rates for valuations.

CIPFA/LASAAC reviewed this position at its meeting in March 2017 with a view to implementation in 2017/18. It decided that currently, and in particular in the absence of central support for key elements of the valuation, the benefits are outweighed by the costs of implementation.

Integration with health sector

The responsibilities of local government now include public health. Pooled budgets including the Better Care Fund (BCF) are operated by the Council in conjunction with other local partners. More widely there is a recognition of a need for closer working with health partners to deliver the right health and social care to the people of Blackburn and Darwen.

In-sourcing of back office services

The Council's 15-year strategic partnership with Capita ended on 30 June 2016. From January 2016 the Council began the process of bringing the majority of the previously-outsourced financial systems back in-house. Staff have transferred to the Council from Capita on a phased basis since January 2016.

Key challenges

Autumn Statement

The Chancellor detailed plans in the Autumn Statement to increase funding for Housing and Infrastructure, and further extend devolved powers to Local Authorities.

The demand and cost pressures on adult and children's social care continue to provide a challenge across the sector. This is replicated in Blackburn with Darwen although significant work is being done to manage the position, including using external support to identify opportunities to transform services.

The pressures on adult social care were recognised in the spring 2017 Budget which announced additional funding of £2bn over the next three years to the local government sector.

Financial Position

The Council has set a balanced budget for 2017/18 and has kept its medium term financial plan under review throughout the year.

The Council knows that urgent action must be taken to reduce the medium term funding gap through its savings programme. This programme has designed savings by undertaking a comprehensive workforce review and implementing alternative delivery models to enhance service provision. Alongside reducing cost, in December 2016 the Council set itself a target to generate additional income of £4.1M per year by 2019/20.

Financial reporting changes

CIPFA Code of Practice 2016/17 (the Code)

Changes to the Code in 2016/17 reflect aims of the 'Telling the Story' project, to streamline the financial statements to be more in line with internal organisational reporting and improve accessibility to the reader of the financial statements.

The changes affect the presentation of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the Movement in Reserves Statements, segmental reporting disclosures and a new Expenditure and Funding Analysis note has been introduced. The Code also requires these amendments to be reflected in the 2015/16 comparative through a prior period adjustment.

Earlier closedown

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require councils to bring forward the approval and audit of financial statements to 31 July by the 2017/2018 financial year.

Implementation of New Financial Ledger

The Council's finance and IT teams recently completed a major project to install a new financial ledger system. The new ledger went live on 1 April 2016. The installation has been accompanied by a programme of training for finance and non finance-staff to ensure the Council can obtain maximum benefit from the new system. The old ledger system will be used to prepare the 2016-17 financial statements.

Our response

- We aim to complete all our substantive audit work of your financial statements by 4 August 2017 based on an expectation that the draft accounts will be provided to us in early June 2017.
- As part of our opinion on your financial statements, we will consider whether your financial statements accurately reflect the financial reporting changes in the 2016/17 CIPFA Code.
- We will review the Council's progress in delivering the schemes set out in its savings programmes.
- We will consider whether the Council's medium term financial strategy has been updated appropriately to reflect developments locally or nationally which might impact on the assumptions built into the strategy.
- We will document any changes the Council has made to its accounting systems, processes and controls since the systems have been brought in-house.

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 concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law. An item does not necessarily have to be large to be considered to have a material effect on the financial statements. An item may be considered to be material by nature, for example, when greater precision is required (e.g. senior manager salaries and allowances).

We determine planning materiality (materiality for the financial statements as a whole determined at the planning stage of the audit) in order to estimate the tolerable level of misstatement in the financial statements, assist in establishing the scope of our audit engagement and audit tests, calculate sample sizes and assist in evaluating the effect of known and likely misstatements in the financial statements.

We have determined planning materiality based upon professional judgement in the context of our knowledge of the Council. In line with previous years, we have calculated financial statements materiality based on a proportion of the gross revenue expenditure of the Council. For purposes of planning the audit we have determined overall materiality to be £8,729k (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure as reported in the audited 2015-16 financial statements). In the previous year, we used the same level of materiality as that proposed for our 2016/17 audit. Our assessment of materiality is kept under review throughout the audit process and we will advise you if we revise this during the audit.

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 £436k.

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
Related Party Transactions	The Council conducts its business using public funds. The Related Party disclosures ensures that the Council discloses in full any transactions that have occurred with related parties. This ensures that the Council is open about who it does business with and counters any allegations or suspicion of nepotism on the part of management, members or those charged with governance.	£20,000
Disclosures of senior manager salaries and allowances in the remuneration report	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	£20,000

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; Judgements about materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances, and are affected by the size or nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both; and Judgements about matters that are material to users of the financial statements are based on a consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group. The possible effect of misstatements on specific individual users, whose needs may vary widely, is not considered. (ISA (UK and Ireland) 320)

Significant risks identified

An audit is focused on risks. Significant risks are defined by ISAs (UK and Ireland) as risks that, in the judgement of the auditor, require special audit consideration. In identifying risks, audit teams consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood. Significant risks are those risks that have a higher risk of material misstatement.

Significant risk	Description	Audit procedures
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions	Under ISA (UK and Ireland) 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue streams may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA 240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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; and • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable <p>Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.</p>
Management override of controls	Under ISA (UK and Ireland) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management override of controls is present in all entities.	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management; and • Review of journal entry process and selection of unusual journal entries for testing back to supporting documentation. <p>Further work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management to identify any estimate, judgments and decisions not captured during the planning phase of the audit; • Review of journal entry process and selection of unusual journal entries for testing back to supporting documentation for periods not covered as part of the interim visit, particularly year-end journals; and • Review of unusual significant transactions.

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgemental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, due to either size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgemental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty." (ISA (UK and Ireland) 315) . In making the review of unusual significant transactions "the auditor shall treat identified significant related party transactions outside the entity's normal course of business as giving rise to significant risks." (ISA (UK and Ireland) 550)

Significant risks identified (continued)

Significant risk	Description	Audit procedures
Valuation of pension fund net liability	The Council's pension fund asset and liability as reflected in its balance sheet represent a significant estimate 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 the Council's actuary.
Valuation of property, plant and equipment	The Council undertakes a rolling programme of revaluations of land and buildings. The approach taken to determine the carrying value of Property, Plant and Equipment in the Balance Sheet represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements.	<p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of controls put in place by management to ensure that the carrying value of property, plant and equipment is not materially different from fair value at year end and undertake an assessment of whether these controls are implemented as expected and whether they are sufficient to mitigate the risk of material misstatement; Review of management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate; 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; Sample testing to obtain assurance over the accuracy of valuations recorded in the Asset Register by tracing the valuations in the asset register back to reports received from the valuer; Discussions with the 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 inform their valuations to ensure it is robust and consistent with our understanding; and 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 carrying value.

Other risks identified

Reasonably possible risks (RPRs) are, in the auditor's judgement, other risk areas which the auditor has identified as an area where the likelihood of material misstatement cannot be reduced to remote, without the need for gaining an understanding of the associated control environment, along with the performance of an appropriate level of substantive work. The risk of misstatement for an RPR or other risk is lower than that for a significant risk, and they are not considered to be areas that are highly judgemental, or unusual in relation to the day to day activities of the business.

Reasonably possible risks	Description of risk	Audit procedures
Operating expenses/ Creditors	Creditors are understated or not recorded in correct period	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have reviewed the systems and controls that the Council has in place to pay suppliers and record expenditure incurred; and We have walked through controls relevant to the risk identified. <p>Work planned: .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will undertake testing of a sample of payments made by the Council after the year-end to obtain assurance over the completeness of the Council's accruals; and We will test a sample of creditors and accruals recognised in the Balance Sheet to ensure these properly reflect the Council's liabilities at the year-end.
Employee remuneration	Employee remuneration costs are understated	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have reviewed the systems and controls that the Council has in place to ensure that its employees are paid the correct amount based on hours worked and their contractual entitlement, including arrangements to accrue for amounts outstanding but not yet paid at the year-end. We have walked through the controls the Council has in place in relation to this risk. <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation and walkthrough of the systems and processes operated by Capita which are relevant to this risk. Capita provide payroll services to some of the schools in the Borough. We will complete substantive testing of significant year end payroll accruals. We will perform analytical procedures to identify any discrepancies in monthly payrolls and consideration as to whether payroll expenditure is in line with our expectations based on supporting evidence. We will test the reconciliation between the payroll system and the amounts recorded in the general ledger and financial statements.

"In respect of some risks, the auditor may judge that it is not possible or practicable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence only from substantive procedures. Such risks may relate to the inaccurate or incomplete recording of routine and significant classes of transactions or account balances, the characteristics of which often permit highly automated processing with little or no manual intervention. In such cases, the entity's controls over such risks are relevant to the audit and the auditor shall obtain an understanding of them." (ISA (UK and Ireland) 315)

Other risks identified (continued)

Other risks	Description of risk	Audit procedures
<p>Changes to the presentation of local authority financial statements</p>	<p>CIPFA has been working on the 'Telling the Story' project, for which the aim was to streamline the financial statements and improve accessibility to the user and this has resulted in changes to the 2016/17 Code of Practice.</p> <p>The changes affect the presentation of income and expenditure in the financial statements and associated disclosure notes. A prior period adjustment (PPA) to restate the 2015/16 comparative figures is also required.</p>	<p>Work planned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will document and evaluate the process for the recording the required financial reporting changes to the 2016/17 financial statements. • We will review the re-classification of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) comparatives to ensure that they are in line with the Authority's internal reporting structure. • We will review the appropriateness of the revised grouping of entries within the Movement In Reserves Statement (MIRS). • We will test the classification of income and expenditure for 2016/17 recorded within the Cost of Services section of the CIES. • We will test the completeness of income and expenditure by reviewing the reconciliation of the CIES to the general ledger. • We will test the classification of income and expenditure reported within the new Expenditure and Funding Analysis (EFA) note to the financial statements. • We will review the new segmental reporting disclosures within the 2016/17 financial statements to ensure compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice.

Other audit procedures

Going concern

As auditors, we are required to “obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence about the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern assumption in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and to conclude whether there is a material uncertainty about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern” (ISA (UK and Ireland) 570). We will review the management's assessment of the going concern assumption and the disclosures in the financial statements.

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 sections but will include:

- Intangible assets
- Heritage assets
- Assets held for sale
- Cash and cash equivalents
- Trade and other receivables
- Borrowings and other liabilities (long and short term)
- Provisions
- Useable 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
- Schools balances and transactions
- New note disclosures
- Officers' remuneration note
- Leases note
- Related party transactions note
- Capital expenditure and capital financing note
- Financial instruments note
- Collection Fund and associated notes

Value for Money

Background

The Code requires 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 for 2016/17 in November 2016. The guidance states that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has proper arrangements in place.

The guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

In all significant respects, the audited body takes properly informed decisions and deploys resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

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

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 sound governance• Understanding and using appropriate cost and performance information (including, where relevant, information from regulatory/monitoring bodies) 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 and utilising 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 have carried out an initial risk assessment based on the NAO's auditor's guidance note (AGN03). 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 significant risks which we are required to communicate to you. These are set out overleaf.

Reporting

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

We will include our conclusion in our auditor's report on your financial statements which we will give by 30 September 2017.

Value for money (continued)

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

Significant risk	Link to sub-criteria	Work proposed to address
<p>Delivery of the Financial Plan</p> <p>In February 2016 the Council agreed measures to close the budget gap of almost £48 million over the period of the MTFS to 2019/20. Progress has been made during 2016/17 in the implementation of these measures including development and significant delivery of a savings programme and increases in income streams.</p> <p>However, the December 2016 revenue monitoring report set out that the Council continues to face significant financial pressures and is forecasting an overspend of approximately £1.683 million across all portfolios for 2016/17.</p> <p>The delivery of the required savings in 2016/17 and beyond represent a significant challenge to the Council.</p>	<p>This links to the Council's arrangements for sustainable resource deployment and informed decision-making.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• review the detail to support the required savings in 16/17 including financial and budget reporting to Members• assess the outturn position for 2016/17 and the budget plans for 2017/18 to 2019/20• meet with key officers to discuss plans/proposals

Other audit responsibilities

In addition to our responsibilities under the Code of Practice in relation to your financial statements and arrangements for economy, efficiency and effectiveness we have a number of other audit responsibilities, as follows:

- We will undertake work to satisfy ourselves that the disclosures made in your Annual Governance Statement are in line with CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and consistent with our knowledge of the Council.
- We will read your Narrative Statement and check that it is consistent with the financial statements on which we give an opinion and that the disclosures included in it are in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice.
- We will carry out work on your consolidation schedules for the Whole of Government Accounts process in accordance with NAO instructions to auditors.
- We consider our other duties under the Act and the Code, as and when required, including:
 - we will give electors the opportunity to raise questions about your financial statements and consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the financial statements;
 - issue of a report in the public interest; and
 - making a written recommendation to the Council, copied to the Secretary of State
- We certify completion of our audit.

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:

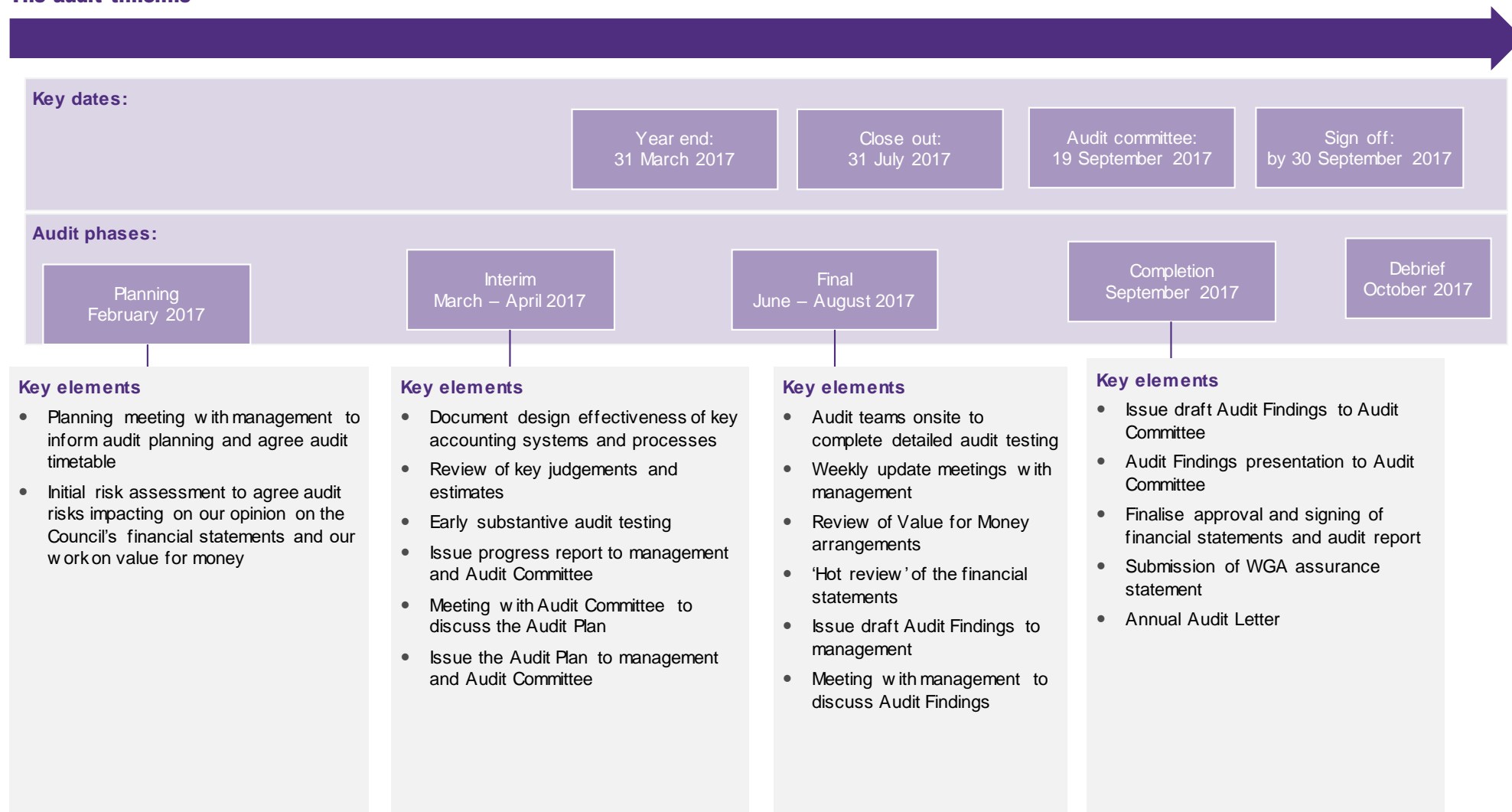
	Work performed	Conclusion
Internal audit	<p>We have completed a high level review of internal audit's overall arrangements. Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p> <p>We have also reviewed internal audit's work on the Council's key financial systems to date.</p>	<p>Overall, we have concluded that the internal audit service provides an independent and satisfactory service to the Council and that internal audit work contributes to an effective internal control environment</p> <p>Our review of internal audit work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
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>

Results of interim audit work (continued)

	Work performed	Conclusion
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>Internal controls have been implemented by the Council in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	Our work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.
Journal entry controls	<p>We have reviewed the Council's journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy. We have not identified any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's control environment or financial statements.</p>	Our work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.
Early substantive testing	<p>We have undertaken some early testing in respect of the following transactions recognised in the Council's ledgers for the period 1 April 2016 – 28 February 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing benefit payments • Non-Pay expenditure • Income from fees and charge <p>To date our testing had not identified any matters which we need to report to you.</p> <p>We have agreed with management that we will select samples and undertake testing of payroll expenditure in advance of receipt of the draft statements in order to reduce the volume of testing to be completed as part of our main post-statements visit.</p>	Our work has not identified any errors impacting on our audit opinion

The audit cycle

The audit timeline



Audit Fees

Fees

	£
Council audit	102,839
Certification of Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim	14,910
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	117,749

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; and
- 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

Fees for other services detailed on the following page, 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.

What is included within our fees

- A reliable and risk-focused audit appropriate for your business
- Feedback on your systems and processes, and identifying potential risks, opportunities and savings
- Invitations to events hosted by Grant Thornton in your sector, as well as the wider finance community
- Ad-hoc telephone calls and queries
- Technical briefings and updates
- Regular contact to discuss strategy and other important areas
- A review of accounting policies for appropriateness and consistency
- Annual technical updates for members of your finance team
- Regular Audit Committee Progress Reports

Independence and non-audit services

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 we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

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

For the purposes of our audit we have made enquiries of all Grant Thornton UK LLP teams providing services to Client Name. The following audit-related services were identified for the Council for 2016/17:

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £ (ex VAT)	Planned outputs
Audit related		
Certification of 2015-16 Transport Grant	3,875	We have provided a reasonable assurance report to the Council in line with the terms agreed in our engagement letter
Certification of 2015-16 Regional Growth Fund	2,100	We have provided a reasonable assurance report to the Council and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in line with the terms agreed in our engagement letter
Certification of 2015-16 Teachers Pension return	4,200	We carried out procedures agreed with Teachers Pensions to certify the Council's Teachers Pensions return.
Non Audit-Related		
None		

The amounts detailed are fees agreed to-date for audit related and non-audit services (to be) undertaken by Grant Thornton UK LLP (and Grant Thornton International Limited network member Firms) in the current financial year. Full details of all fees charged for audit and non-audit services by Grant Thornton UK LLP and by Grant Thornton International Limited network member Firms will be included in our Audit Findings report at the conclusion of the audit.

The above services are consistent with the Council's policy on the allotment of non-audit work to your auditors.

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standard on Auditing (UK and Ireland) (ISA) 260, as well as other ISAs (UK and Ireland) 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

As auditor we are responsible for performing the audit in accordance with ISAs (UK and 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.

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.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

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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