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## EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2015/16

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the Council's external auditor's annual audit plan (AAP) covering the audit of the 2015/16 accounts and certification of claim and returns.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In the AAP, attached as Appendix 1, EY sets out the approach and scope in relation to the audit of the 2015/16 financial statements, value for money conclusions and grant certification work.
- 2.2 Also attached is a Value for Money Code of Audit Practice (Appendix 2) and a Local Government Audit Committee Briefing (Appendix 3).

### 3 EXTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 EY was appointed as the Council's external auditor with effect from April 2015 under the terms of The Audit Commission Act 1998.
- 3.2 The Annual Audit Letter setting out proposed fees and audit arrangements was presented to this Committee on 17 June 2015.

### 4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The AAP confirms the proposed core audit fee for 2015/16 as £47,657, which adheres to the scale fee published by the Audit Commission. The proposed fee for the 2015/16 certification of claims and returns is £8,184 based on certain criteria contained in the AAP. Both fees are liable for VAT.

### 5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) was appointed as a transitional body following the closure of the Audit Commission. The PSAA will exercise statutory functions relating to auditor appointments and fees. It will monitor the performance of the firms providing audit services.

### 6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That the external auditor's annual audit plan for 2015/16 be noted.



Robert Manning

Section 151 Officer

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

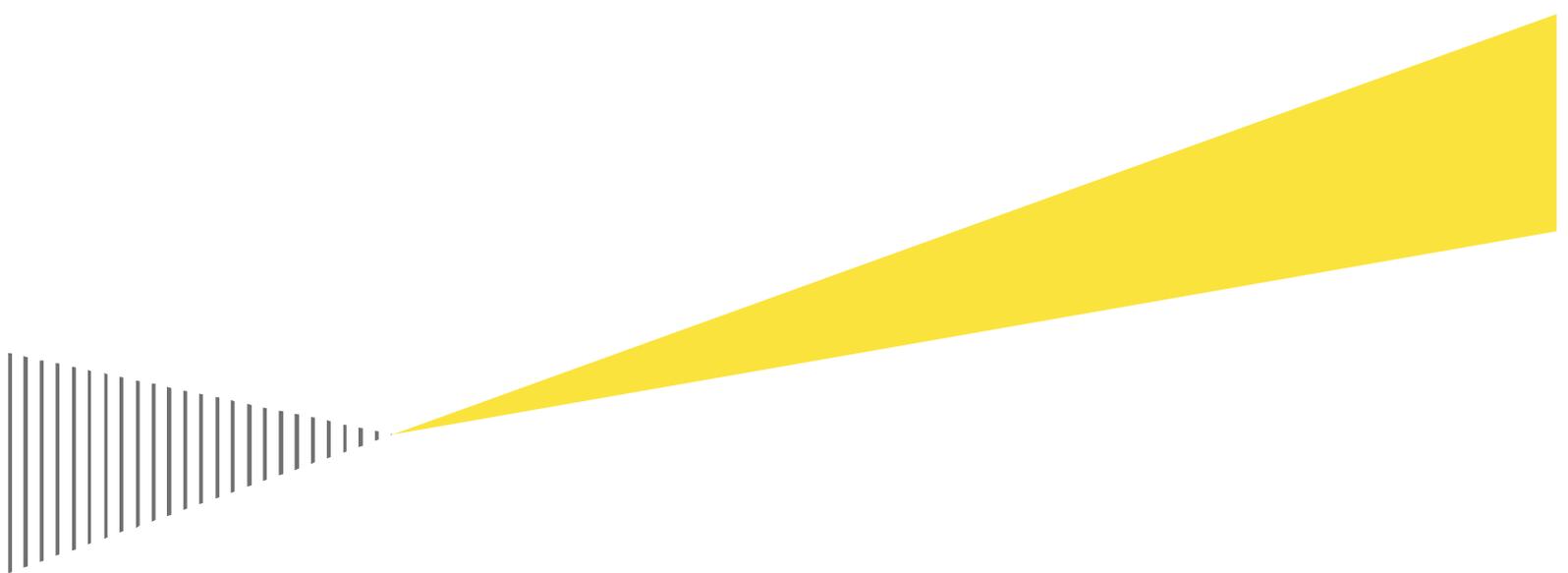
# Rochford District Council

Year ending 31 March 2016

Audit Plan

12 February 2016

Ernst & Young LLP



The Audit Committee  
Rochford District Council  
Council Offices  
South Street  
Rochford  
Essex  
SS4 1BW

12 February 2016

Dear Members

## **Audit Plan**

We are pleased to attach our Audit Plan which sets out how we intend to carry out our responsibilities as auditor.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit Committee with a basis to review our proposed audit approach and scope for the 2015/16 audit in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements. It is also to ensure that our audit is aligned with the Audit committee's service expectations.

2015/16 will be our first year as your external auditor. This Plan therefore summarises our preliminary assessment of the key issues which drive the development of an effective audit for the Council, and outlines our planned audit strategy in response to those risks. Where appropriate, we will present you with updates to the Audit Plan at a subsequent meeting when all transitional arrangements have been completed, and our interim planning work has been performed.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you at 8 March 2016 Audit Committee and to understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Suter  
Audit Director  
For and behalf of Ernst & Young LLP  
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In April 2015 Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued ‘Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies 2015-16’. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the [PSAA website \(www.psa.co.uk\)](http://www.psa.co.uk)

The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The ‘Terms of Appointment from 1 April 2015’ issued by PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Audit Plan is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities. It is addressed to the Audit Committee, and is prepared for the sole use of the audited body. We, as appointed auditor, take no responsibility to any third party.

Our Complaints Procedure – If at any time you would like to discuss with us how our service to you could be improved, or if you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving, you may take the issue up with your usual partner or director contact. If you prefer an alternative route, please contact Steve Varley, our Managing Partner, 1 More London Place, London SE1 2AF. We undertake to look into any complaint carefully and promptly and to do all we can to explain the position to you. Should you remain dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, you may of course take matters up with our professional institute. We can provide further information on how you may contact our professional institute.

## 1. Overview

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

- ▶ Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of Rochford District Council give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2016 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- ▶ Our conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

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

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

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

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

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

### **Changes in our audit scope**

We have not made any changes to the scope of our audit, in comparison to that of our predecessor auditors BDO.

## 2. Financial statement risks

We outline below our current assessment of the financial statement risks facing the Council, identified through our knowledge of the Council's operations and discussion to date with those charged with governance and officers.

At our meeting, we will seek to validate these with you.

Significant risks (including fraud risks)	Our audit approach
<p><b>Risk of fraud in revenue recognition</b></p> <p>Under ISA240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10, issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.</p> <p>For local authorities the potential for the incorrect classification of revenue spend as capital is a particular area where there is a risk of fraud in revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Our approach will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reviewing and testing revenue and expenditure recognition policies;</li> <li>▶ Reviewing and discussing with management any accounting estimates on revenue or expenditure recognition for evidence of bias;</li> <li>▶ Developing a testing strategy to test material revenue and expenditure streams;</li> <li>▶ Reviewing and testing revenue cut-off at the period end date; and</li> <li>▶ Reviewing capital expenditure on property, plant and equipment to ensure it meets the relevant accounting requirements to be capitalised.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Risk of management override</b></p> <p>As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.</p>	<p>Our approach will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements;</li> <li>▶ Reviewing accounting estimates for evidence of management bias; and</li> <li>▶ Evaluating the business rationale for significant unusual transactions.</li> </ul>

### 2.1 Responsibilities in respect of fraud and error

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that management has the primary responsibility to prevent and detect fraud. It is important that management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, has a culture of ethical behaviour and a strong control environment that both deters and prevents fraud.

Our responsibility is to plan and perform audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free of material misstatements whether caused by error or fraud. As auditors, we approach each engagement with a questioning mind that accepts the possibility that a material misstatement due to fraud could occur, and design the appropriate procedures to consider such risk.

Based on the requirements of auditing standards our approach will focus on:

- ▶ Identifying fraud risks during the planning stages;
- ▶ Enquiry of management about risks of fraud and the controls to address those risks;
- ▶ Understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud;
- ▶ Consideration of the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud;
- ▶ Determining an appropriate strategy to address any identified risks of fraud, and,
- ▶ Performing mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified risks.

### 3. Value for money risks

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place ‘proper arrangements’ to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources.

For 2015-16 this is based on the overall evaluation criterion:

*“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”*

Proper arrangements are defined by statutory guidance issued by the National Audit Office. They comprise your arrangements to:

- Take informed decisions;
- Deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and
- Work with partners and other third parties.

In considering your proper arrangements, we will draw on the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for local government to ensure that our assessment is made against a framework that you are already required to have in place and to report on through documents such as your annual governance statement.

We are only required to determine whether there are any risks that we consider significant, which the Code of Audit Practice which defines as:

*“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”*

Our risk assessment supports the planning of sufficient work to enable us to deliver a safe conclusion on arrangements to secure value for money and enables us to determine the nature and extent of further work that may be required. If we do not identify any significant risks there is no requirement to carry out further work.

Our risk assessment has therefore considered both the potential financial impact of the issues we have identified, and also the likelihood that the issue will be of interest to local taxpayers, the Government and other stakeholders. This has resulted in the following significant VFM risk which we view as relevant to our value for money conclusion

#### Significant value for money risks

#### Our audit approach

Significant value for money risks	Our audit approach
Sustainable resource deployment: Achievement of savings needed over the medium term	
<p>The Council faces significant financial challenges over the next three to four years, with a forecasted underlying budget gap of £2.8m by 2020-21.</p> <p>Given the scale of the savings needed, there is a risk that savings plans to bridge this gap are not robust and/or achievable.</p>	<p>Our approach will continue to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The robustness of any assumptions used in medium term planning.</li> <li>▶ The Council’s approach to prioritising resources whilst maintaining services.</li> <li>▶ The savings plans and concepts in place, and assessing the likelihood of whether these can provide the Council with the required savings/efficiencies over the medium term.</li> </ul>

We will keep our risk assessment under review throughout our audit, and communicate to the Audit Committee any revisions and any additional local risk-based work we may need to undertake as a result.

## 4. Our audit process and strategy

### 4.1 Objective and scope of our audit

Under the Code of Audit Practice our principal objectives are to review and report on the Council's:

- ▶ Financial statements; and
- ▶ Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources to the extent required by the relevant legislation and the requirements of the Code.

We issue an audit report that covers:

#### 1. Financial statement audit

Our objective is to form an opinion on the financial statements under International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you by exception in respect of your governance statement and other accompanying material as required, in accordance with relevant guidance prepared by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Alongside our audit report, we also review and report to the NAO on the Whole of Government Accounts return to the extent and in the form they require;

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

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources.

### 4.2 Audit process overview

Our intention is to carry out a fully substantive audit in 2014/15 as we believe this to be the most efficient audit approach. Although we are therefore not intending to rely on individual system controls in 2015/16, the overarching control arrangements form part of our assessment of your overall control environment and will form part of the evidence for your Annual Governance Statement. We will review the work completed by internal audit as part of this element of our work.

Our audit involves:

- ▶ Walking through the material financial systems, and assessing the design and implementation of key internal controls;
- ▶ Reviewing internal audit plans and the results of work undertaken; and
- ▶ Reliance on the work of experts in relation to areas such as pensions and valuations.

#### Processes

Our initial assessment of the key processes has identified the following material systems which we will document and walkthrough the key controls.

- General ledger
- Accounts receivable;

- Accounts payable;
- Payroll;
- Council tax;
- National non-domestic rates;
- Housing benefits;
- Cash; and
- Property, plant and equipment;

However, our intention is to carry out a fully substantive audit in 2015/16 rather than rely on the operation of controls as we believe this is the most efficient approach.

### **Analytics**

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

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

### **Internal audit**

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

### **Use of specialists**

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

Area	Specialists
Pensions	EY pensions team and PWC; Rochford District Council's actuary: Hymans Robertson.
Property, Plant and Equipment	Rochford District Council's: Wilks, Head and Eve:

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

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

- ▶ Analyse source data and make inquiries as to the procedures used by the expert to establish whether the source data is relevant and reliable;

- ▶ Assess the reasonableness of the assumptions and methods used;
- ▶ Consider the appropriateness of the timing of when the specialist carried out the work; and
- ▶ Assess whether the substance of the specialist's findings are properly reflected in the financial statements.

### 4.3 **Mandatory audit procedures required by auditing standards and the Code**

As well as the financial statement risks (section two) and value for money risks (section three), we must perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards, the Code and other regulations. We outline below the procedures we will undertake during the course of our audit.

#### **Procedures required by standards**

- ▶ Addressing the risk of fraud and error;
- ▶ Significant disclosures included in the financial statements;
- ▶ Entity-wide controls;
- ▶ Reading other information contained in the financial statements and reporting whether it is inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements;
- ▶ Auditor independence.

#### **Procedures required by the Code**

- ▶ Reviewing, and reporting on as appropriate, other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement; and
- ▶ Reviewing and reporting on the Whole of Government Accounts return, in line with the instructions issued by the NAO.

Finally, we are also required to discharge our statutory duties and responsibilities as established by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

### 4.4 **Materiality**

For the purposes of determining whether the financial statements are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation requires professional judgement and so takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implied in the definition.

We have determined that overall materiality for the financial statements of the Council is £0.7 based on 2% of gross expenditure. We will communicate uncorrected audit misstatements greater than £25,000 to you.

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

## 4.5 Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. PSAA has published a scale fee for all relevant bodies. This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the NAO Code. The indicative fee scale for the audit of Rochford District Council is £47,657.

## 4.6 Your audit team

The engagement team is led by Kevin Suter, Executive Director, who has significant experience of the local government sector. Kevin is supported by Chris Hewitt, Manager, who is responsible for the day-to-day direction of audit work and is the key point of contact for the Section 151 Officer.

## 4.7 Timetable of communication, deliverables and insights

We have set out below a timetable showing the key stages of the audit, including the value for money work and the Whole of Government Accounts. The timetable includes the deliverables we have agreed to provide to the Council through the Audit Committee's cycle in 2015/16. These dates are determined to ensure our alignment with PSAA's rolling calendar of deadlines.

From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the Audit Committee and we will discuss them with the Chair as appropriate.

Following the conclusion of our audit we will prepare an Annual Audit Letter to communicate the key issues arising from our work to the Council and external stakeholders, including members of the public.

<b>Audit phase</b>	<b>Timetable</b>	<b>Audit Committee timetable</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
High level planning	April 2015	June 2015	Audit Fee Letter
Risk assessment and setting of scopes	January – March 2016	March 2016	Audit Plan
Testing routine processes and controls	February - March 2016	June 2016	Interim results report (if appropriate)
Completion of audit	June – September 2016	September 2016	Report to those charged with governance via the Audit Results Report Audit report (including our opinion on the financial statements and, overall value for money conclusion). Audit completion certificate Reporting to the NAO on the Whole of Government Accounts return.
Conclusion of reporting	October 2016	December 2016	Annual Audit Letter

In addition to the above formal reporting and deliverables we will seek to provide practical business insights and updates on regulatory matters.

## 5. Independence

### 5.1 Introduction

The APB Ethical Standards and ISA (UK and Ireland) 260 ‘Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance’, requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear on our independence and objectivity. The Ethical Standards, as revised in December 2010, require that we do this formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications	
Planning stage	Final stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by EY including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;</li> <li>▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality Review;</li> <li>▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;</li> <li>▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that bear on our objectivity and independence, the threats to our independence that these create, any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;</li> <li>▶ Details of non-audit services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;</li> <li>▶ Written confirmation that we are independent;</li> <li>▶ Details of any inconsistencies between APB Ethical Standards, the PSAA Terms of Appointment and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy; and</li> <li>▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.</li> </ul>

During the course of the audit we must also communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of our safeguards, for example when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We also provide information on any contingent fee arrangements, the amounts of any future contracted services, and details of any written proposal to provide non-audit services;

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

### 5.2 Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including any principal threats. However we have adopted the safeguards below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective.

#### ***Self-interest threats***

A self-interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in your entity. Examples include where we have an investment in your entity; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with the Council.

At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake permissible non-audit services, and we will comply with the policies that the Council has approved and that are in compliance with PSAA Terms of Appointment.

At the time of writing, the Council has not commissioned any non-audit services from EY for 2015/16.

Therefore, no additional safeguards are required.

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

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

#### ***Self-review threats***

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

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

#### ***Management threats***

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

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

#### ***Other threats***

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

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

#### ***Overall Assessment***

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

### **5.3 Other required communications**

EY has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report, which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this report is for the year ended June 2015 and can be found here:

<http://www.ey.com/UK/en/About-us/EY-UK-Transparency-Report-2015>

## Appendix A Fees

A breakdown of our agreed fee is shown below.

	Planned Fee 2015/16 £	Scale fee 2015/16 £	Outturn fee 2014/15 (BDO) £	Explanation
Opinion Audit and VFM Conclusion	47,657	47,657	63,543	The reduction of 25% in audit fees between 2014/15 and 2015/16 represents the outcome of the Audit Commission's tendering exercise in March 2014.
<b>Total Audit Fee – Code work</b>	47,657	47,657	78,277	
Certification of claims and returns	8,184**	8,184**	11,360*	Our fee for the certification of grant claims is based on the indicative scale fee set by the PSAA
Non-audit work	0	0	0	

*All fees exclude VAT.*

\* BDO has yet to finalise its fee for the certification of the housing benefit grant claim for 2014/15. Any fee scale fee variation increase is still subject to approval by the PSAA.

\*\* The indicative fee scale for the certification of Rochford District Council's housing benefit claim is £8,184. This fee scale assumes that the previous arrangements with BDO, where Internal Audit complete the initial sample testing of cases and the workbooks, continue.

The agreed fee presented above is based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ We can rely on the work of internal audit as planned;
- ▶ Our accounts opinion and value for money conclusion being unqualified;
- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Council; and
- ▶ The Council has an effective control environment.

If any of the above assumptions prove to be unfounded, we will seek a variation to the agreed fee. This will be discussed with the Section 151 Officer in advance.

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

## Appendix B UK required communications with those charged with governance

There are certain communications that we must provide to the Audit Committee. These are detailed here:

Required communication	Reference
<p><b>Planning and audit approach</b> Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit including any limitations.</p>	▶ Audit Plan
<p><b>Significant findings from the audit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures</li> <li>▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit</li> <li>▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management</li> <li>▶ Written representations that we are seeking</li> <li>▶ Expected modifications to the audit report</li> <li>▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process</li> </ul>	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p><b>Misstatements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion</li> <li>▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods</li> <li>▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected</li> <li>▶ In writing, corrected misstatements that are significant</li> </ul>	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p><b>Fraud</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Enquiries of the Audit Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity</li> <li>▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist</li> <li>▶ A discussion of any other matters related to fraud</li> </ul>	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p><b>Related parties</b> Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Non-disclosure by management</li> <li>▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions</li> <li>▶ Disagreement over disclosures</li> <li>▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations</li> <li>▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity</li> </ul>	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p><b>External confirmations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations</li> <li>▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures</li> </ul>	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p><b>Consideration of laws and regulations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Audit findings regarding non-compliance where the non-compliance is material and believed to be intentional. This communication is subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off</li> <li>▶ Enquiry of the Audit Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Audit Committee may be aware of</li> </ul>	▶ Report to those charged with governance

Required communication	Reference
<p><b>Independence</b></p> <p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's objectivity and independence</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement director's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The principal threats</li> <li>▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness</li> <li>▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards</li> <li>▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Audit Plan</li> <li>▶ Report to those charged with governance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Going concern</b></p> <p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty</li> <li>▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements</li> <li>▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Report to those charged with governance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Report to those charged with governance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fee Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Breakdown of fee information at the agreement of the initial audit plan</li> <li>▶ Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Audit Plan</li> <li>▶ Report to those charged with governance</li> <li>▶ Annual Audit Letter if considered necessary</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opening Balances (initial audits)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Findings and issues regarding the opening balance of initial audits</li> </ul>	<p>Report to those charged with governance</p>
<p><b>Certification work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Summary of certification work undertaken</li> </ul>	<p>Annual Report to those charged with governance summarising grant certification, and Annual Audit Letter if considered necessary</p>

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# **Value for Money**

Code of Audit Practice 2015

Rochford District Council

March 2016



Building a better  
working world

- 
- ▶ Requirement of Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 Section 21(1)
  - ▶ NAO Code of Audit Practice 2015 implies ‘reasonable assurance’
    - ▶ Need to plan and conduct risk assessment
    - ▶ Undertake sufficient work against any identified ‘significant’ risks

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***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***

Replaces previous two criteria for audited bodies:

1. securing financial resilience; and
2. challenging how they secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness

# Sub-criteria and proper arrangements

Sub-Criteria	Proper Arrangements
<b>Informed decision making</b>	Acting in the public interest, through demonstrating and applying the principles and values of sound governance
	Understanding and using appropriate and reliable financial 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
<b>Sustainable resource deployment</b>	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
<b>Working with partners and other third parties</b>	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

- ▶ Risk that the auditor will reach an incorrect conclusion on the arrangements (*as opposed to the risk that arrangements are inadequate*)
- ▶ Performed to determine nature and extent of any further work
- ▶ Undertaken only on significant risks
  - ▶ *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*

- ▶ Documented from sources such as:
  - ▶ Cumulative knowledge of the client (brought forward)
  - ▶ Findings from other areas of the audit
  - ▶ Findings of other inspectorates/regulatory bodies
  - ▶ IA reports
  - ▶ AGS / Annual Report
  - ▶ Risk registers
  - ▶ Board/Committee minutes
  - ▶ Key financial information and reports
  - ▶ Wider knowledge of the sector and developments.
  - ▶ NAO illustrative risks

- ▶ **Organisational change and transformation:**
  - ▶ reorganisation/merger; major outsourcing; significant capital projects; debt restructuring
  
- ▶ **Significant funding gaps in financial planning:**
  - ▶ significance of budget gaps will depend both on the size of the funding gap, and at what point it emerges in the body's medium-term financial plans. Where the body has a significant budget gap in terms of funding, and especially where a significant level of as yet unidentified savings are required to deliver a balanced budget, the auditor should consider the issue as a significant risk.

- ▶ **Legislative/policy changes:**
  - ▶ taking on a significant new function as a result of changes in legislation or national policy decisions
  
- ▶ **Repeated financial difficulties, or persistently poor performance:**
  - ▶ a history of financial difficulty, or persistently poor performance in one or more key service areas with little sign of securing any improvements,
  
- ▶ **Other sources:**
  - ▶ an independent inspectorate or other review agency identifies significant concerns about the quality of services provided.

- ▶ Proportionate
- ▶ To a level sufficient to be clear on the conclusion, and reduce the initial audit risk

- 
- ▶ Audit Plan – risk assessment
  - ▶ ISA260 – completion of fieldwork, results of work and proposed conclusion
  - ▶ Auditor's report – conclusion
  - ▶ Annual Audit Letter –key findings and conclusion
  - ▶ Also may need to consider wider reporting arrangements

---

## Adverse

- ▶ Weakness in arrangements:
  - ▶ So significant in impact; or
  - ▶ So numerous in aspects of proper arrangements affected

## Except for

- ▶ Weaknesses:
  - ▶ Sufficiently significant to report
  - ▶ Limited to specific issue or area

**Reporting:** Concise summary of the information leading to that conclusion

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## General briefing for all sub-sectors

### Contains:

- ▶ General background
- ▶ Sector financial positions
- ▶ National changes (developments)
- ▶ (annual) Governance Reporting framework, mapped to the relevant VFM sub-criteria
- ▶ Other resources

Item	Location
Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/</a>
NAO	<a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/">http://www.nao.org.uk/</a>
Code of Audit Practice	<a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2015/03/Final-Code-of-Audit-Practice.pdf">http://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2015/03/Final-Code-of-Audit-Practice.pdf</a>
Guidance and information for auditors	<a href="https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/">https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/</a>

# Local government audit committee briefing

## Contents at a glance

### Government and economic news

### Accounting, auditing and governance

### Regulation news

### Key questions for the audit committee

### Find out more

This sector briefing is one of the ways that we see as supporting you and your organisation in an environment that is constantly changing and evolving.

It covers issues which may have an impact on your organisation, the local government sector and the audits that we undertake.

The public sector audit specialists in EY's national Government and Public Sector (GPS) team have extensive public sector knowledge which is supported by the wider expertise across EY's UK and international business. This briefing reflects this, bringing together not only

technical issues relevant to the local government sector but wider matters of potential interest to you and your organisation.

Links to where you can find out more on any of the articles featured can be found at the end of the briefing, as well as some examples of areas where EY can provide support to Local Authorities.

We hope that you find the briefing informative and should this raise any issues that you would like to discuss further please do contact your local engagement team.



## Government and economic news

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### EY Item Club forecast

In its latest quarterly forecast (Winter) the EY Item Club highlights that what it terms the UK consumer's "holiday" from inflation and austerity in 2015 is expected to continue well into 2016, aided by the sharp fall in oil and other commodity prices, and the Chancellor's change of heart on working tax credits.

Whilst the global situation is clearly fragile, the UK is seen to be well placed to ride out the storms. Growth is expected to increase from the revised 2.2% in 2015 to 2.6% this year, being supported by low inflation and interest rates. The CPI is forecast to increase by just 0.7% and they do not expect the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee to increase bank rate until late in the year.

Looking further forward, the forecast is for inflation and austerity to return, with GDP growth of 2.3% in 2017 and 2.2% in 2018 and consumer spending growth dropping from 2.8% in 2016 of 2.1% in 2017 and 1.7% in 2018. Highlighted as impacting on this are the increasing taxes and levies on consumers and companies, and the roll-out of Universal Credit (which will claw back this Autumn's concessions to low earners). Inflation is expected to increase to 1.8% by 2018, remaining below the MPC target until 2019.

Continuing uncertainty over the EU Referendum could potentially hit business investment this year, as businesses wait to see the result, but momentum in the UK and other economies is seen as supporting capital spending this year.

### Local Government Devolution

Towards the end of 2015, Birmingham and Liverpool each agreed devolution deals with Treasury which gives them control over infrastructure investment, transport and skills. This brings the total of devolution deals to 6:

- ▶ Birmingham
- ▶ Liverpool
- ▶ Greater Manchester
- ▶ Sheffield
- ▶ North East
- ▶ Tees Valley

Each area will need to elect a metro mayor, with elections expected to take place in 2017.

For Birmingham, £1.2bn of government investment is anticipated over the next 30 years, and for Liverpool the expectation is £30mn per year over the next three decades.

Read the government announcements in full at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-devolution-deal-to-power-the-midlands-engine> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/liverpool-devolution-deal-boosts-the-northern-powerhouse>.

## Government and economic news

### Spending Review 2015

Some headlines from the Spending Review 2015 include:

- ▶ The intention to be running a £10bn surplus by 2019/20.
- ▶ Tax credit taper rates and thresholds will remain unchanged.
- ▶ Council tax increases of 2% to support social care will be permitted. Local Police and Crime Commissioners will have the power to increase their share of council tax by 2% from April 2016.
- ▶ From 2020, local government will retain 100% of business rates collected. The system of top ups and tariffs redistributing revenues between local authorities will be retained. The uniform rate will be abolished; allowing local areas to cut business rates if they choose to do so in order to win new jobs and generate wealth.
- ▶ Police and schools funding will be protected in line with inflation.

Read more at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/autumn-statement-and-spending-review-2015>

The Government has also consulted on the 2016-17 settlement. Further details available at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486730/Provisional\\_settlement\\_consultation\\_document.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486730/Provisional_settlement_consultation_document.pdf).

### Consultation: New Homes Bonus

In 2011 the New Homes Bonus was introduced to incentivise local authorities to encourage housing growth in their areas. Since 2011, £3.4bn has been allocated to support the delivery of 700,000 new homes and the return of 100,000 long term empty homes to use.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has released a consultation which seeks views on potential changes to the New Homes Bonus. The changes are intended to “better reflect authorities’ delivery of new housing”. Other proposed changes include introducing a reduction to the number of years in which current and future payments are made, from six years to four years.

See full details of the consultation as well as methods for responding at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-homes-bonus-sharpening-the-incentive-technical-consultation>

The deadline for response is 10th March 2016.



## Government and economic news

### Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing

During November 2015, statistics for 2014-15 on revenue expenditure and financing with local government were released by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Some highlights include:

Total revenue expenditure by local authorities in England reduced by 0.5% in 2014-15, from £96.4bn in 2013-14 to £95.9bn, however, excluding spend on Education (30.7% of total net current expenditure) there was an increase of 1.5% from £60.5bn in 2013-14 to £61.5bn.

Net current expenditure on education saw the largest decrease, which was largely driven by schools achieving academy status and therefore receiving central expenditure, and by the reclassification of some services to Children and Families Social Care services (which saw a £1.2bn increase for this reason).

Local Authorities added £0.9bn to reserves in 2014-15 as compared to £2.4bn in 2013-14. This takes total reserves to £22.5bn and means that the last 15 years has seen a significant increase in the amount held by local authorities in non-ringfenced reserves. Communities Secretary Greg Clark has noted this increase and said:

“With local government accounting for a quarter of all public spending, it is right that they are called on to play their part in dealing with the deficit.

Today’s figures show how they are well placed to do so, with local authorities holding £22.5bn held in non-ringfenced reserves – up 170% in real terms over the last 15 years.

As we continue to secure our country’s economic future and cut the deficit, now is the time to make efficient use of their assets and resources to provide the services local people want to see.”

Public Finance has published an article available at <http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2015/11/mounting-reserves-leave-councils-well-placed-make-cuts-says-clark>, and the full publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-in-england-2014-to-2015-final-outturn>

### Response to flooding

The Bellwin scheme, which compensates eligible authorities for exceptional costs incurred in incidents like flooding, has been opened for councils affected by floods resulting from storms Desmond and Eva.

Authorities are eligible for costs under the scheme when they have spent more than 0.2% of their calculated annual revenue budgets on works.

## Government and economic news

Bellwin allows eligible authorities to apply to have 100% of their costs above threshold reimbursed by the government.

Eligible authorities include:

- ▶ Councils
- ▶ Policing bodies
- ▶ Fire and rescue authorities
- ▶ National Park authorities

For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/north-west-england-floods-2015-government-response>.

### Council Tax support

A review into the effectiveness of Council Tax support schemes across the country has been initiated, led by Member of Parliament, Eric Ollerenshaw, OBE.

Council Tax Benefit was reformed from 2013-14 to give councils the power to design their own schemes and align them to local needs. This review is intended to examine the implementation of this change and to consider whether or not this support should be part of the Universal Credit payments in the future.

Further details of the review are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/launch-of-review-into-council-tax-support>.

### Public sector exit payment recovery regulations

The government is consulting on draft regulations that will give effect to the powers enacted in the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015. These regulations allow for the recovery of exit payments following the return of a high earner to the public sector within a year of their initial departure.

Changes made to the policy since the previous consultation include:

- ▶ The minimum earnings threshold for individuals subject to the recovery provisions has been lowered from £100,000 to £80,000
- ▶ The policy has been extended to include qualifying returns to any part of the public sector, rather than only to the same part of the public sector
- ▶ Introduction of a tapered recovery period for 12 months from the exit date
- ▶ Recovery will now include employer funded pension 'top up' payments made under the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Public sector organisations that are in scope and those that are proposed to be exempt are included in the draft regulations.

Following this consultation, the regulations will go through Parliamentary scrutiny, and the intention is that the policy will take effect from April 2016.

Read more at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-calls-time-on-public-sector-parachute-payments-for-boomerang-bosses>.



## Accounting, auditing and governance

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### Faster Close update

Since our think piece 'accelerating your financial close arrangements' in the summer – we have worked together with our clients to successfully deliver another round of financial statements audits.

We have seen again a number of our clients achieve the earlier 31 July deadline – three years ahead of schedule. Nationally, 5% of opinions were issued by 31 July for 2014-15.

At other clients, we have seen a shortening of the actual audit window as both preparers and auditors refine the operational timetable in readiness for 2017-18 audits.

The think piece set out some areas where preparers can hone their closedown plans and work with their auditors in the run up to the revised timetable. Discussions with clients around the country are showing encouraging signs that finance teams are already grasping the issue and working on solutions to enable them to prepare and submit draft financial statements and supporting working papers to the auditor by 31 May. Twenty-one percent of our clients have committed to this earlier target for the 2015-16 audits.

On our side, as a firm, we are reviewing how we can streamline our audit approach, to provide maximum ability to undertake early substantive testing across a Month 8-10 window, thereby reducing some pressure in the key June – July audit window. This may not work in all cases, because of the budget setting process, so other ways of streamlining the audit approach are also being developed.

In addition, we are addressing the resourcing challenge that this presents to audit firms, with a significant recruitment campaign to enable us to continue to deliver exceptional client service across the entire sector. This will require us to phase our audits, at both an interim and final audit stage to allow us greater flexibility in resource deployment and audit clients should be prepared to have bigger audit teams on site for shorter periods of time, as running all audits concurrently is not likely to be possible.

A key issue arising from our recent discussions is dealing with the governance processes at councils for receiving the auditor's report and approving the accounts. There are a wide range of approval processes in place at councils as a result of custom and practice over the years, and some are more streamlined than others.

Councils will need to review their governance processes for approving the accounts with a view to making it as simple as possible to ensure the maximum amount of the nine week window for audit can be used for audit procedures. Under the Account and Audit Regulations 2015, it is only the responsibility of the committee 'charged with governance' to approve the financial statements ahead of final certification by the s151 officer. Adding additional layers of approval through to Cabinet or Full Council slows down the governance process and potentially adds to the audit burden.

For 2014-15 audits, 8% of our clients had Audit Committee meetings scheduled before September for approval of the financial statements. For 2015-16, in several instances Audit Committee timetables have not yet been finalised, however, currently 7% of our client base has already confirmed that their Audit Committee timetable would enable accounts authorisation before September, with 4% scheduled before 31 July 2016.

## Accounting, auditing and governance

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An effective Audit Committee is one which can appropriately scrutinise the financial statements and the auditor's results report prepared under International Standard on Auditing (UK&I) 260, and challenge officers about accounting policies and estimates in order to be able to approve the financial statements on behalf of the council.

Given the lead time for amending corporate governance processes, officers should review the approval arrangements, and schemes of delegation from Full Council, ensuring that the Audit Committee operates as effectively as possible and to the remit as set out by CIPFA in its guidance 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2013 edition)'.

We are encouraged by the response of our clients to this challenge and the acceptance that it is a joint responsibility to achieve the faster close, and we will continue to work with you as we both prepare for the advanced deadlines.

For further information, please speak to a member of your engagement team.

### Value for Money guidance

The Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 Section 20(1) requires that: 'In auditing the accounts of a relevant authority other than a health service body, a local auditor must, by examination of the accounts and otherwise, be satisfied ... (c) that the authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources'.

The Act is implemented through the National Audit Office's 2015 Audit Code of Practice (the Code), which sets out what local auditors are required to do to fulfil their statutory responsibilities under the Act.

Paragraph 3.14 sets out that 'the auditor's work should be designed to provide the auditor with sufficient assurance to enable them to report as appropriate to audited bodies other than health service bodies, providing a conclusion that in all significant respects, the audited body has (or has not) put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period'.

To support the Code, the NAO issues guidance to auditors. This is undertaken by preparing and publishing Auditor Guidance Notes (AGNs) which are publically available on its website. See <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

AGN 03 – Auditors' work on Value for Money Arrangements was published in November 2015 following a consultation period. It confirms the requirement is for auditors to issue a conclusion in respect of the single overall criterion that:

**"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."**

To assist auditors the NAO provide three sub-criteria that are intended to guide auditors in reaching their overall judgement:

- ▶ Informed decision making
- ▶ Sustainable resource deployment
- ▶ Working with partners and other third parties

However, these are not separate and auditors are not required to reach a judgement against each one.

Underpinning these sub-criteria are the proper arrangements,



## Accounting, auditing and governance

which are aligned to the scope of arrangements that are already required to be put in place and reported on through documents such as the annual governance statement.

Auditors are required to undertake a risk assessment to identify any significant risks that, in the auditor's judgement, have the potential to cause the auditor to reach an inappropriate conclusion on the audited body's arrangements.

The Code 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."**

Where such a significant risk is identified, further audit work will be undertaken based on the auditor's professional judgement. If the auditor does not identify any significant risks, there is no requirement to carry out further work.

Full information on all of the above can be found within AGN 03. See <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

### New arrangements for the exercise of public rights

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (the Regulations) set out new arrangements for the exercise of public rights from 2015-16 onwards. In respect of principal bodies, paragraph 9(1) requires the responsible financial officer to commence the period for the exercise of public rights and to notify the local auditor of the date on which that period was commenced. This is a change to previous arrangements where the local auditor notified the audited body of the appointed date on or after which local government electors could exercise their rights.

Paragraph 9(2) is clear that the final approval of the statement of accounts by the authority prior to publication cannot take place until after the conclusion of the period for the exercise of public rights. For 2015-16, the thirty working day period for the exercise of public rights must include the first ten working days of July, this means that authorities will not be able to approve their audited accounts or publish before 15 July 2016.

Paragraph 14(1) states that any rights of objection, inspection and questioning of the local auditor conferred by sections 26 and 27 of the Act may only be exercised within a single period of 30 working days. In effect this paragraph brings the period in which an elector can question the auditor into the inspection period, rather than immediately following the inspection period as per the previous regulations. As a result of this, auditors are unable to issue their audit reports until the 30 day period has been concluded.

Read the regulations in full at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/234/regulation/2/made>.

### Consultation: HRA accounting

The Department for Communities and Local Government is consulting on directions to replace the Housing Revenue Account (Accounting Practices) Directions 2011, which will cease to have effect in relation to Housing Revenue Accounts of local housing authorities in England from 1 April 2016. DCLG describes the replacement directions as essentially technical changes in order to bring the accounting requirements in line with proper practices under international accounting standards. They specify information to be disclosed in the notes to the HRA.

See full details of the draft direction at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-revenue-account-accounting-practices-directions-2015>



## Regulation news

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### Report on the results of auditors' work 2014-15

Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) have published their first report showing the results of auditors' work for 2014-15 covering 509 principal bodies and 9,755 small bodies.

The report includes information on timeliness of reporting, as well as the outcomes of those reports.

- ▶ Auditors were able to issue an early opinion (by 31st July 2015) for 5% of principal bodies.
- ▶ The auditor was unable to issue an opinion by the statutory deadline of 30th September at 15 bodies (3%), compared to 2% in 2013-14.
- ▶ Consistent with 2013-14, no non-standard opinions were issued.
- ▶ 20 non-standard value for money opinions were issued, including 1 adverse conclusion, 18 except-for conclusions, and one report on matters arising.
- ▶ Ten value for money conclusions were outstanding at the time of publishing the report.

Read the report in full at:

<http://www.psaa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/reports-on-the-results-of-auditors-work/>



## Key questions for the audit committee

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### **What questions should the Audit Committee ask itself?**

Have we considered our responses to the key government consultations that affect us, including New Homes Bonus and HRA Accounting Directions?

Have we formulated a response to support the review of Local Council Tax Support Schemes? How effective have our council tax support arrangements been since 2013-14?

Are we monitoring our progress against the revised timetable for closing the accounts from 2017-18 onwards?

Have we considered amending governance arrangements to streamline the approval of the financial statements?

## Find out more

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### **Ey Item Club Summer 2015 forecast**

For details of the EY Item Club's latest forecast, see <http://www.ey.com/UK/en/Issues/Business-environment/Financial-markets-and-economy/ITEM---Forecast-headlines-and-projections>

### **Local Government Devolution**

Read the government announcements in full at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-devolution-deal-to-power-the-midlands-engine> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/liverpool-devolution-deal-boosts-the-northern-powerhouse>.

### **Spending Review 2015**

Read more at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/autumn-statement-and-spending-review-2015>

### **Consultation: New Homes Bonus**

See full details of the consultation as well as methods for responding at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-homes-bonus-sharpening-the-incentive-technical-consultation>

### **Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing**

The full publication is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-in-england-2014-to-2015-final-outturn>

### **Response to flooding**

For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/north-west-england-floods-2015-government-response>.

### **Council Tax Support**

Further details of the review are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/launch-of-review-into-council-tax-support>.

### **Public Sector Exit Payment Recovery Regulations**

Read more at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-calls-time-on-public-sector-parachute-payments-for-boomerang-bosses>

### **Faster Close update**

The original publication 'accelerating your financial close arrangements' can be accessed at [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY\\_-\\_Accelerating\\_your\\_financial\\_close\\_arrangements/\\$FILE/EY-accelerating-your-financial-close-arrangements.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_-_Accelerating_your_financial_close_arrangements/$FILE/EY-accelerating-your-financial-close-arrangements.pdf)

For more information, please contact a member of your engagement team.

### **Value for Money guidance**

Full information on the new guidance can be found within AGN 03. See <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

### **New arrangements for the exercise of public rights**

Read the regulations in full at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/234/regulation/2/made>

### **Consultation: HRA accounting**

See full details of the draft direction at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-revenue-account-accounting-practices-directions-2015>

### **Report on the results of auditors' work 2014-15**

Read the report in full at:

<http://www.psa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/reports-on-the-results-of-auditors-work/>

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