

St Albans City and District Council

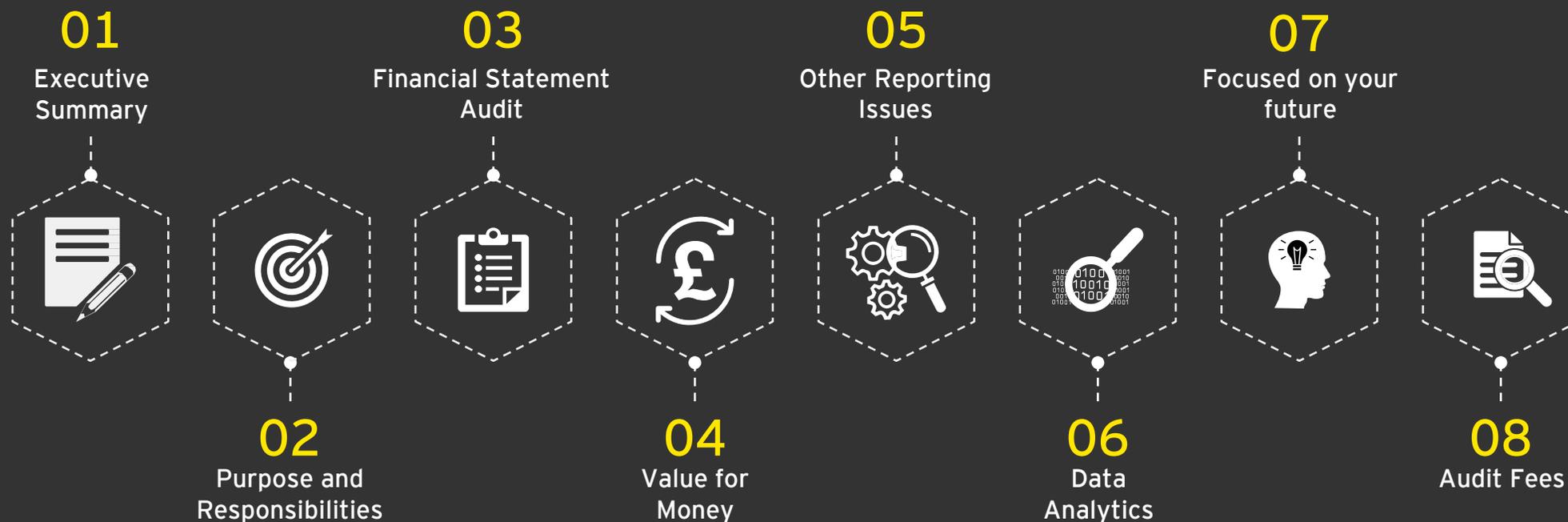
Annual Audit Letter for the year
ended 31 March 2018

August 2018

The EY logo consists of the letters 'EY' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A yellow triangle is positioned above the 'Y', pointing downwards towards the letters.

Building a better
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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) have issued a 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies'. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website (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 (updated 23 February 2017)' 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 Annual Audit Letter is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities. It is addressed to the Members of the audited body, and is prepared for their sole use. 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.



01 Executive Summary



Executive Summary

We are required to issue an annual audit letter to St Albans City and District Council following completion of our audit procedures for the year ended 31 March 2018. Below are the results and conclusions on the significant areas of the audit process.

Area of Work	Conclusion
Opinion on the Council's:	Unqualified - the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2018 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended
▶ Financial statements	
▶ Consistency of other information published with the financial statements	Other information published with the financial statements was consistent with the Annual Accounts
Concluding on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness	We concluded that you have put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources

Area of Work	Conclusion
Reports by exception:	
▶ Consistency of Governance Statement	The Governance Statement was consistent with our understanding of the Council.
▶ Public interest report	We had no matters to report in the public interest.
▶ Written recommendations to the Council, which should be copied to the Secretary of State	We had no matters to report.
▶ Other actions taken in relation to our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014	We had no matters to report.

Area of Work	Conclusion
Reporting to the National Audit Office (NAO) on our review of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return (WGA).	We had no matters to report.



Executive Summary (cont'd)

As a result of the above we have also:

Area of Work	Conclusion
Issued a report to those charged with governance of the Council communicating significant findings resulting from our audit.	Our Audit Results Report was issued on 19 July 2018
Issued a certificate that we have completed the audit in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice.	Our certificate was issued on 31 July 2018

In October 2018 we will also issue a report to those charged with governance of the Council summarising the certification work we have undertaken. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council's staff for their assistance during the course of our work.

Neil Harris
Associate Partner
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP



02 Purpose and Responsibilities

Purpose and Responsibilities

The Purpose of this Letter

The purpose of this annual audit letter is to communicate to Members and external stakeholders, including members of the public, the key issues arising from our work, which we consider should be brought to the attention of the Council.

We have already reported the detailed findings from our audit work in our 2017/18 Audit Results Report to the Audit Committee, representing those charged with governance. We do not repeat those detailed findings in this letter. The matters reported here are the most significant for the Council.

Responsibilities of the Appointed Auditor

Our 2017/18 audit work has been undertaken in accordance with the Audit Plan that we issued on 29 March 2018 and is conducted in accordance with the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland), and other guidance issued by the National Audit Office.

As auditors we are responsible for:

- ▶ Expressing an opinion:
 - ▶ On the 2017/18 financial statements; and
 - ▶ On the consistency of other information published with the financial statements.
- ▶ Forming a conclusion on the arrangements the Council has to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- ▶ Reporting by exception:
 - ▶ If the annual governance statement is misleading or not consistent with our understanding of the Council;
 - ▶ Any significant matters that are in the public interest;
 - ▶ Any written recommendations to the Council, which should be copied to the Secretary of State; and
 - ▶ If we have discharged our duties and responsibilities as established by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Code of Audit Practice.

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO) on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £500mn. Therefore, we did not perform any audit procedures on the return.]

Responsibilities of the Council

The Council is responsible for preparing and publishing its statement of accounts accompanied by an Annual Governance Statement. In the AGS, the Council reports publicly each year on how far it complies with its own code of governance, including how it has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in year, and any changes planned in the coming period.

The Council is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.



03

Financial Statement Audit



Financial Statement Audit

Key Issues

The Council's Statement of Accounts is an important tool for the Council to show how it has used public money and how it can demonstrate its financial management and financial health. We audited the Council's Statement of Accounts in line with the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland), and other guidance issued by the National Audit Office and issued an unqualified audit report on 31 July 2018. Our detailed findings were reported to the July 2018 Audit Committee.

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows:

Significant Risk	Conclusion
<p>Misstatements due to fraud or error</p> <p>The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.</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>For the Council, we identified the potential for the incorrect classification of revenue spend as capital as a particular area where there is a risk of misstatement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquired of management, those charged with governance, Internal Audit and Monitoring Officer about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks. • Understood the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud. • Considered the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud. • Determined an appropriate strategy to address those identified risks of fraud. • Performed mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including testing of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements. • Assessed accounting estimates for evidence of management bias; • Evaluated the business rationale for significant unusual transactions; and • Reviewed capital expenditure on property, plant and equipment to ensure it meets the relevant accounting requirements to be capitalised, should the final sum be material. <p>We have not identified any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override.</p> <p>We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied.</p> <p>We did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the Authority's normal course of business.</p> <p>We did not identify any capital expenditure which had been inappropriately capitalised.</p> <p>Overall, our audit work has not identified any material issues, inappropriate judgements or unusual transactions which indicate that there has been any misreporting of the Authority's financial position or that management has overridden controls.</p>

Financial Statement Audit (cont'd)

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows: (cont'd)

Significant Risk	Conclusion
<p>Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Provision</p> <p>NDR Appeals Provision represents a significant balance in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes. This year specially presented significant risk as there were changes in the source data of these provision, and the implications from the 2017 rateable value listing on the provisioning. Material judgemental inputs and estimation techniques are required to calculate the year-end NDR Appeals Provisions balance held in the balance sheet. As this amount is significant, and the outputs from the expert are subject to estimation, there is a higher inherent risk NDR Appeals Provision may be under/overstated or the associated accounting entries incorrectly posted.</p> <p>ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of experts and assumptions underlying fair value estimates.</p>	<p>Considered the work performed by the Council's experts (Analyse Local), including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work;</p> <p>Sample tested key business rates information used by the experts in performing their calculation and corroborated to observable market data (for example historic data on successful/unsuccessful appeals, long outstanding appeals etc);</p> <p>Assessed the reasonableness of assumptions made by the expert.</p> <p>Assessed and tested the accuracy of source data used by the expert.</p> <p>Tested accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements</p> <p>Our work on the Non Domestic Rate Appeals Provision exercise is complete.</p> <p>Our testing has not identified any material misstatements from inappropriate judgements being applied to the provision estimates.</p> <p>The expert possess the relevant qualifications and experience, and undertook a review of all the Council's NDR appeals.</p> <p>We considered the underlying assumptions made by the expert and concluded that they were reasonable.</p>

Other Key Findings (Inherent risks)	Conclusion
<p>Property, plant and equipment valuations</p> <p>Property, plant and equipment (PPE) represents a significant balance in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Material judgemental inputs and estimation techniques are required to calculate the year-end PPE balances held in the balance sheet.</p> <p>As the Council's asset base is significant, and the outputs from the valuer are subject to estimation, there is a higher inherent risk PPE may be under/overstated or the associated accounting entries incorrectly posted.</p> <p>ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of experts and assumptions underlying fair value estimates.</p>	<p>Considered the work performed by the Council's valuers, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work;</p> <p>Sample tested key asset information used by the valuers in performing their valuation (for example floor plans to support valuations based on price per square metres);</p> <p>Considered the annual cycle of valuations to ensure that assets have been valued within a 5 year rolling programme as required by the Code for PPE and annually for Investment Properties.</p> <p>Reviewed assets not subject to valuation in 2017/18 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated;</p> <p>Considered any changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation; and</p> <p>Tested accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements</p> <p>Our testing has not identified any material misstatements from inappropriate judgements being applied to the property valuation estimates.</p> <p>The expert valuers possess the relevant qualifications and experience, and undertook a review of all of the Authority's assets.</p> <p>We considered the underlying assumptions made by the expert valuer and concluded that they were reasonable.</p>

Financial Statement Audit (cont'd)

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows: (cont'd)

Other Key Findings (Inherent Risks)	Conclusion
<p>Pension liability valuation</p> <p>The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in which it is an admitted body.</p> <p>The Council's current pension fund deficit is a highly material and sensitive item and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet.</p> <p>The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary. As with other councils, accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and due to the nature, volume and size of the transactions we consider this to be a higher inherent risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Liaised with the auditors of the Hertfordshire Pension Fund, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to St Albans City District Council;▶ Assessed the work of the Pension Fund actuary Hymans Robertson including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by NAO for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team; and▶ Reviewed and tested the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to IAS19. <p>We received reports from the Hertfordshire Pension Auditor and the EY actuarial team.</p> <p>The report identified material movements in the Authority's pension assets and related disclosures as a result of significant movements in the asset values between the date of the estimates used by the actuary to produce the IAS19 report and the year end.</p> <p>The Council obtained the revised IAS 19 report and made the relevant changes to the accounts.</p> <p>The accounting entries and disclosures are in line with our expectations and the Code.</p>

Financial Statement Audit (cont'd)

Our application of materiality

When establishing our overall audit strategy, we determined a magnitude of uncorrected misstatements that we judged would be material for the financial statements as a whole.

Item	Thresholds applied
Planning materiality	We determined planning materiality to be £2 mn (2017: £2.2mn), which is 2% of gross expenditure reported in the accounts of £100 million. We consider gross expenditure to be one of the principal considerations for stakeholders in assessing the financial performance of the Council.
Reporting threshold	We agreed with the Audit Committee that we would report to the Committee all audit differences in excess of £0.100 mn (2017: £0111mn)

We also identified the following areas where misstatement at a level lower than our overall materiality level might influence the reader. For these areas we developed an audit strategy specific to these areas. The areas identified and audit strategy applied include:

- ▶ Remuneration disclosures including any severance payments, exit packages and termination benefits: Strategy applied: We reviewed the remuneration disclosures note for completeness and reasonability. Agreed the pay outs to payroll data and agreed the exit packages to agreements.
- ▶ Related party transactions. Strategy applied: Reviewed the related party note for completeness, reviewed the declarations made and tested completeness of such declarations through Company House checks. Compared declarations of transactions made against our significant contracts review.

We evaluate any uncorrected misstatements against both the quantitative measures of materiality discussed above and in light of other relevant qualitative considerations



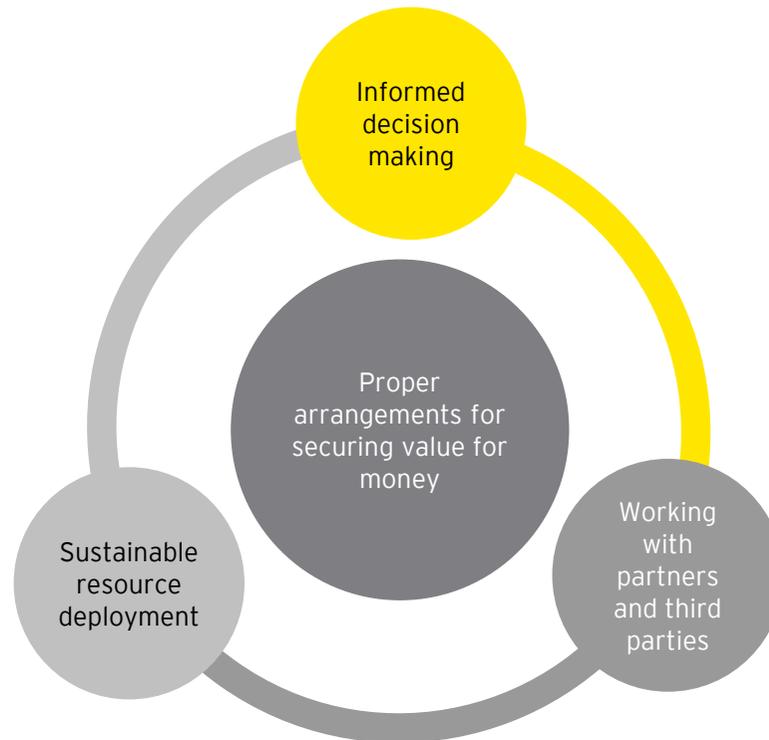
04 Value for Money

£ 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. This is known as our value for money conclusion.

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.



We did not identify any significant risks in relation to these.

We therefore issued an unqualified value for money conclusion on 31 July 2018.



05

Other Reporting Issues



Other Reporting Issues

Whole of Government Accounts

The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £500mn. Therefore, we did not perform any audit procedures on the consolidation pack.

Annual Governance Statement

We are required to consider the completeness of disclosures in the Council's annual governance statement, identify any inconsistencies with the other information of which we are aware from our work, and consider whether it is misleading.

We completed this work and did not identify any areas of concern.

Report in the Public Interest

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether, in the public interest, to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit in order for it to be considered by the Council or brought to the attention of the public.

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

Written Recommendations

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to designate any audit recommendation as one that requires the Council to consider it at a public meeting and to decide what action to take in response.

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a written recommendation.

Other Reporting Issues (cont'd)

Objections Received

We did not receive any objections to the 2017/18 financial statements from members of the public.

Other Powers and Duties

We identified no issues during our audit that required us to use our additional powers under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Independence

We communicated our assessment of independence in our Audit Results Report to the Audit Committee on 26 July 2018. In our professional judgement the firm is independent and the objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff has not been compromised within the meaning regulatory and professional requirements.

Control Themes and Observations

As part of our work, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control identified during our audit.

Our audit did not identify any controls issues to bring to the attention of the Audit Committee.



06 Data Analytics



Use of Data Analytics in the Audit

Analytics Driven Audit

Data analytics

We used our data analysers to enable us to capture entire populations of your financial data. These analysers:

- ▶ Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be the focus of our substantive audit tests; and
- ▶ Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than traditional, random sampling techniques.

In 2017/18, our use of these analysers in the Council's audit included testing journal entries and employee expenses, to identify and focus our testing on those entries we deem to have the highest inherent risk to the audit.

We capture the data through our formal data requests and the data transfer takes place on a secured EY website. These are in line with our EY data protection policies which are designed to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of business and personal information.

Journal Entry Analysis

We obtain downloads of all LG financial ledger transactions posted in the year. We perform completeness analysis over the data, reconciling the sum of transactions to the movement in the trial balances and financial statements to ensure we have captured all data. Our analysers then review and sort transactions, allowing us to more effectively identify and test journals that we consider to be higher risk, as identified in our audit planning report.

Payroll Analysis

We also use our analysers in our payroll testing. We obtain all payroll transactions posted in the year from the payroll system and perform completeness analysis over the data, including reconciling the total amount to the General Ledger trial balance. We then analyse the data against a number of specifically designed procedures. These include analysis of payroll costs by month to identify any variances from established expectations, as well as more detailed transactional interrogation.



07

Focused on your future



Focused on your future

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom introduces the application of new accounting standards in future years. The impact on the Council is summarised in the table below.

Standard	Issue	Impact
IFRS 9 Financial Instruments	<p>Applicable for local authority accounts from the 2018/19 financial year and will change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How financial assets are classified and measured; ▶ How the impairment of financial assets are calculated; and ▶ The disclosure requirements for financial assets. <p>There are transitional arrangements within the standard and the 2018/19 Accounting Code of Practice for Local Authorities has now been issued, providing guidance on the application of IFRS 9. In advance of the Guidance Notes being issued, CIPFA have issued some provisional information providing detail on the impact on local authority accounting of IFRS 9, however the key outstanding issue is whether any accounting statutory overrides will be introduced to mitigate any impact.</p>	<p>Although the Code has now been issued, providing guidance on the application of the standard, along with other provisional information issued by CIPFA on the approach to adopting IFRS 9, until the Guidance Notes are issued and any statutory overrides are confirmed there remains some uncertainty. However, what is clear is that the Council will have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reclassify existing financial instrument assets ▶ Re-measure and recalculate potential impairments of those assets; and ▶ Prepare additional disclosure notes for material items.
IFRS 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers	<p>Applicable for local authority accounts from the 2018/19 financial year. This new standard deals with accounting for all contracts with customers except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Leases; ▶ Financial instruments; ▶ Insurance contracts; and ▶ For local authorities; Council Tax and NDR income. <p>The key requirements of the standard cover the identification of performance obligations under customer contracts and the linking of income to the meeting of those performance obligations.</p> <p>Now that the 2018/19 Accounting Code of Practice for Local Authorities has been issued it is becoming clear what the impact on local authority accounting will be. As the vast majority of revenue streams of Local Authorities fall outside the scope of IFRS 15, the impact of this standard is likely to be limited.</p>	<p>As with IFRS 9, some provisional information on the approach to adopting IFRS 15 has been issued by CIPFA in advance of the Guidance Notes. Now that the Code has been issued, initial views have been confirmed; that due to the revenue streams of Local Authorities the impact of this standard is likely to be limited.</p> <p>The standard is far more likely to impact on Local Authority Trading Companies who will have material revenue streams arising from contracts with customers. The Council will need to consider the impact of this on their own group accounts when that trading company is consolidated.</p>



Focused on your future (cont'd)

Standard	Issue	Impact
IFRS 16 Leases	<p>It is currently proposed that IFRS 16 will be applicable for local authority accounts from the 2019/20 financial year.</p> <p>Whilst the definition of a lease remains similar to the current leasing standard; IAS 17, for local authorities who lease a large number of assets the new standard will have a significant impact, with nearly all current leases being included on the balance sheet.</p> <p>There are transitional arrangements within the standard and although the 2019/20 Accounting Code of Practice for Local Authorities has yet to be issued, CIPFA have issued some limited provisional information which begins to clarify what the impact on local authority accounting will be. Whether any accounting statutory overrides will be introduced to mitigate any impact remains an outstanding issue.</p>	<p>Until the 2019/20 Accounting Code is issued and any statutory overrides are confirmed there remains some uncertainty in this area.</p> <p>However, what is clear is that the Council will need to undertake a detailed exercise to identify all of its leases and capture the relevant information for them. The Council must therefore ensure that all lease arrangements are fully documented.</p>



08 Audit Fees

Audit Fees

Our fee for 2017/18 is in line with the scale fee set by the PSAA and reported in our 19 July 2018 Annual Results Report.

Description	Final Fee 2017/18 £	Planned Fee 2017/18 £	Scale Fee 2017/18 £	Final Fee 2017/18 £
Total Audit Fee - Code work	62,256*	60,034	60,034	80,034 **
Total Audit Fee - Certification of claims and returns -	TBC	13,583	13,583	21,617

*We are proposed a scale fee variation in relation to delays in the submission of payroll data. This relates to lost time spent by auditors trying to work with payroll data that was not suitable for audit purposes and additional hours spent by the data analytics team working on the data. The team worked on the data 3 times, before they obtained suitable data from the Council. Other hours relate to manager time spent liaising between the relevant stakeholders. This fee variation is subject to approval by PSAA.

** We proposed a scale fee variation in relation to our 2016/17 audit in relation to **our response to the objection on the council's 2016-2017 accounts as this led to additional audit procedures outside of the scope and assumptions underpinning the scale fee set by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA Ltd). PSAA Ltd approved the scale fee variation for 2016/17.**

TBC - as we have not yet completed our audit of the 2017/18 Housing Subsidy claim we are not able to confirm the fee for this work

We confirm we have not undertaken any non-audit work outside of the PSAA's requirements.

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