Wokingham Borough Council

Outline Audit Plan

Year ended 31 March 2021

June 2021

Agenda Item 6.

Building a better working world

20 May 2021

Wokingham Borough Council
Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Dear Audit Committee Members

Outline 2020/21 Audit Plan

We are pleased to attach our Outline 2020/21 Audit Plan.

Its purpose is to provide the Audit Committee with an overview of our plans and fee for the 2020/21 audit, as well as to ensure our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations. At the time of writing this plan, we have not finalised the 2019/20 audit and therefore we have not yet completed our detailed planning procedures. We will provide a more detailed and comprehensive audit plan for the Committee at the July meeting. This report sets out the areas which we consider will be a focus for our 2020/21 plan, and provides Members with an update on the new value for money requirements.

Our audit is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you as well as understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

Helen Thompson
Associate Partner
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
Encl

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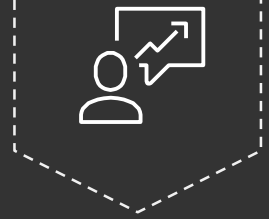

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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (https://www.psaa.co.uk/audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities/).The Statement of responsibilities 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 and further guidance (updated April 2018)" issued by the 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 in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.
This report is made solely to the Audit Committee and management of Wokingham Borough Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit Committee, and management of Wokingham Borough Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit Committee and management of Wokingham Borough Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.

01 2020/21 Audit

2020/21 Audit

2020/21 financial statements audit

Planning for 2020/21

The 2019/20 audit is still ongoing due to outstanding assurances from the auditor of Berkshire Pension Fund. Subsequent to its completion, we will meet with the Assistant Director Finance and Chief Accountant to discuss the final outcome of our 2019/20 audit. We have already had an initial discussion with the Deputy Chief Executive, and the Assistant Directors for Finance, Governance and Commercial Property and we will incorporate findings from these meetings into our 2020/21 planning.

We will plan our meetings with key stakeholders to have regular touch points throughout the year and will be based on the timetable for 2020/21 as published in the draft Accounts and Audit (Amendment) regulations 2021 which extends the publication date for audited local authority accounts from 31 July to 30 September.

Due to the ongoing impact of later deadlines and completion of audits from 2019/20, we have yet to start our planning for the 2020/21 audit. We set out in this report our initial considerations of the risks for the audit – these are broadly similar to those identified in 2019/20. We will update these risks as our planning progresses and take into account the risks suggested by the NAO in the Auditor Guidance Note 06 – Local Government Audit Planning, which has not yet been released for 2020/21.

Wider public sector audit context

There is increasing pressure on all auditors in the current climate. There have been a number of reviews of the wider audit market, and local government audit in particular. The Government has yet to confirm which recommendations from these reviews they will seek to put in place. However, the consistent themes across the reviews are: :

- The level of fees and sustainability of the market
- Competence and capability - skills, capability and capacity of auditors, finance teams and audit committees
- Timetable for audits

This, alongside new accounting and auditing regulations, places increasing pressure on auditors. The specific areas we would draw to your attention are:

- The introduction of ISA 540 (Revised), Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures;
- ISA 570 (Revised), Going Concern which will increase the work required in these areas of the audit; and
- A new Value for Money approach, including changes to the reporting (see section 2)

Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters. It seeks to provide the Audit Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Misstatement due to fraud or error	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	As identified in ISA 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 would otherwise appear to be operating effectively.
Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition, through inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. 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. We believe the risk of manipulation is most likely to manifest in the incorrect capitalisation of revenue expenditure through either inappropriate additions to Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) and Investment Property (IP) or incorrect classification of expenditure as Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS), as there is an incentive to reduce expenditure which is funded from Council Tax.
Valuation of Land & Buildings in Property, Plant & Equipment (PPE) under Estimated-Use-Value (EUV) and Investment Properties (IP) under Fair Value (FV)	Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	The value of land & buildings in PPE under EUV and in IP under FV represent significant balances in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes and impairment reviews. Management is required to make a high degree of material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.
Valuation of Land & Buildings in PPE under Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	The value of land & buildings in PPE under DRC and HRA properties also represent significant balances in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes and impairment reviews. Management is required to make a lesser degree of material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques are required to calculate these balances held in the balance sheet and HRA notes. Although there is a risk for land & buildings under DRC due to the specialised nature of these assets and insufficient availability of market-based evidence to assist the valuation, these assets and HRA properties are inherently not subject to the same level of material uncertainty arising due to market conditions.

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Pension Liability Valuation	Inherent risk	Changed from a significant risk in the PY to area of focus in the CY	The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Royal County of Berkshire Fund Pension Scheme administered by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Council's pension fund asset is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this asset be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet. The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the Pension Fund. Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.
Going Concern Disclosure	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	Covid-19 has created a number of financial pressures throughout local government, increasing service demand and expenditure. The Council has incurred additional expenditure in a number of areas of its operations and has experienced some income losses. The extent of support from MHCLG has developed over time, but does not include all financial consequences of Covid-19. CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 sets out that organisations that can only be discontinued under statutory prescription shall prepare their accounts on a going concern basis. However, International Auditing Standard 570 Going Concern, as applied by Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statements of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom, still requires auditors to undertake sufficient and appropriate audit procedures to consider whether there is a material uncertainty on going concern that requires reporting by management within the financial statements, and within the auditor's report (Details continued on next slide)

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Going Concern Disclosure	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	(Details continued from previous slide) We are obliged to report on such matters within the section of our audit report 'Conclusions relating to Going Concern'. To do this, the auditor must review management's assessment of the going concern basis applying IAS1 Presentation of Financial Statements.
Accounting for Covid-19 Grant Income	Inherent risk	New area of focus	The Council has received a significant level of government funding in the relation to Covid-19. There is a need for the Council to ensure that it is has recognised and accounted for these appropriately, taking into account any associated restrictions and conditions.
Accounting for Public Finance Initiative (PFI)	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	The PFI liability and associated expenditure represent material figures within the Council's financial statements. The accounting for a PFI scheme involving reliance on historic accounting models and a number of judgements. Errors within the models or changes in judgement can have a material impact on the financial statements. We therefore recognise the PFI scheme as an area of audit focus. There is a risk the Council fails to account properly for the PFI contract. Due to the size and complexity of the PFI and associated transactions, we believe there is a potential to have an impact on the financial statements. In 2018/19, we commissioned a detailed review of the RE3 Waste PFI arrangements for Bracknell, Reading and Wokingham Councils by our PFI specialist. This included a review of the assumptions used in the RE3 PFI accounting model and commenting on local adjustments made to the model. Our work will focus on any changes to estimates within the model and accounting plus future inflation assumptions.
Group Accounting	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	The Council is required to prepare group accounts which involves consolidating the financial statements of its following subsidiaries: • Optalis Holdings Ltd, which provides Adult Social Care Services; • WBC Holdings (WBCH) Ltd, which provides social and affordable housing. The WBCH group also includes Wokingham Housing Ltd, Loddon Homes Ltd and Berry Brook Homes Ltd. (Details continued on next slide)

Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

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Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Group Accounting	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	(Details continued from previous slide) These subsidiaries contain accounting entries and balances that can be considered material or significant to the group, and will be classified as either full or specific scope audits. We require that that the auditors of these subsidiaries undertake a programme of work and seek assurances from them to ensure the 2020/21 financial statements do not contain material misstatement which may arise within the consolidated financial statements. We will review whether the balances from the four subsidiaries have been properly consolidated into the Council's financial statements.

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Independence update

The engagement team is led by Helen Thompson, who has been the engagement lead for the Council for 5 years. We have proposed a two year extension to Helen's tenure as Engagement Partner with the Council. We have sought and gained approval to this decision from the Deputy Chief Executive and Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, as part of our overall considerations for the extension.

Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

Risks to Delivery		
Risk	**Mitigation (EY)**	**Mitigation (Council)**
Impact of continuing restrictions in movement because of Covid-19	Early agreement of workplans and flexibility arrangements to ensure work can be delivered in the agreed timescales Regular communication with the Council to ensure issues are addressed quickly	Early agreement of workplans and flexibility arrangements to ensure work can be delivered in the agreed timescales Regular communication with EY to ensure issues are addressed quickly
Poor project management which results in delayed audit results and additional burden on Council staff.	Prioritisation of audit work, such as higher risk items are tested earlier in the audit process. Ensuring that samples are selected early in the audit period to enable sufficient time for the Council to respond. Timely review of audit work will be undertaken by senior audit staff to ensure continuous progress and adherence to timeframes throughout the audit.	Agreeing clear expectations and deadlines with audit staff and working together to agree a project plan, including the timing of audit testing that can be supported before and during the audit period. Providing good quality working papers and analytics data is available when agreed, helps to smooth audit delivery.

02 Value for Money

Value for money

Council responsibilities for value for money

The Council is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of their policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

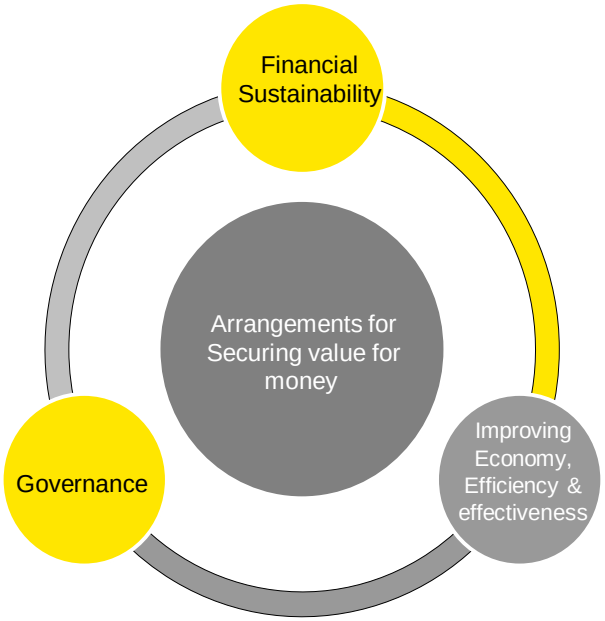
As part of the material published with its financial statements, the Council is required to bring together commentary on its governance framework and how this has operated during the period in an annual governance statement. In preparing its annual governance statement, the Council tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the relevant accounting and reporting framework and having regard to any guidance issued in support of that framework. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on its arrangements for securing value for money from their use of resources.

Auditor responsibilities under the new Code

Under the 2020 Code we are still required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. However, there is no longer one overall evaluation criterion on which we need to conclude. Instead the 2020 Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Council a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Council has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- Financial sustainability
  How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure they can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance
  How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness:
  How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.



Value for money risks

Planning and identifying VFM risks

The NAO's guidance notes require us to carry out a risk assessment which gathers sufficient evidence to enable us to document our evaluation of the Council's arrangements, in order to enable us to draft a commentary under the three reporting criteria. This includes identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations. This is a change to 2015 Code guidance notes, where the NAO required auditors, as part of planning, to consider the risk of reaching an incorrect conclusion in relation to the overall criterion.

In considering the Council's arrangements, we are required to consider:

- The Council's Annual Governance Statement
- Evidence that the Council's arrangements were in place during the reporting period;
- Evidence obtained from our work on the accounts;
- The work of inspectorates (such as Ofsted and CQC) and other bodies; and
- Any other evidence source that we regard as necessary to facilitate the performance of our statutory duties.

We then consider whether there is evidence to suggest that there are significant weaknesses in arrangements. The NAO's guidance is clear that the assessment of what constitutes a significant weakness and the amount of additional audit work required to adequately respond to the risk of a significant weakness in arrangements is a matter of professional judgement. However, the NAO states that a weakness may be said to be significant if it:

- Exposes – or could reasonably be expected to expose – the Council to significant financial loss or risk;
- Leads to – or could reasonably be expected to lead to – significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service or on the Council's reputation;
- Leads to – or could reasonably be expected to lead to – unlawful actions; or
- Identifies a failure to take action to address a previously identified significant weakness, such as failure to implement or achieve planned progress on action/improvement plans.

We should also be informed by a consideration of:

- The magnitude of the issue in relation to the size of the Council;
- Financial consequences in comparison to, for example, levels of income or expenditure, levels of reserves (where applicable), or impact on budgets or cashflow forecasts;
- The impact of the weakness on the Council's reported performance;
- Whether the issue has been identified by the Council's own internal arrangements and what corrective action has been taken or planned;
- Whether any legal judgements have been made including judicial review;
- Whether there has been any intervention by a regulator or Secretary of State;
- Whether the weakness could be considered significant when assessed against the nature, visibility or sensitivity of the issue;
- The impact on delivery of services to local taxpayers; and
- The length of time the Council has had to respond to the issue.

Value for money risks

Responding to identified risks

Where our planning work has identified a risk of significant weakness, the NAO's guidance requires us to consider what additional evidence is needed to determine whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements and undertake additional procedures as necessary, including where appropriate, challenge of management's assumptions. We are required to report our planned procedures to the Audit Committee.

Reporting on VFM

In addition to the commentary on arrangements, where we are not satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources the 2020 Code has the same requirement as the 2015 Code in that we should refer to this by exception in the audit report on the financial statements.

However, a new requirement under the 2020 Code is for us to include the commentary on arrangements in a new Auditor's Annual Report. The 2020 Code states that the commentary should be clear, readily understandable and highlight any issues we wish to draw to the Council's attention or the wider public. This should include details of any recommendations arising from the audit and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with our view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily.

The new Code promotes more timely reporting by auditors. So where we have sufficient evidence to determine that there is a significant weakness on VFM related arrangements we can report that weakness, and an associated recommendation for improvement, at that time and not wait until we issue our Audit Results Report on the audit of the statement of accounts.

Summary of changes in VFM requirements between the 2015 and 2020 Codes of Audit Practice

We set out a summary of key changes in VFM requirements between the 2015 and 2020 Codes in tabular form over-page.

Value for money – Code requirements

2015 Code requirement	2020 Code requirement
Overall requirement For auditors to satisfy themselves that the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.	**Overall requirement** No change in requirement.
Design of work The auditor's work should be designed to provide the auditor with sufficient assurance to enable them to report by exception if the auditor concludes that they are not satisfied that the audited body has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources for the relevant period. Where required, the auditor should report their conclusion on the audited body's arrangements having regard to specific reporting criteria.	**Design of work** The auditor's work should be designed to provide the auditor with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the audited body a commentary against the specified reporting criteria on the arrangements the body has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period. Where the auditor is not satisfied in respect of arrangements to secure value for money, they should refer to this by exception in their audit report on the financial statements.
Assurance given In carrying out this work, the auditor is not required to satisfy themselves that the audited body has achieved value for money during the reporting period.	**Assurance given** No change in requirement. Our work remains arrangements based.
Other sources of relevant information Auditors need to consider: • The audited body's governance statement • Evidence that the audited body's arrangements were in place during the reporting period; • Evidence obtained from the auditor's other work • The work of inspectorates and other bodies and • Any other evidence source that the auditor regards as necessary to facilitate the performance of their statutory duties	**Other sources of relevant information** No change in requirement.

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Value for money – Code requirements

2015 Code requirement	2020 Code requirement
Quantum of work Determining how much work to do on arrangements to secure value for money is a matter of auditor judgement.	**Quantum of work** Determining how much work to do on arrangements to secure value for money remains a matter of auditor judgement, but we expect the enhanced risk assessment process and reporting requirements to require more time to be input.
Reporting criteria The NAO's supporting Auditor Guidance Note 3 defines proper arrangements as: 1. *Informed decision making* • 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 2. *Sustainable resource deployment* • 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 3. *Working with partners and other third parties* • 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	**Reporting criteria** The Code specifies that auditors need to focus on these reporting criteria: 1. *Financial sustainability*: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services. Specifically: • How the body ensures that it identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds these into them; • How the body plans to bridge its funding gaps and identifies achievable savings; • How the body plans finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities; • How the body ensures that its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment, and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system; and • how the body identifies and manages risks to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions underlying its plans. 2. *Governance*: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. Specifically: • How the body monitors and assesses risk and how the body gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud; • How the body approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process;

Value for money – Code requirements

2015 Code requirement	2020 Code requirement
Reporting criteria (continued) See previous page	**Reporting criteria (continued)** • How the body ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency. This includes arrangements for effective challenge from the audit committee; and • How the body monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of staff or member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declarations/conflicts of interests). 3. *Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness*: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services. Specifically: • How financial and performance information has been used to assess performance to identify areas for improvement; • How the body evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement; • How the body ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships, engages with stakeholders it has identified, monitors performance against expectations, and ensures action is taken where necessary to improve; and • Where the body commissions or procures services, how the body ensures that this is done in accordance with relevant legislation, professional standards and internal policies, and how the body assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits.
Risk assessment As part of planning, auditors should consider the risk of reaching an incorrect conclusion in relation to the overall criterion.	**Risk assessment** The auditor will need to gather sufficient evidence and document their evaluation of it in order to enable them to draft their commentary under the three reporting criteria. This includes identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations.

Value for money – Code requirements

2015 Code requirement	2020 Code requirement
Reporting The auditor should report to the audit committee the results of their work. The Annual Audit Letter should provide a clear, readily understandable commentary on the results of the auditor's work and highlight any issues that the auditor wishes to draw to the attention of the public.	**Reporting** Auditors are required to report in a commentary each year under the specified reporting criteria and the Code expects that where auditors identify significant weaknesses in arrangements as part of their work, they will raise them promptly with the audit committee. The auditor's annual report should bring together all of the auditor's work over the year. A core element of the report will be the commentary in accordance with the specified reporting criteria. The commentary should be clear, readily understandable and highlight any issues that the auditor wishes to draw to the attention of the body or the wider public. This should include details of any recommendations arising from the audit and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with the auditor's view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily.

03 Fees

Fees

Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

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 requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

	Planned fee 2020/21	Scale fee 2019/20	Final Fee 2019/20 *
	£	£	£
Total Fee – Code work	£81,325	£81,325	£81,325
Scale Fee Rebasing (Note 1)	£58,655	£Nil	£58,655
Revised Proposed Scale Fee	**£139,980**	**£81,325**	**£139,980**
Scale Fee Variation:			
• Additional Covid-19 work: Going concern & consultation (Note 2)	TBC	£Nil	TBC
• Additional Covid-19 work: Increased property valuation risk (Note 2)	TBC	£Nil	TBC
• Value for Money significant risks (Note 2)	TBC	£Nil	TBC
• Restatement of comparative figures in CIES, PPE and Capital Grants (Note 2)	TBC	£Nil	TBC
Total Scale Fee Variation	**TBC**	**£Nil**	**TBC**
Total fees	**TBC**	**£81,325**	**TBC**

All fees exclude VAT

- *2019/20 Audit is still ongoing at time of this report*

For 2020/21, the scale fee will be further impacted by a range of factors which may result in additional work. The issues we have identified at the initial planning stage which could impact on the fee include:

- The need to engage EY Real Estate to review a sample of valuations of investment properties and EUV assets, and for additional work in this area by the audit team.
- Review of additional disclosures that will be required in relation to going concern and our internal consultation process.

Other additional fees may arise, for example we cannot yet quantify the level of work to complete the additional work in relation to the new value for money approach. We are also driving greater innovation in the audit through the use of technology. The significant investment costs in this global technology continue to rise as we seek to provide enhanced assurance and insight in the audit.

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

- Officers meet the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- Our accounts opinion and value for money conclusion are 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 Council 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.

Notes:
(1) Changes in work required to address professional and regulatory requirements and scope associated with risk - See page 21.
(2) In 2019/20 we carried out additional work in relation to property valuations, group accounting disclosures, going concern and the restatement of the comparative figures in CIES, PPE and Capital Grants. This additional fee is yet to be determined and will be discussed with the Sec 151 Officer and subsequent approval by the PSAA.

Fees

Fees (continued)

Scale Fee Rebasing: Changes in work required to address professional and regulatory requirements and scope associated with risk

Janet Dawson, our Government & Public Sector Assurance Lead, wrote to all Chief Finance Officers and Audit Committee (or equivalent) chairs on 11 February 2020 on the subject of the sustainability of UK local public audit. Amongst other issues her letter stated that we did not believe the existing scale fees provide a clear link with both a public sector organisation's risk and complexity, and the audit profession's context for cost and fee increases, including the attractiveness of audit, investment in technology, innovation and the regulatory environment.

Around the same time, PSAA consulted on its 2020/21 audit fees (PSAA fee consultation), discussing the challenging environment, new standards and regulatory requirements. They noted an appropriate forum for fee discussions from these impacts would be between the auditor and Chief Financial Officer, to take place as soon as possible as part of planning discussions for 2019/20 audits.

The subsequent review by Sir Tony Redmond (Redmond Review) has also highlighted that audit fees in the local authority sector have dropped significantly at the same time that audit fees in other sectors have significantly risen, and that no assessment of the amount it would cost to audit each local authority based on their level of audit risk has been made in the past ten years due to the methods applied by the Audit Commission and then PSAA. As such there is no guarantee that the fee paid by each local authority accurately reflects the risk profile or amount of audit work required for their external audit.

To address these issues we undertook an analysis of the changes in professional and regulatory requirements since our last tender to PSAA was submitted, and any other known changes in audit risk. For instance, where applicable, significant commercial property investments, creation of joint ventures, subsidiaries and other similar arrangements.

We identified the proposed fee rebasing under the headings of:

- Changes in risk;
- Increased regulatory requirements; and
- Client readiness and ability to support a technologically enabled audit.

As requested by PSAA, we discussed this with management on 9 June 2020. This discussion was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We did not reach agreement. While management recognised many of these pressures and can see how they are reflected in the changes in the audit work, their view was that this is a decision for PSAA.

Having not reached agreement, and in light of management's comments, we have submitted the proposed rebasing to PSAA for their review and decision. We would like to thank management for their contribution to this debate and the positive manner in which they engaged with us.

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