

The Audit Plan

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

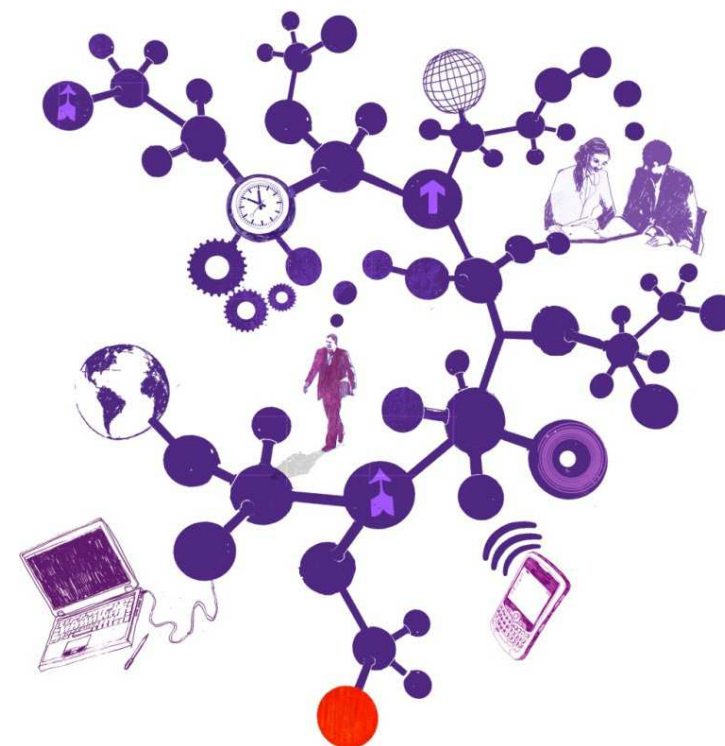
Year ending 31 March 2016

5 April 2016

Elizabeth L Olive
Engagement Lead
T 0207 728 3329
E elizabeth.l.olive@uk.gt.com

Ade O Oyerinde
Manager
T 0207 728 3332
E ade.o.oyerinde@uk.gt.com

Ronald Kiwanuka
Executive
T 0207 728 3287
E ronald.kiwanuka@uk.gt.com



The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or any weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Town Hall
The Parade
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5BY

5 April 2016

Dear Members of the Strategy and Resources Committee

Audit Plan for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for the year ending 31 March 2016

This Audit Plan sets out for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, the Strategy and Resources Committee), an overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260. This document is to help you understand the consequences of our work, discuss issues of risk and the concept of materiality with us, and identify any areas where you may request us to undertake additional procedures. It also helps us gain a better understanding of the Council and your environment. The contents of the Plan have been discussed with management.

We are required to perform our audit in line with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2015.

Our responsibilities under the Code are to:

- give an opinion on the Council's financial statements
- satisfy ourselves the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth L Olive
Engagement Lead

Grant Thornton UK LLP
[Grant Thornton House
Melton Street
Euston Square
London
NW1 2EP
T +44 (0) 207 383 5100
www.grant-thornton.co.uk

Chartered Accountants

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Understanding your business

In planning our audit we need to understand the challenges and opportunities the Council is facing. We set out a summary of our understanding below.

Challenges/opportunities

1. Autumn Statement 2015 and financial health

- The Chancellor proposed that local government would have greater control over its finances, although this was accompanied by a 24% reduction in central government funding to local government over 5 years.
- Despite the increased ownership, the financial health of the sector is likely to become increasingly challenging.
- Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is one of the 15 councils nationwide to face quicker and more savage Government cuts than expected. This means the Council will need to save £1m more than originally anticipated.

2. Devolution

- The Autumn Statement 2015 also included proposals to devolve further powers to localities.

3. Housing

- The Autumn Statement also included a number of announcements intended to increase the availability and affordability of housing.
- Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is currently faced with increasing level of homelessness which is exacerbated by increases in the weekly rental charges.

4. Earlier closedown of accounts

- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require councils to bring forward the approval and audit of financial statements to 31 May and 31 July respectively by the 2017/18 financial year.
- You brought forward the accounts production in 2014/15 and are reviewing the accounts preparation process to streamline this further in 2015/16.

Our response

- We will consider your plans for addressing its financial position to inform our work reaching our VFM conclusion.

- We will consider if devolution is a VFM risk and discuss your plans to inform our work in reaching our VFM conclusion.

- We will consider how you have reflected government announcements to inform our work in reaching our VFM conclusion.
- We will share our knowledge of how other councils are responding to these changes.

- We will work with you to identify areas of your accounts production where you can learn from good practice in other authorities.
- We aim to complete all substantive audit work on your financial statements by 31 July 2016 as a 'dry run'

Developments and other requirements relevant to your audit

In planning our audit we also consider the impact of key developments in the sector and take account of national audit requirements as set out in the Code of Audit Practice and associated guidance.

Developments and other requirements

1. Fair value accounting

- A new accounting standard on fair value (IFRS 13) has been adopted and applies for the first time in 2015/16.
- This will have a particular impact on the valuation of surplus assets within property, plant and equipment which are now required to be valued at fair value in line with IFRS 13 rather than the existing use value of the asset.
- Investment property assets are required to be carried at fair value as in previous years.
- There are a number of additional disclosure requirements of IFRS 13.

2. Corporate governance

- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require local authorities to produce a Narrative Statement, which reports on your financial performance and use of resources in the year, and replaces the explanatory foreword.
- You are required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) as part of your financial statements.

3. Joint arrangements

- Councils are involved in a number of pooled budgets and alternative delivery models which they need to account for in their financial statements.
- Collaborative working with others is likely to be one of the solutions to the Government's austerity measures.

4. Other requirements

- You are required to submit a Whole of Government accounts pack on which we provide an audit opinion
- You also complete housing benefit grant claims and returns on which audit certification is required

Our response

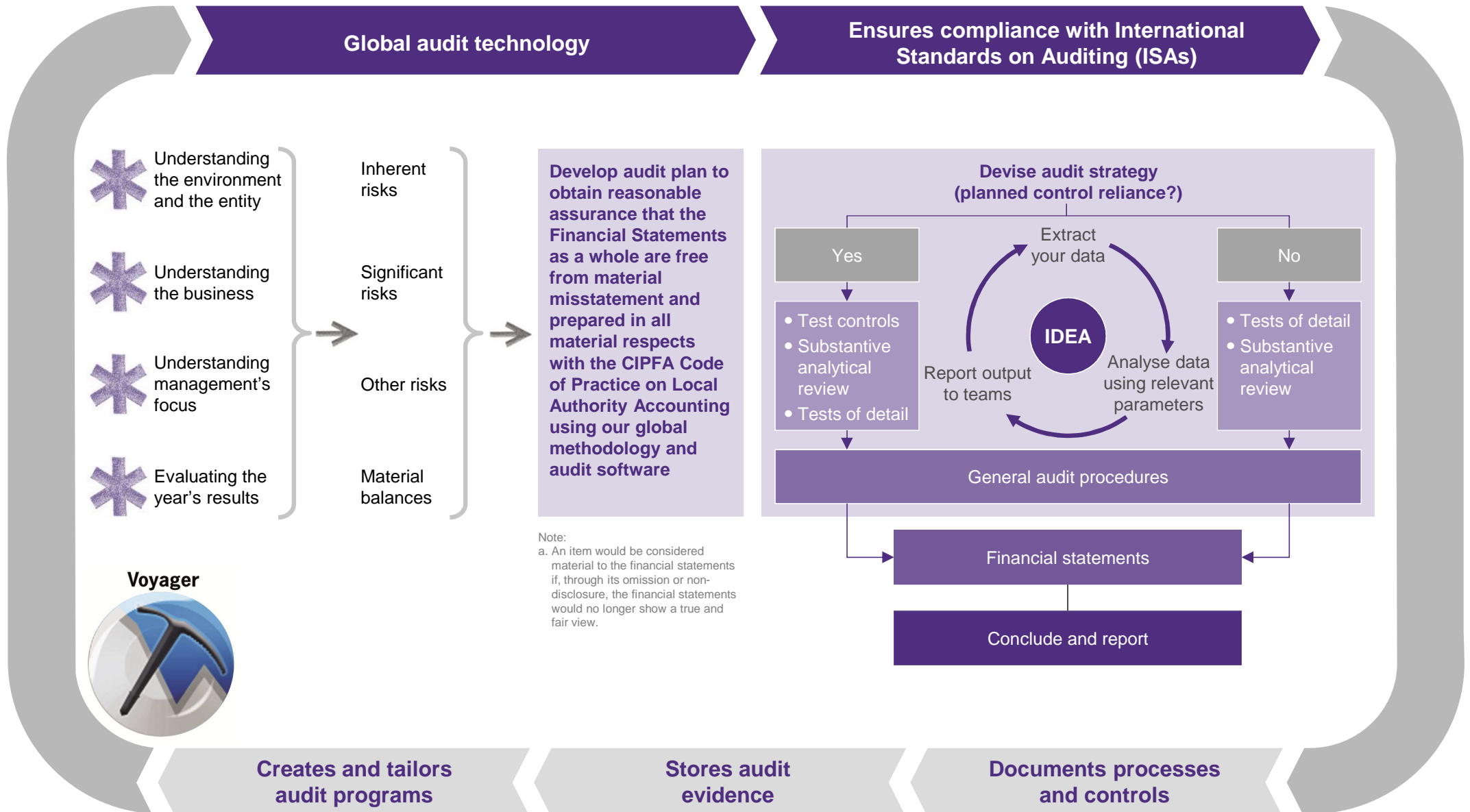
- We will keep you informed of changes to the financial reporting requirements for 2015/16 through ongoing discussions and invitations to our technical update workshops.
- We will discuss this with you at an early stage, including reviewing the basis of valuation of your surplus assets and investment property assets to ensure they are valued on the correct basis.
- We will review your draft financial statements to ensure you have complied with the disclosure requirements of IFRS 13.

- We will review your Narrative Statement to ensure it reflects the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice when this is updated, and make recommendations for improvement.
- We will review your arrangements for producing the AGS and consider whether it is consistent with our knowledge of the Council and the requirements of CIPFA guidance.

- We will discuss with officers the arrangements in place for partnership working to inform our work in reaching our VFM conclusion.

- We will carry out work on the WGA pack in accordance with requirements
- We will certify the housing benefit subsidy claim in accordance with the requirements and by the deadline specified by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd.

Our audit approach



Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit.

The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As is usual in public sector entities, we have determined materiality for the statements as a whole as a proportion of the gross revenue expenditure of the Council. For purposes of planning the audit we have determined overall materiality to be £911k (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure). We will consider whether this level is appropriate during the course of the audit and will advise you if we revise this.

Under ISA 450, auditors also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulation of such amounts would have a material effect on the financial statements. "Trivial" matters are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any criteria of size, nature or circumstances. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £46k.

ISA 320 also requires auditors to determine separate, lower, materiality levels where there are 'particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures for which misstatements of lesser amounts than materiality for the financial statements as a whole could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users'.

We have not identified any separate materiality levels.

Significant risks identified

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty" (ISA 315). In this section we outline the significant risks of material misstatement which we have identified. There are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards (International Standards on Auditing - ISAs) which are listed below:

Significant risk	Description	Substantive audit procedures
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions	<p>Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition• opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited• the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.
Management over-ride of controls	<p>Under ISA 240 it is presumed that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documenting the control environment and walkthrough of the system in respect of journal entries <p>Further work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management• Testing of journal entries• Review of unusual significant transactions.

Other risks identified

"The auditor should evaluate the design and determine the implementation of the entity's controls, including relevant control activities, over those risks for which, in the auditor's judgment, it is not possible or practicable to reduce the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level to an acceptably low level with audit evidence obtained only from substantive procedures"(ISA (UK & Ireland) 315).

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

Other risks	Description	Audit approach
Operating expenses	Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period (Operating expenses understated)	Work completed to date: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walkthrough of operating expenses system Further work planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of control account reconciliations• Sample testing of operating expenditure during the financial year• Testing of the year end payables• Testing for unrecorded liabilities• Testing of manual accruals
Employee remuneration	Employee remuneration and benefit obligations and expenses understated (Remuneration expenses not correct)	Work completed to date: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walkthrough of the payroll system Further work planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of monthly/weekly reconciliations of the payroll to the ledger• Directional analytical review using trend analysis• Sample testing of payroll transactions to payslips and HR contract of employment.

Other risks identified (continued)

Other risks	Description	Audit approach
Valuation of property, plant and equipment (PPE) including investment properties	<p>You revalue your assets regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their fair value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. Investment properties are re-valued annually.</p> <p>The Code requires that you ensure that the carrying value at the balance sheet date is not materially different from current value. This represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements.</p>	<p>Planned work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate • Review of the competence, expertise and objectivity of any management experts used • Review of the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work • Discussions with valuer about the basis on which the valuation is carried out and challenge of the key assumptions • Review and challenge of the information used by the valuer to ensure it is robust and consistent with our understanding • Testing of revaluations made during the year to ensure they are input correctly into your asset register • Evaluation of the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not materially different to current value.
Valuation of pension fund net liability	Your pension fund asset and liability as reflected in your balance sheet represent significant estimates in the financial statements.	<p>Planned work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will identify the controls put in place by management to ensure that the pension fund liability is not materially misstated. We will also assess whether these controls were implemented as expected and whether they are sufficient to mitigate the risk of material misstatement. • We will review the competence, expertise and objectivity of the actuary who carried out your pension fund valuation. We will gain an understanding of the basis on which the valuation is carried out • We will undertake procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made • We will review the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in notes to the financial statements with the actuarial report from your actuary.

Other risks identified (continued)

Other material balances and transactions

Under International Standards on Auditing, "irrespective of the assessed risks of material misstatement, the auditor shall design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transactions, account balance and disclosure". All other material balances and transaction streams will therefore be audited. However, the procedures will not be as extensive as the procedures adopted for the risks identified in the previous section but will include:

- Heritage assets
- Assets held for sale (if any)
- Cash and cash equivalents
- Borrowing and other liabilities (long term and short term)
- Usable and unusable reserves
- Movement in Reserves Statement and associated notes
- Statement of cash flows and associated notes
- Financing and investment income and expenditure
- Taxation and non-specific grants
- Segmental reporting note
- Officers' remuneration note
- Leases note
- Related party transactions note
- Capital expenditure and capital financing note
- Financial instruments note
- Collection Fund and associated notes

Other audit responsibilities

- We will undertake work to satisfy ourselves that disclosures made in the Annual Governance Statement are in line with CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and consistent with our knowledge of the Council.
- We will read the Narrative Statement and check that it is consistent with the statements on which we give an opinion and disclosures are in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice.
- We will carry out work on consolidation schedules for the Whole of Government Accounts process in accordance with NAO instructions to auditors.
- We will give electors the opportunity to raise questions about the accounts and consider and decide upon objections received in relation to the accounts

Value for Money

Background

The Code requires us to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VfM) conclusion.

The NAO issued its guidance for auditors on value for money work in November 2015. The guidance states that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has put proper arrangements in place.

The NAO guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

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

This is supported by three sub-criteria as set out to the right:

Risk assessment

We shall carry out an initial risk assessment based on the NAO's guidance. In our initial risk assessment, we will consider :

- our cumulative knowledge of the Council, including work performed in previous years in respect of the VfM conclusion and the opinion on the financial statements.
- the findings of other inspectorates and review agencies,
- any illustrative significant risks identified and communicated by the NAO in its Supporting Information.
- any other evidence which we consider necessary to conclude on your arrangements.

Sub-criteria	Detail
Informed decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acting in the public interest, through demonstrating and applying the principles and values of good governance• Understanding and using appropriate cost and performance information to support informed decision making and performance management• Reliable and timely financial reporting that supports the delivery of strategic priorities• Managing risks effectively and maintaining a sound system of internal control
Sustainable resource deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and maintain statutory functions• Managing assets effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities• Planning, organising and developing the workforce effectively to deliver strategic priorities.
Working with partners and other third parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with third parties effectively to deliver strategic priorities• Commissioning services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities• Procuring supplies and services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities.

Value for Money (continued)

Risk assessment

Following the completion of this risk assessment, we have identified one significant risk and this is summarised below. A significant risk is defined as an issue, decision or area of activity which relates to the overall VfM criterion, is important enough to be of clear interest to the public and other stakeholders and about which we do not already have sufficient information on which to base a conclusion on the relevant arrangements. Included below are details of the work we plan to carry out to address this risk in fulfilling our duties in respect of the 2015/16 VfM conclusion. We will also consider the Council's other risks related to the NAO's VfM criteria and will report back any findings to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Significant risks	Sub-criterion	Planned response
You are on course to achieve a planned budget for 2015/16 though you have had to take some difficult measures such as having a moratorium on spend. Going forward to 2016/17, the Local Government Finance Settlement reduced your funding assessment by 25% in 2016/17 and further savings of £1.6 million are required over the period 2017/18 to 2019/20.	Sustainable resource deployment	We propose to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• review your outturn position for 2015/16, including the delivery of savings targets• review your plans to achieve the 2016/17 revenue budget• assess your progress on the residual risk reported in our previous audit reports• meet with key officers to discuss and review your arrangements to ensure medium term financial stability.

Reporting

The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and summarised in the Annual Audit Letter. As stated above, we will only report by exception in our auditor's report where we are not satisfied that the Council has proper arrangements in place to secure value for money.

Results of interim audit work

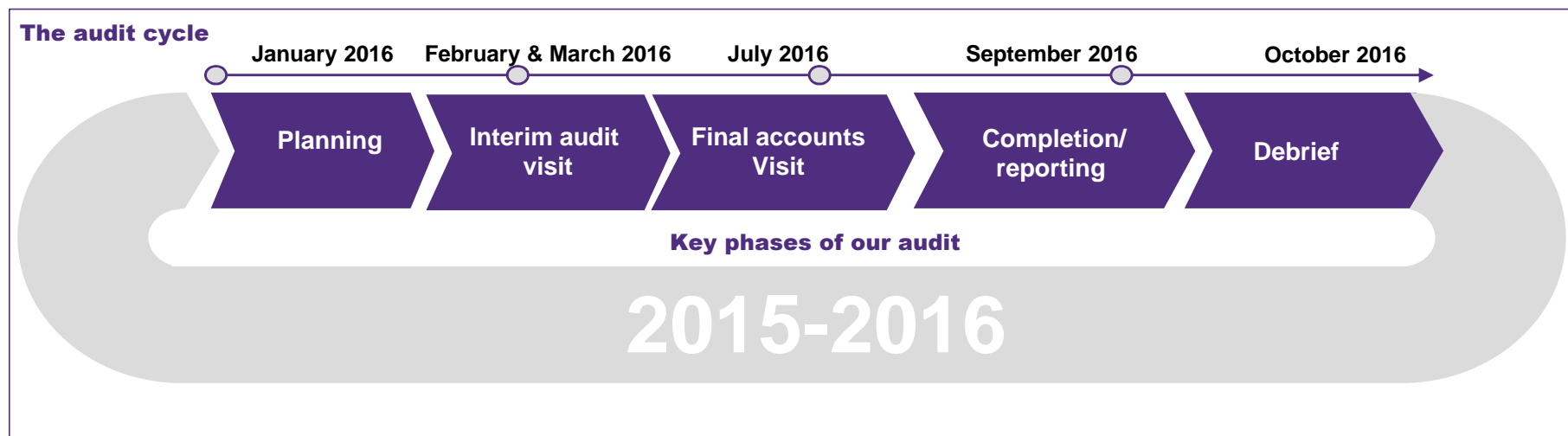
The findings of our interim audit work, and the impact of our findings on the accounts audit approach, are summarised in the table below:

	Work performed	Conclusion
Internal audit	<p>We have completed a high level review of internal audit's overall arrangements. Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention</p> <p>We have also reviewed internal audit's work on your key financial systems to date. We have not identified any significant weaknesses impacting on our responsibilities.</p>	<p>Overall, we have concluded that the internal audit service provides an independent and satisfactory service and that internal audit work contributes to an effective internal control environment.</p> <p>Our review of internal audit work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
Entity level controls	<p>We have obtained an understanding of the overall control environment relevant to the preparation of the financial statements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values• commitment to competence• participation by those charged with governance• management's philosophy and operating style• organisational structure• assignment of authority and responsibility• human resource policies and practices.	<p>Our work has not identified material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on your financial statements.</p>
Walkthrough testing	<p>We have completed our walkthrough tests of the controls operating in areas where we consider that there is a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements.</p> <p>Our work to date has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. Internal controls have been implemented in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work to date has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p> <p>Further work required: Document year end controls around pension liabilities and PPE valuations.</p>

Results of interim audit work (continued)

	Work performed	Conclusion
Early testing	<p>We undertook the following early transaction testing during the interim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating expenses (months 1 – 9) • Property Plant Equipment ownership and physical verification • Housing Benefits system parameters • Employee remuneration (months 1 – 9) is in progress <p>Our work to date has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p>	<p>Our work to date has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p> <p>Further work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level review of IT
Journal entry controls	<p>We have reviewed your journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy and have not identified any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on your control environment or financial statements.</p> <p>We have carried a walkthrough of the journal entry system and confirmed that the system operates as designed.</p> <p>We also completed early testing of journal entries (months 1 – 10) during the interim audit.</p>	<p>Our work over the control environment and walkthrough of the journal system has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p> <p>Our work to date on interim testing of journals month 1 – 10 has not identified any issues to bring to your attention.</p>

Key dates



Date	Activity
January 2016	Planning
w/c 15 February 2016	Interim site visit
5 April 2016	Presentation of Audit Plan to Strategy and Resources Committee
14 April 2016	Presentation of Audit Plan to Audit, Crime & Disorder & Scrutiny Committee
1 July 2016	Year end fieldwork commences
September 2016 (TBA)	Audit findings clearance meeting with Director of Finance and resources
27 September 2016	Report audit findings to those charged with governance (Strategy & Resources Committee)
By 30 September 2016	Sign financial statements opinion

Fees and independence

Fees

	£
Council audit	44,708
Grant certification	8,976
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	53,684

Our fee assumptions include:

- Supporting schedules to all figures in the accounts are supplied by the agreed dates and in accordance with the agreed upon information request list.
- The scope of the audit, and the Council and its activities, have not changed significantly.
- The Council will make available management and accounting staff to help us locate information and to provide explanations.
- The accounts presented for audit are materially accurate, supporting working papers and evidence agree to the accounts, and all audit queries are resolved promptly.

Grant certification

- Our fees for grant certification cover only housing benefit subsidy certification, which falls under the remit of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
None	Nil

Fees for other services

Fees for other services reflect those agreed at the time of issuing our Audit Plan. Any changes will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter.

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Full details of all fees charged for audit and non-audit services will be included in our Audit Findings Report at the conclusion of the audit.

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

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while The Audit Findings Report will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to the Council.

Respective responsibilities

This plan has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psaa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Council's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged. Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to the auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓



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