

# External Audit Plan

*Year ending 31 March 2018*

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Mid Devon District Council  
23 January 2018



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## Your key Grant Thornton team members are:

Geraldine Daly

Associate Director

T: 0117 305 7741

E: [geri.n.daly@uk.gt.com](mailto:geri.n.daly@uk.gt.com)

Andrew Davies

Audit Manager

T: 0117 305 7844

E: [andrew.davies@uk.gt.com](mailto:andrew.davies@uk.gt.com)

Tori Redler

Executive

T: 0117 305 7744

E: [victoria.j.redler@uk.gt.com](mailto:victoria.j.redler@uk.gt.com)

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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit planning process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, 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.

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# Introduction & headlines

## Purpose

This document provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Mid Devon District Council ('the Council') for those charged with governance.

## Respective responsibilities

The National Audit Office ('the NAO') has issued a document entitled Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'). This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is expected from the audited body. Our respective responsibilities are also set in the Terms of Appointment and Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), the body responsible for appointing us as auditor of Mid Devon District Council. We draw your attention to both of these documents on the [PSAA website](#).

## Scope of our audit

The scope of our audit is set in accordance with the Code and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK). We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the:

- financial statements (including the Annual Governance Statement) that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance (the Audit Committee); and
- Value for Money arrangements in place at the Council for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or the Audit Committee of your responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our audit approach is based on a thorough understanding of the Council's business and is risk based.

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## Significant risks

Those risks requiring specific audit consideration and procedures to address the likelihood of a material financial statement error have been identified as:

- Management over-ride of controls
- Valuation of property, plant and equipment
- Valuation of pension fund net liability

We will communicate significant findings on these areas as well as any other significant matters arising from the audit to you in our Audit Findings (ISA 260) Report.

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## Materiality

We have determined planning materiality to be £935k (PY £935k), which equates to 2% of your gross expenditure for the previous year. We are obliged to report uncorrected omissions or misstatements other than those which are 'clearly trivial' to those charged with governance. Clearly trivial has been set at £46,750 (PY £46,750).

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## Value for Money arrangements

Our risk assessment regarding your arrangements to secure value for money have identified the following VFM significant risks at this stage of our audit planning:

- Financial resilience
- Housing company arrangements

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## Audit logistics

Our interim visit will take place in February 2018 and our final visit will take place in June 2018. Our key deliverables are this Audit Plan and our Audit Findings Report.

Our fee for the audit will be no less than £47,700 (PY: £47,700) for the Council.

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## Independence

We have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and we as a firm, and each covered person, confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements

# Deep business understanding

## Changes to service delivery

### Commercialisation

The scale of investment activity, primarily in commercial property, has increased as local authorities seek to maximise income generation. These investments are often discharged through a company, partnership or other investment vehicle. Local authorities need to ensure that their commercial activities are presented appropriately, in compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice and statutory framework, such as the Capital Finance Regulations. Where borrowing to finance these activities, local authorities need to comply with CIPFA's Prudential Code. A new version is due to be published in December 2017.

We are aware of the Council's growing commercial investments and activity. These include a new housing company, and investment in commercial and investment properties

We will review the Council's arrangements for setting up, monitoring and reporting the performance of 3 Rivers Development Company Ltd as part of our Value for money conclusion. We will also revisit the transactions relating to the Premier Inn sale of land.

We will also review the accounting transactions to ensure compliance with the Code.

## Changes to financial reporting requirements

### Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (the Regulations)

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is currently undertaking a review of the Regulations, which may be subject to change. The date for any proposed changes has yet to be confirmed, so it is not yet clear or whether they will apply to the 2017/18 financial statements.

Under the 2015 Regulations local authorities are required to publish their accounts along with the auditors opinion by 31 July 2018.

### Changes to the CIPFA 2017/18 Accounting Code

CIPFA have introduced other minor changes to the 2017/18 Code which confirm the going concern basis for local authorities, and updates for Leases, Service Concession arrangements and financial instruments.

### Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

DCLG has issued revised guidance on the calculation of the Item 8 Determination for 2017/18, which :

- extends transitional arrangements for reversing impairment charges and revaluation losses on dwelling assets and applies this principle to non-dwelling assets from 2017/18,

- confirms arrangements for charging depreciation to the HRA and permitting revaluation gains that reverse previous impairment and revaluation losses to be adjusted against the HRA.

## Key challenges

### Financial pressures

Like the majority of Councils Mid Devon District Council face a significant financial challenge over the medium term. The Council is forecasting an overspend of £181k in 2017/18 and has a funding gap of £4.1m through to 2021/22. The Council currently has a General Fund Reserve of £2,241k, which is above the approved minimum level of £2,100k. Without action General Fund Reserves will be eroded 2020/21.

### Impacts of Grenfell Tower fire

The Grenfell Tower fire disaster in 2017 has led to the identification of approximately 150 high rise buildings in local authority ownership that have failed fire safety tests. Local authorities are expected to make these buildings fire safe. DCLG are reviewing the current restrictions on the use of the financial resources that prevent local authorities from making essential fire safety upgrades.

As part of our ongoing risk assessment we will consider the Councils response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

## Our response

- We will consider your arrangements for managing and reporting your financial resources, as part of our work in reaching our Value for Money conclusion.
- We will consider whether your financial position leads to uncertainty about the going concern assumption and will review any related disclosures in the financial statements.
- We will keep you informed of changes to the Regulations and any associated changes to financial reporting or public inspection requirements for 2017/18 through on-going discussions and invitations to our technical update workshops.
- As part of our opinion on your financial statements, we will consider whether your financial statements reflect the financial reporting changes in the 2017/18 CIPFA Code, revised stock valuation guidance for the HRA and the impact of impairment assessments and the adequacy of provisions in relation to essential work on high rise buildings.
- We will consider whether progress has been made to the previously agreed recommendations raised in 2016/17.
- We will review the appropriateness of your accounting policies.

# Significant risks identified

Significant risks are defined by professional standards as risks that, in the judgement of the auditor, require special audit consideration because they have a higher risk of material misstatement. Such risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. In identifying risks, audit teams consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood.

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
<b>The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions</b>	Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a rebuttable presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue. This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.	Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at the Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition.</li><li>• opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited.</li><li>• The culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Mid Devon District Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.</li></ul> Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for Mid Devon District Council.
<b>Management over-ride of controls</b>	Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities. Management over-ride of controls is a risk requiring special audit consideration.	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• gain an understanding of the accounting estimates, judgements applied and decisions made by management and consider their reasonableness.</li><li>• obtain a full listing of journal entries, identify and test unusual journal entries for appropriateness.</li><li>• evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies or significant unusual transactions.</li></ul>

# Significant risks identified

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
<b>Valuation of property, plant and equipment</b>	<p>The Council revalues its land and buildings on an annual basis to ensure that carrying value is not materially different from fair value. This represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements.</p> <p>We identified the valuation of land and buildings revaluations and impairments as a risk requiring special audit consideration.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate, the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work.</li><li>• Consider the competence, expertise and objectivity of any management experts used.</li><li>• Discuss with the valuer the basis on which the valuation is carried out and challenge the key assumptions.</li><li>• Review and challenge the information used by the valuer to ensure it is robust and consistent with our understanding.</li><li>• Test revaluations made during the year to ensure they are input correctly into the Council's asset register.</li><li>• Evaluate the assumptions made by management for any assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not materially different to current value.</li></ul>
<b>Valuation of pension fund net liability</b>	<p>The Council's pension fund asset and liability as reflected in its balance sheet represent a significant estimate in the financial statements.</p> <p>We identified the valuation of the pension fund net liability as a risk requiring special audit consideration.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• Evaluate 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.</li><li>• Undertake procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made.</li><li>• Check the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in notes to the financial statements with the actuarial report from your actuary.</li></ul>

We will communicate significant findings on these areas as well as any other significant matters arising from the audit to you in our Audit Findings Report in July 2018.

# Reasonably possible risks identified

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

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
<b>Employee remuneration</b>	<p>Payroll expenditure represents a significant percentage (31%) of the Council's operating expenses.</p> <p>As the payroll expenditure comes from a number of individual transactions and an interface with a sub-system there is a risk that payroll expenditure in the accounts could be understated. We therefore identified completeness of payroll expenses as a risk requiring particular audit attention.</p>	<p>We will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate the Council's accounting policy for recognition of payroll expenditure for appropriateness.</li> <li>• gain an understanding of the Council's system for accounting for payroll expenditure and evaluate the design of the associated controls.</li> <li>• reconcile payroll expenditure reported in the financial statements to total expenditure recorded in the payroll system.</li> <li>• perform substantive analytical procedures.</li> </ul>
<b>Operating expenses</b>	<p>Non-pay expenses on other goods and services also represents a significant percentage of the Council's operating expenses. Management uses judgement to estimate accruals of un-invoiced costs.</p> <p>We identified completeness of non- pay expenses as a risk requiring particular audit attention.</p>	<p>We will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate the Council's accounting policy for recognition of non-pay expenditure for appropriateness.</li> <li>• gain an understanding of the Council's system for accounting for non-pay expenditure and evaluate the design of the associated controls.</li> <li>• Agree creditors to the ledger.</li> <li>• Substantively test significant creditor balances.</li> <li>• Review after date payments to ensure all liabilities have been identified.</li> </ul>

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# Other matters

## Other work

In addition to our responsibilities under the Code of Practice, we have a number of other audit responsibilities, as follows:

- We carry out work to satisfy ourselves that disclosures made in your Annual Governance Statement are in line with the guidance issued and consistent with our knowledge of the Council.
- We will read your Narrative Statement and check that it is consistent with the financial statements on which we give an opinion and that the disclosures included in it are in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice.
- We carry out work on your consolidation schedules for the Whole of Government Accounts process in accordance with NAO group audit instructions.
- We consider our other duties under the Act and the Code, as and when required, including:
  - giving electors the opportunity to raise questions about your 2017/18 financial statements, consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the 2017/18 financial statements;
  - issue of a report in the public interest; and
  - making a written recommendation to the Council, copied to the Secretary of State.
- We certify completion of our audit.

## 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 this report.

## Going concern

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

## Group Accounts

During 2017/18 the Council set up 3 Rivers Development Company Ltd. This was incorporated at Companies House on 28 April 2017. We will discuss with officers whether or not group financial statements will be required and review accordingly.



### The concept of materiality

The concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law. 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.

### Materiality for planning purposes

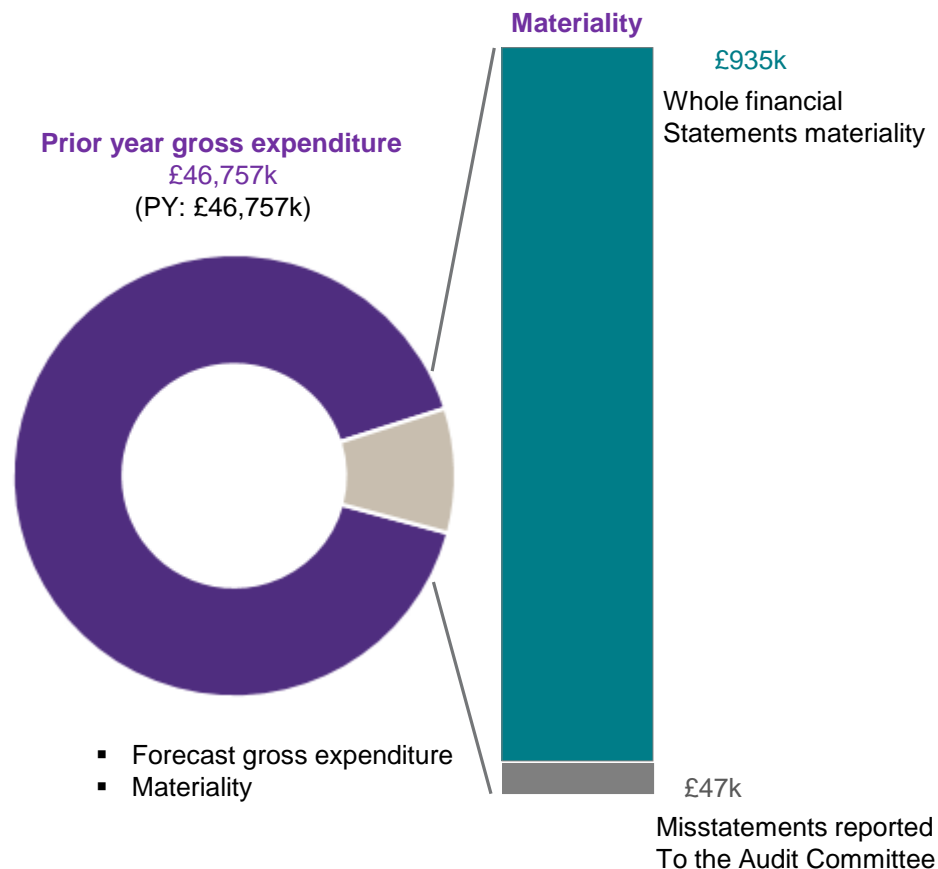
We propose to calculate financial statement materiality based on a proportion of the gross expenditure of the Council for the financial year. In the prior year we used the same benchmark. We have determined planning materiality (the financial statements materiality determined at the planning stage of the audit) to be £935k (PY £935k), which equates to 2% of your prior year gross expenditure. We design our procedures to detect errors in specific accounts at a lower level of precision.

We reconsider planning materiality if, during the course of our audit engagement, we become aware of facts and circumstances that would have caused us to make a different determination of planning materiality. We will also review materiality on receipt of the draft financial statements.

### Matters we will report to the Audit Committee

Whilst our audit procedures are designed to identify misstatements which are material to our opinion on the financial statements as a whole, we nevertheless report to the Audit Committee any unadjusted misstatements of lesser amounts to the extent that these are identified by our audit work. Under ISA 260 (UK) 'Communication with those charged with governance', we are obliged to report uncorrected omissions or misstatements other than those which are 'clearly trivial' to those charged with governance. ISA 260 (UK) defines 'clearly trivial' as matters that are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any quantitative or qualitative criteria. In the context of the Council, we propose that an individual difference could normally be considered to be clearly trivial if it is less than £46,750 (PY £46,750).

If management have corrected material misstatements identified during the course of the audit, we will consider whether those corrections should be communicated to the Audit Committee to assist it in fulfilling its governance responsibilities.



# Value for Money arrangements

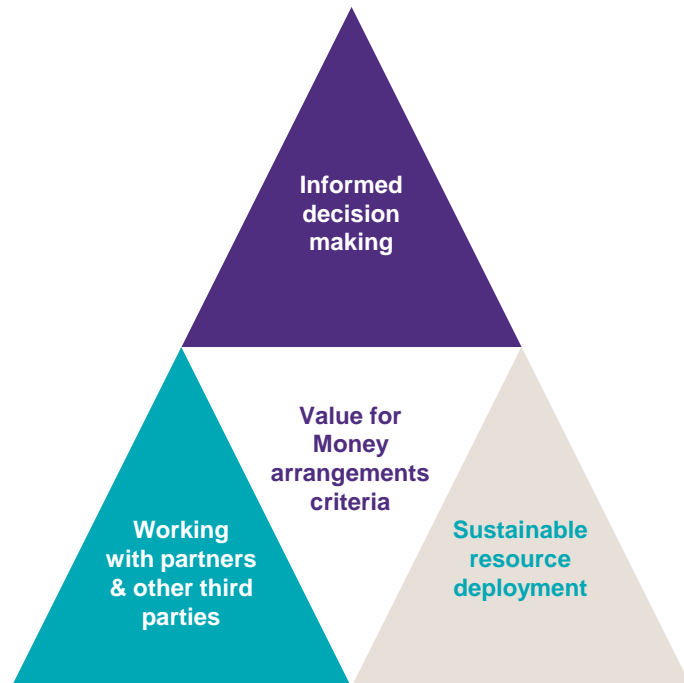
## Background to our VFM approach

The NAO issued its guidance for auditors on Value for Money work for 2017/18 in November 2017. The guidance states that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has proper arrangements in place.

The guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

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

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



## Significant VFM risks

Those risks requiring specific audit consideration and procedures to address the likelihood that proper arrangements are not in place at the Council to deliver value for money.



### Financial resilience

Like the majority of Councils Mid Devon District Council face a significant financial challenge over the medium term. The Council is forecasting an overspend of £181k in 2017/18 and has a funding gap of £4.1m through to 2021/22. The Council currently has a General Fund Reserve of £2,241k, which is above the approved minimum level of £2,100k. Without action General Fund Reserves will be eroded 2020/21.

In response to this risk we will review the significant assumptions made in the Council's medium term financial plan and progress towards closing the funding gap.



### Housing Company arrangements

During 2017/18 the Council set up 3 Rivers Development Company Ltd. This was incorporated at Companies House on 28 April 2017. This represents a new, innovative way to deliver services.

In response to this risk we will review the Council's arrangements for setting up, monitoring and reporting the performance. We will also review the governance arrangements in place.

# Audit logistics, team & audit fees



**Geraldine Daly, Engagement Lead**



**Andrew Davies, Audit Manager**



**Victoria Redler, Audit Incharge**

## Audit fees

The planned audit fees are £47,700 (PY: £47,700) for the financial statements audit and £6,908 for the certification of housing benefit subsidy. Our fees for grant certification cover only housing benefit subsidy certification, which falls under the remit of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Fees in respect of other grant work, such as reasonable assurance reports, are shown under 'Fees for other services'.

In setting your fee, we have assumed that the scope of the audit, and the Council and its activities, do not significantly change.

## Our requirements

To ensure the audit is delivered on time and to avoid any additional fees, we have detailed our expectations and requirements in the following section 'Early Close'. If the requirements detailed overleaf are not met, we reserve the right to postpone our audit visit and charge fees to reimburse us for any additional costs incurred.

# Early close

## Meeting the early close timeframe

Bringing forward the statutory date for publication of audited local government accounts to 31 July this year, across the whole sector, is a significant challenge for local authorities and auditors alike. For authorities, the time available to prepare the accounts is curtailed, while, as auditors we have a shorter period to complete our work and face an even more significant peak in our workload than previously. It is pleasing to note that the Council has worked hard and in partnership with Grant Thornton over the past two years to ensure that the opinion on the audit has been able to be issued in mid July. This provides an excellent basis to fulfil this deadline for 2017/18.

We have carefully planned how we can make the best use of the resources available to us during the final accounts period. We have focused on:

- The elements and learning from the previous two years so that the same approaches can be utilised
- bringing forward as much work as possible to interim audits
- starting work on final accounts audits as early as possible, by agreeing which authorities will have accounts prepared significantly before the end of May
- seeking further efficiencies in the way we carry out our audits
- working with you to agree detailed plans to make the audits run smoothly, including early agreement of audit dates, working paper and data requirements and early discussions on potentially contentious items.

We are satisfied that, if all these plans are implemented, we will be able to complete your audit and those of our other local government clients in sufficient time to meet the earlier deadline.

## Client responsibilities

Where individual clients do not deliver to the timetable agreed, we need to ensure that this does not impact on audit quality or absorb a disproportionate amount of time, thereby disadvantaging other clients. We will therefore conduct audits in line with the timetable set out in audit plans. Where the elapsed time to complete an audit exceeds that agreed due to a client not meeting its obligations we will not be able to maintain a team on site. Similarly, where additional resources are needed to complete the audit due to a client not meeting their obligations we are not able to guarantee the delivery of the audit by the statutory deadline. Such audits are unlikely to be re-started until very close to, or after the statutory deadline. In addition, it is highly likely that these audits will incur additional audit fees.

## Our requirements

To minimise the risk of a delayed audit or additional audit fees being incurred, you need to ensure that you:

- produce draft financial statements of good quality by the deadline you have agreed with us, including all notes, the narrative report and the Annual Governance Statement.
- ensure that good quality working papers are available at the start of the audit, in accordance with the working paper requirements schedule that we have shared with you.
- ensure that the agreed data reports are available to us at the start of the audit and are reconciled to the values in the accounts, in order to facilitate our selection of samples.
- ensure that all appropriate staff are available on site throughout (or as otherwise agreed) the planned period of the audit.
- respond promptly and adequately to audit queries.

In return, we will ensure that:

- the audit runs smoothly with the minimum disruption to your staff.
- you are kept informed of progress through the use of an issues tracker and weekly meetings during the audit.
- we are available to discuss issues with you prior to and during your preparation of the financial statements.

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# Independence & non-audit services

## Auditor independence

Ethical Standards and ISA (UK) 260 require us to give you timely disclosure of all significant facts and matters that may bear upon the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm or covered persons, relating to our independence. We encourage you to contact us to discuss these or any other independence issues with us. We will also discuss with you if we make additional significant judgements surrounding independence matters.

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 Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and we as a firm, and each covered person, confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements. Further, we have complied with the requirements of the National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note 01 issued in December 2016 which sets out supplementary guidance on ethical requirements for auditors of local public bodies.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Ethical Standard. For the purposes of our audit we have made enquiries of all Grant Thornton UK LLP teams providing services to the Council.

## Non-audit services

The following non-audit services were identified:

Service	Fees £	Threats	Safeguards
<b>Audit related</b>			
Certification of Housing Capital Receipts grant	1,500	Self-Interest (because this is a recurring fee)	The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the fee for this work is £1,500 in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £47,700 and in particular relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP's turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level.

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The amounts detailed are fees agreed to-date for audit related to be undertaken by Grant Thornton UK LLP in the current financial year. There are no non-audit services to be undertaken by Grant Thornton. These services are consistent with the Council's policy on the allotment of non-audit work to your auditors. Any changes and full details of all fees charged for audit related and non-audit related services by Grant Thornton UK LLP and by Grant Thornton International Limited network member Firms will be included in our Audit Findings report at the conclusion of the audit.

None of the services provided are subject to contingent fees.

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# Appendices

## A. Revised ISAs

# Appendix A: Revised ISAs

Detailed below is a summary of the key changes impacting the auditor's report for audits of financial statement for periods commencing on or after 17 June 2016.

<b>Section of the auditor's report</b>	<b>Description of the requirements</b>
<b>Conclusions relating to going concern</b>	We will be required to conclude and report whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The directors use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate</li><li>• The directors have disclosed identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Council's ability to continue as a going concern.</li></ul>
<b>Material uncertainty related to going concern</b>	We will need to include a brief description of the events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the Council's ability to continue as a going concern when a material uncertainty has been identified and adequately disclosed in the financial statements. Going concern material uncertainties are no longer reported in an Emphasis of Matter section in our audit report.
<b>Other information</b>	We will be required to include a section on other information which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsibilities of management and auditors regarding other information</li><li>• A statement that the opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information unless required by law or regulation</li><li>• Reporting inconsistencies or misstatements where identified</li></ul>
<b>Additional responsibilities for directors and the auditor</b>	We will be required to include the respective responsibilities for directors and us, as auditors, regarding going concern.
<b>Format of the report</b>	The opinion section appears first followed by the basis of opinion section.



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