

Audit Committee Update

Mid Devon District Council

Year ended 31 March 2016

31 May 2016

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Introduction

This paper provides the Audit Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

At the last Audit Committee on 15 March we alerted Members of the Audit Committee to three publications that Grant Thornton has produced at the time. In this report, we have included the links so that Members can access these reports electronically. The last report is a new publication on Mental Health and collaboration.

- Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company; <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company/>
- Knowing the Ropes – Audit Committee; Effectiveness Review ; www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/knowing-the-ropes--audit-committee-effectiveness-review-2015/
- Making devolution work: A practical guide for local leaders (October 2015) www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/making-devolution-work/
- Joining up the dots, not picking up the pieces - Partnership working in mental health (April 2016) <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/partnership-working-in-mental-health/>

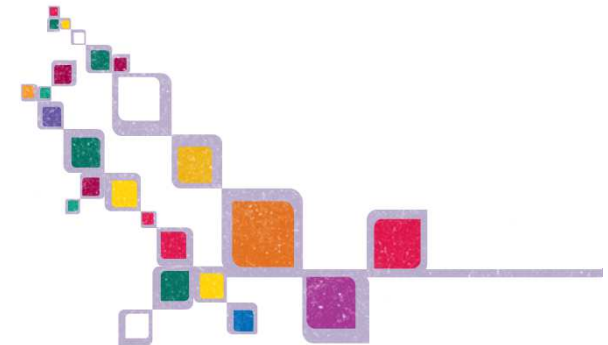
If you would like further information on any items in this briefing, or would like to register with Grant Thornton to receive regular email updates on issues that are of interest to you, please contact either your Engagement Lead or Engagement Manager.



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Progress at 26 February 2016

Work	Planned date	Complete?	Comments
<p>2015/16 Accounts Audit Plan</p> <p>We are required to issue a detailed accounts audit plan to the Council setting out our proposed approach in order to give an opinion on the Council's 2014-15 financial statements.</p>	January 2016 to March 2016.	Yes	Audit plan was presented to the March Audit Committee agenda.
<p>Interim accounts audit</p> <p>Our interim fieldwork visit includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating our review of the Council's control environment • updating our understanding of financial systems • review of Internal Audit reports on core financial systems • early work on emerging accounting issues • early substantive testing • proposed Value for Money conclusion. 	January to March 2016.	Yes	We had no findings to report following the interim audit. The summary of our interim review was presented to the March Audit Committee.
<p>2015/16 final accounts audit</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audit of the 2015/16 financial statements • proposed opinion on the Council 's accounts 	June 2016.	Not yet due.	Our work will commence in early June. We intend to report our findings and give our audit opinion to the July Audit Committee.

Progress at 20 May 2016

Work	Planned date	Complete?	Comments
<p>Value for Money (VfM) conclusion</p> <p>The scope of our work to inform the 2015/16 VfM conclusion has recently been subject to consultation from the National Audit Office. The audit guidance on the auditor's work on value for money arrangements was published on 9 November 2015.</p> <p>Auditors are required to reach their statutory conclusion on arrangements to secure VFM based on the following overall evaluation criterion: <i>In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.</i></p> <p>To help auditors to consider this overall evaluation criterion, the following sub-criteria are intended to guide auditors in reaching their overall judgements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed decision making • Sustainable resource deployment • Working with partners and other third parties. <p>We will be required to report by exception if we conclude that we are not satisfied that the Council has in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources for the relevant period.</p>	<p>January to July 2016</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>The guidance and supporting information includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the legal and professional framework; • definitions of what constitute 'proper arrangements'; • guidance on the approach to be followed by auditors in relation to risk assessment, with auditors only required to carry out detailed work in areas where significant risks have been identified; • evaluation criteria to be applied; • reporting requirements; • CCG specific guidance. <p>The guidance is available at https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/</p> <p>Now that the finalised auditor guidance we have carried out an initial risk assessment to determine our approach and reported this in our Audit Plan, presented in March.</p> <p>Our work will be reported in the Audit Findings Report presented to the July meeting of the Audit Committee.</p>

Progress at 20 May 2016

Work	Planned date	Complete?	Comments
Certify the Council's WGA accounts	August 2016.	Not yet due.	As the deadline for the Council's submission is likely to be July 2016, we will plan our work for August.
Grant claims and certification. We anticipate that we will be required to certify the Council's 2015/16 Housing benefit and council tax subsidy claim.	June 2016 to November 2015.	Not yet due	The work on the 2015/16 claim will be carried out between June 2016 and November 2016.
Other grant claims In addition, in 2015, we have undertaken the, under a separate engagement, certification of the Council's: - HCA Backlog maintenance claim; and - Pooling of capital receipts claim. Should these be required	August 2016 – October 2016.	Not yet due.	
Other activity undertaken Meetings with: 24 February - Chief Executive, Leader and head of Finance 03 March – Monitoring Officer and Solicitor 13 May - Chief Executive			

Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company

Local government is evolving as it looks for ways to protect front-line services. These changes are picking up pace as more councils introduce alternative delivery models to generate additional income and savings.

'Better together' is the next report in our series looking at alternative delivery models and focuses on the key areas to consider when deciding to set up a joint venture (JV), setting it up and making it successful.

JVs have been in use for many years in local government and remain a common means of delivering services differently. This report draws on our research across a range of JVs to provide inspiring ideas from those that have been a success and the lessons learnt from those that have encountered challenges.

Key findings from the report:

- JVs continue to be a viable option – Where they have been successful they have supported councils to improve service delivery, reduce costs, bring investment and expertise and generate income
- There is reason to be cautious – Our research found a number of JVs between public and private bodies had mixed success in achieving outcomes for councils
- There is a new breed of JVs between public sector bodies – These JVs can be more successful at working and staying together. There are an increasing number being set up between councils and wholly-owned commercial subsidiaries that can provide both the commercialism required and the understanding of the public sector culture.

Our report, Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company, can be downloaded from our website:

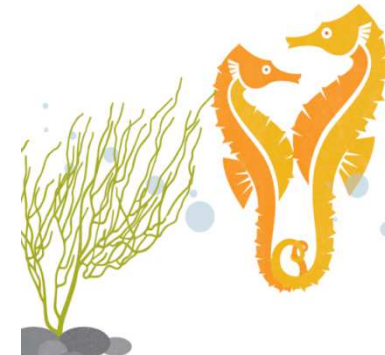
<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company/>

Grant Thornton reports

Grant Thornton
An instinct for growth

ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Better together
Building a successful
joint venture company



Knowing the Ropes – Audit Committee Effectiveness Review

Grant Thornton reports

We have published our first cross-sector review of Audit Committee effectiveness encompassing the corporate, not for profit and public sectors.

It provides insight into the ways in which audit committees can create an effective role within an organisation's governance structure and understand how they are perceived more widely. The report is structured into four key issues:

- What is the status of the audit committee within the organisation?
- How should the audit committee be organised and operated?
- What skills and qualities are required in the audit committee members?
- How should the effectiveness of the audit committee be evaluated?

The detailed report is available here

<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/knowning-the-ropes--audit-committee-effectiveness-review-2015/>



Joining up the dots, not picking up the pieces

Partnership working in mental health

Summary report of our mental health collaboration summit

Mental ill health costs the economy over £100 million each year and affects one in four people. However, responding to issues related to an underlying mental illness does not solely sit within the remit of health professionals. With many parts of the public sector needing to respond, and each facing significant financial pressures, collaboration around this issue is essential to provide high quality care and make savings to the wider public purse.

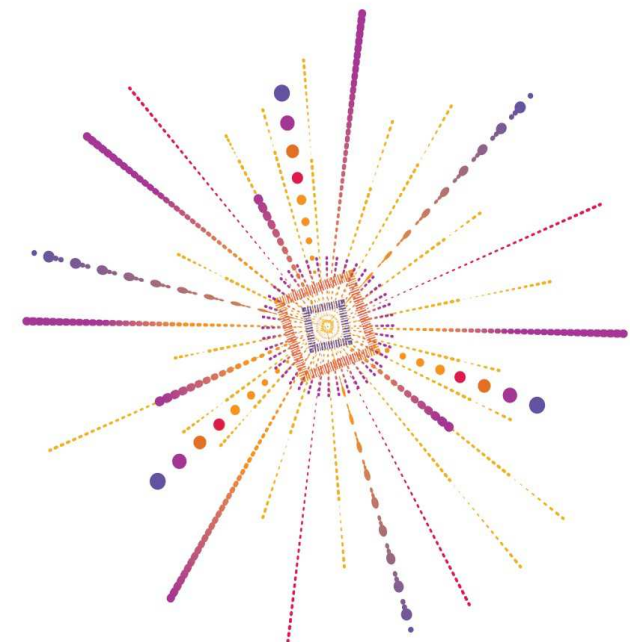
This paper draws together examples of successful collaboration between public services and feedback from a Midlands round table discussion – where the West Midlands Combined Authority has set up a mental health commission – to look at how different services have overcome some of the traditional barriers and demarcation lines between organisations.

The key messages are:

- The unpredictable nature of mental health symptoms can mean that the first point of contact is via emergency services, with ambulance, fire and rescue or police officers being present. The cost of services not being available at the right place at the right time can be huge, in terms of the personal suffering of individuals and costs to the wider system
- Often relatively modest amounts of money targeted at specific initiatives such as street triage or community cafes can make a huge difference in improving the availability of important services
- An impact can be made without the need for expensive structural change. Most importantly, it requires a genuine approach to collaboration and a culture of putting the patient first
- Investing in collaborative initiatives focussing on the needs of mental health patients were undoubtedly resulting in savings elsewhere to the public purse. Examples include:
 - 92% reduction in detentions under section 136 of the Mental Health Act in Cheshire and Wirral; 50% reduction in Birmingham and Solihull; 39% in Nottinghamshire; 30% in Kent
 - 647 A&E attendances avoided by one street triage team in one year in Birmingham and Solihull
 - 80% remission in psychosis through early intervention in Derbyshire
 - 25% of unemployed users of the café run by the Manchester Mind Young Adults Services and Projects team have gone on to find employment.

Grant Thornton reports

Challenge question:
Is the trust familiar with this report?



Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally

Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally is a strategy for English local authorities that is the result of collaboration by local authorities and key stakeholders from across the counter fraud landscape .

This strategy is the result of an intensive period of research, surveys, face-to-face meetings and workshops. Local authorities have spoken openly about risks, barriers and what they feel is required to help them improve and continue the fight against fraud and to tackle corruption locally.

Local authorities face a significant fraud challenge. Fraud costs local authorities an estimated £2.1bn a year. In addition to the scale of losses, there are further challenges arising from changes in the wider public sector landscape including budget reductions, service remodelling and integration, and government policy changes. Local authorities will need to work with new agencies in a new national counter fraud landscape.

The strategy:

- calls upon local authorities to continue to tackle fraud with the dedication they have shown so far and to step up the fight against fraud in a challenging and rapidly changing environment
- illustrates the financial benefits that can accrue from fighting fraud more effectively
- calls upon central government to promote counter fraud activity in local authorities by ensuring the right further financial incentives are in place and helping them break down barriers to improvement
- updates and builds upon Fighting Fraud Locally 2011 in the light of developments such as The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy and the first UK Anti-Corruption Plan
- sets out a new strategic approach that is designed to feed into other areas of counter fraud and corruption work and support and strengthen the ability of the wider public sector to protect itself from the harm that fraud can cause.

The strategy can be downloaded from

<http://www.cipfa.org/services/counter-fraud-centre/fighting-fraud-and-corruption-locally>

CIPFA publication



Glossary

Abbreviation	Detail
HCA	Homes and Community Agency
JV	Joint Venture
WGA	Whole of Government Accounts



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