

# Annual Audit Letter

Central Bedfordshire Council

Audit 2008/09

December 2009



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## Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
  - any third party.
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# Key messages

**This report summarises the findings from our 2008/09 audits of Bedfordshire County Council, Mid Bedfordshire Council and South Bedfordshire District Councils. It includes messages arising from the audit the accounts of the demised authorities and the results of the work I have undertaken to assess the way in which the demised authorities used their resources. In addition I have included the key messages from our recent assessment of the way the new Central Bedfordshire Council manages its performance.**

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## Accounts

- 1** Central Bedfordshire Council was required to prepare and approve the accounts for Bedfordshire County Council (BCC), Bedfordshire Pension Fund, Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire District Councils by 31 July 2009. The Council met that deadline with the four sets of accounts approved at the Central Bedfordshire Audit Committee of 27 July 2009.
- 2** Our audit found some errors in all four sets of the approved accounts. The Council agreed to correct a number of these, but officers chose not to amend for a number of others. These errors were not so significant as to distort the overall financial position of the Councils. However, I reported the errors I identified to Central Bedfordshire Council's Audit Committee (as those charged with the governance of the Council), who concurred with officers decision not to amend the accounts for those errors. The Audit Committee formally provided me with their rationale for not adjusting the accounts for these errors.
- 3** As a result of my work, I concluded that the accounts for all three demised authorities and the Pension Fund 'presented fairly' the financial position at the 31 March (an unqualified audit opinion) and the income and expenditure for that financial year.
- 4** Our work on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which was carried out in 2008, although focused on identifying potential gaps and areas where additional review would yield benefit, found many positives in the approach and actions being taken to establish the new councils. There was evident commitment to achieving successful implementation of re-organisation and strong public service services from the County Council. Despite a very challenging timescale all councils demonstrated clear recognition of the need to maintain good local government services during the transition, whilst also devoting capacity and focus to establishing new and ambitious councils.
- 5** Work is in progress to disaggregate the BCC balance sheet as at 31 March 2009. A timetable has been drawn up with a view to completing the exercise by 31 December 2009. There are still some significant issues to be resolved between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, in particular the treatment of the County Farms.

- 6 An enhanced reporting framework (International Financial Reporting Standards) is to apply to all Councils accounts in 2010/11. The new Central Bedfordshire Council has developed a project plan to implement these standards and is progressing with the implementation of this plan.

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### Use of resources and value for money conclusion

- 7 We assess how the Council makes use of the resources at its disposal to provide local services. Due to local government reorganisation in Bedfordshire I am not required to give a scored Use of Resources assessment for the three demised authorities for 2008/09. I am however required to give a value for money conclusion.
- 8 As a result of my assessment, I concluded that the both Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire District Councils had proper arrangements in place for the way that they managed their use of resources. However, my value for money conclusion for Bedfordshire County Council was qualified due to weaknesses identified in arrangements to ensure data quality and performance management.

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### Managing performance and organisational assessment

- 9 The detail of the Council's Managing Performance and Organisational Assessment are being reported separately by the Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead for Bedfordshire, Nigel Smith. The key messages are however set out in this Letter.
- 10 The Council has clear aims. Some plans for improvement are already in place. Other plans are being developed to make sure it can deliver improvement in services that matter most to residents. Councillors and officers are clear about what they want to achieve for local people and they work well together. The Council works well with local partners such as the NHS and the Fire and Rescue Service and is keen to take advantage of new opportunities such as the Total Place project which aims to improve the lives of local people and improve value for money. The Council is well prepared to make future improvements.
- 11 The Council is developing plans to improve poorly performing services, for example, adult social care. Education results need to be better in certain areas and steps are being taken to improve schools' performance. The area is becoming cleaner, safer and greener. Housing management and homelessness are particular challenging problems. The Council is supporting residents and business through the recession. Recent research shows that overall the area is performing better economically. However, the south of the area is not performing well and this could make the difference in opportunity for people living in different parts of Central Bedfordshire even greater. Clear plans are needed from the Council and its partners to show how they intend to manage growth.

## Key messages

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### Financial standing

- 12** The last year has seen the country enter a significant economic recession. The consequence locally, is an increasing demand for public services and the likelihood of reduced levels of central government funding. Together, these provide a significant challenge for local councils as they seek to continue to provide services to local residents, whilst maintaining a sound financial position.
- 13** In addition to the challenges of economic recession the Council is facing considerable budget pressures in 2009/10, with a forecast overspend for the year of £8.6m.
- 14** Directorate action plans identify total savings of £4.3m for 2009/10, of which £0.6m are classified as high risk in terms of achievement. This therefore leaves £4.9m of the projected overspend which still has to be addressed. Directors have been instructed to identify further actions to identify savings and potential under spends to address the overspend. Officers have informed Members that any overspend could potentially take the Council into deficit at the year end.
- 15** I will continue to monitor the Council's response and actions in this key area. It is particularly important to identify and understand the reasons for the 2009/10 projected overspend so that an accurate budget can be set for 2010/11.

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### Audit fees

- 16** The final audit fees for both Bedfordshire County Council and South Bedfordshire District Council were both higher than the fee that I initially planned. Additional fees were incurred on the County audit as a result of additional work required on data quality, and impairment. For South Bedfordshire additional work was required in respect of capital accounting in order to issue the opinion on the accounts. Details of the actual fees for all three authorities are provided at Table 2.

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### Independence

- 17** As the External Auditor appointed to audit the Council and the three demised authorities, I have to maintain my independence. I can confirm that this audit has been carried out in accordance with the Audit Commission's policies on integrity, objectivity and independence.

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### Recommendations

- 18** I have made a number of recommendations within this letter, to further develop the arrangements in place at the Council, with the purpose of delivering better outcomes for the residents of the Council. The Council should monitor the implementation of these recommendations.

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# Financial statements and annual governance statement

**The Council's financial statements and annual governance statement are an important means by which the Council accounts for its stewardship of public funds.**

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## Audit opinions

- 19** I issued an unqualified opinion on Mid Bedfordshire District Council's (MBDC) accounts on 2 October 2009, the County Council's and Pension Fund accounts on 17 November and South Bedfordshire DC's (SBDC) accounts on 30 November 2009. In my opinion the four sets of accounts present fairly the financial position of each of the three Councils and the Pension Fund as at 31 March 2009 and their income and expenditure for the year then ended.
- 20** Before giving my opinion, I reported to those charged with governance, in this case the Central Bedfordshire Audit Committee, on the issues arising from the 2008/09 audit. I presented my reports on 21 September and 30 October 2009.
- 21** Responsibility for the administration of the Bedfordshire Pension Fund transferred to Bedford Borough on 1 April 2009. Therefore I also reported the issues arising from the audit of the Pension Fund to the Bedford Borough Pension Committee.
- 22** The transfer of responsibility for the administration of the pension fund did not have an impact on the timeliness or accuracy of the pension fund accounts submitted for audit.

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## Accounting issues

- 23** We received all four sets of accounts for audit on 27 July 2009, the date that they were approved by Central Bedfordshire Audit Committee. As Central Bedfordshire was responsible for preparing three sets of accounts for predecessor authorities it was required to approve the accounts by 31 July 2009 rather than by the 30 June deadline specified in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.
- 24** I presented my Annual Governance Reports (AGR) for the County Council, MBDC and the Pension Fund to the Central Bedfordshire Audit Committee on 21 September 2009. The SBDC AGR was reported to the Audit Committee on 30 October 2009 together with an updated report for the County Council. These reports included the full details of the issues arising from our audit of the accounts. I reported the adjusted and unadjusted errors that my audits had found. I requested that the Audit Committee formally consider the audit errors, for which officers had chosen not to adjust the accounts for. This consideration was formally recorded in a Letter to me, which allowed me to conclude my audit procedures and issue my audit opinion as set out above.

## Financial statements and annual governance statement

- 25 We identified three material errors in the Bedfordshire County Council accounts, one material error in the Mid Bedfordshire accounts and five material errors in the South Bedfordshire accounts. There were no material errors identified in the Pension Fund accounts. The key issues, as reported in the four Annual Governance Reports, are summarised Table 1.

**Table 1 Key issues as reported in the Annual Governance Reports for Bedfordshire CC, Bedfordshire Pension Fund, Mid Bedfordshire DC and South Bedfordshire DC.**

<b>Key issues reported in Annual Governance Reports.</b>
<b>Bedfordshire County Council</b>
Area Based Grant (ABG) of £17.5m had been incorrectly apportioned over the service headings in the income and expenditure account rather than being consolidated with Revenue Support Grant (RSG) under "non specific" grants.
In addition, as a result of an accounting error the income and expenditure in relation to the ABG was apportioned across service headings twice. As a result both income and expenditure for a number of services headings were overstated.
There was a material error in the Cash Flow statement. Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) debt of £27.243m which the County Council had held on behalf of Luton Borough Council was incorrectly shown as being repaid.
In 2008/09 Internal Audit found weaknesses in the new SAP payroll system and issued a limited assurance opinion. As in previous years, we carried out additional substantive testing on the payroll figure in the statement of accounts.
<b>Bedfordshire Pension Fund</b>
In the 2007/08 Pension Fund Annual Governance Report we recommended that measures be put in place to ensure the pensionable pay figures included in the monthly returns from admitted and scheduled bodies are complete and accurate. During 2008/09 Internal Audit carried out specific work on this area and we have been able to rely on their work to gain assurance as to the reasonableness of the figures for employee contributions included in the Fund Account.
Our audit also found that not all admitted bodies provide payroll data to the Pension Fund. We have therefore recommended that all scheme employers should be reminded of the requirement to provide relevant payroll information to enable checks to be made on the contributions deducted.
<b>Mid Bedfordshire District Council</b>
The creditors balance included a debit balance of £1.364m representing housing benefit subsidy owed to the Council at 31 March 2009. As a debit balance this amount should have been included in the debtors balance. Consequently, both the debtors and creditors balances in the accounts had been understated by this amount.

**South Bedfordshire District Council**

Corporate and democratic" core costs in the income and expenditure account included £1.6m for staff time involved in local government reorganisation (LGR). These costs should have been included in the "exceptional costs of LGR" line of the income and expenditure account.

The total impairment of £14,974m on council dwellings and sheltered housing was not initially charged against the balances for individual properties on the revaluation reserve. When this was corrected it was found that £3.981m of the impairment should have been charged to income and expenditure, leaving a balance of £3.981m on the revaluation reserve against individual assets. This has meant that the impairment charged to the income and expenditure account and the transfer from the capital adjustment account have been increased by this amount.

The Council obtained a revaluation of its council dwellings and sheltered housing at 31 March 2009, as recommended in our final accounts memorandum on the 2007/08 audit. Councils are also required to obtain a valuation for resource accounting purposes each year as at 1 April. Although the Council obtained the resource accounting valuation for 1 April 2008 this was not put through the accounts. This valuation showed an overall increase in asset values as at 1 April 2008 of £12 million (a material increase). Correction of this omission has resulted in an increase in revaluation gains and impairments.

Depreciation on council dwellings and sheltered housing was incorrectly deducted from the balance as at 31 March 2009 provided by the external valuers. As a result the closing asset value was understated by £3.769m and entries in the revaluation reserve and capital adjustment account were incorrect. The same issue also arose for general fund properties where the value of the depreciation incorrectly deducted was £0.934m.

Our audit also found that whilst invoice requests are completed before sales ledger invoices are raised there were no checks evidenced on these. The Authority was dependent on staff within the exchequer team being aware of the types of income that could be invoiced and those staff who would be likely to raise them. This did not represent an adequate control on which we could rely for our opinion and therefore we carried out detailed testing on individual income items at the year end.

- 26** Officers agreed to correct all the material errors identified and some but not all of the other errors identified. I reported these issues to the Central Bedfordshire Audit Committee (as those charged with the governance of the Council) on 21 September and 30 October 2009, who agreed with your officers' decision not to amend the accounts for those errors. The Audit Committee formally provided me with a Letter of Representation, for each of the demised authorities, recording their rationale for not adjusting the accounts for the uncorrected errors identified. The final statements of account for all three authorities were approved by Central Bedfordshire Audit Committee on 30 October 2009.



## Financial statements and annual governance statement

- 27** Table 1 above includes a number of reporting issues in respect of capital accounting for South Bedfordshire DC. The size of the amendments reflects the fact that the Council was responsible for managing housing stock through a Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Capital accounting is a particularly complex area of local government accounting and there are specific rules for HRA assets and this has resulted in a number of amendments to the South Bedfordshire accounts in recent years. Central Bedfordshire Council's accounts for 2009/10 will include a Housing Revenue Account and the Council will also have inherited a significant asset base, including a number of schools, from Bedfordshire County Council. Accounting correctly for capital will therefore be a major challenge for the new Council and you will need to ensure that you have the appropriate skills, capacity and information systems in place to meet the relevant capital accounting requirements.
- 28** The working papers provided at the start of the audit to support the South Bedfordshire statements of account were not adequate and although further working papers were provided there remained gaps. In addition, due to local government reorganisation, some finance staff had left before the audit started and others had moved to new posts at the successor authority. Therefore the time taken to resolve audit queries was protracted in some cases.

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### Disaggregation

- 29** Work is in progress to disaggregate the Bedfordshire County Council balance sheet as at 31 March 2009. A timetable has been drawn up with a view to completing the exercise by 31 December 2009. There are still some significant issues to be resolved between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, in particular the treatment of the County Farms.

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### Certification of claims and returns

- 30** We certify the Council's claims and returns on the following basis.
- Claims below £100,000 are not subject to certification.
  - Claims between £100,000 and £500,000 are subjected to a reduced, light-touch certification.
  - Claims over £500,000 are subjected to a certification approach relevant to the auditor's assessment of the control environment and management preparation of claims. A robust control environment leads to a reduced certification approach for these claims.
- 31** The number grant claims audited at the three demised Councils are set out in the Table 2.

**Table 2 Council's claims and returns**

Authority	Number of claims above the certification threshold	Certified to date	Comments
Bedfordshire County Council	5	2	Sure Start Claim and Teachers Pensions return both subject to minor amendments and qualification reports.
Mid Bedfordshire	2	1	National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) claim subject to a qualification report.
South Bedfordshire	6	4	Housing base data and Housing Benefit claims both amended and qualified. National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) claim subject to a qualification report.

- 32** The reasons for the amendments and qualification letters on the Bedfordshire County Council Sure Start and Teachers Pensions claims and the Mid Bedfordshire NNDR claim were not significant and therefore there are no matters to report to those charged with governance.
- 33** The audits of the Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire housing benefits claims have however been problematic and an extensive qualification letter has been issued for South Bedfordshire. Following Local Government Reorganisation the same officers have been dealing with queries for both of these claims. In addition queries raised by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) in respect of the qualifications we reported to them in respect of the 2007/08 South Bedfordshire housing benefit claim have been received and are being responded to.
- 34** The new Central Bedfordshire Council is currently transferring data to its new housing benefits system. In implementing the new system and training staff in its use, the problems that have led to the qualifications of these claims in previous years need to be addressed.

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### International Financial Reporting Standards

- 35** International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) will be introduced for local government accounts from 2010/11 and will require the comparative figures for 2009/10 to be restated into the new accounting format. Applying IFRS will have significant implications for the way in which local authorities prepare their annual financial statements. This change is significant in a number of respects, particularly in the accounting for private finance initiative schemes, fixed assets and leases. A great deal of work will be required in the run up to preparing the 2010/11 accounts in order to establish and collect the information required and to account for it under the new accounting standards.
- 36** The Council has a detailed project plan in place, with clear roles and responsibilities, and progress will be reported regularly to the Audit Committee. The intention is to restate the 2008/09 financial statements early in the new year.

<b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>R1</b>	Ensure the appropriate skills, capacity and information systems are in place to meet the capital accounting requirements..
<b>R2</b>	Ensure that, in implementing the new housing benefits system and training staff in its use, the problems that have led to the qualifications of these claims in previous years are addressed.
<b>R3</b>	Monitor progress on implementing the IFRS plan to enable the Council meet the new reporting requirements under IFRS

# Value for money conclusion

**I assessed whether the demised Councils put in place adequate corporate arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources. This is known as the value for money (VFM) conclusion.**

- 37** I assessed the arrangements at all three demised Councils to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources against criteria specified by the Audit Commission for demised authorities.
- 38** I was able to issue unqualified conclusions for both Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire District Councils, stating that both councils had adequate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources.
- 39** My opinion for Bedfordshire County Council however was qualified on the basis that:
- the Council's arrangements for managing performance in key areas were inadequate during 2008/09; and
  - our testing of a sample of performance indicators found that, due to elapsed time and disaggregation following LGR, for three out of four of the indicators tested the figures used in the calculation could not be agreed back to systems reports or prime documentation.

# Managing performance and organisation assessment

- 40** The Audit Commission also assesses how well Central Bedfordshire Council manages and improves its services and contributes to wider community outcomes. The assessment considers how successful the Council is in delivering its corporate priorities. The priorities have been drawn from what matters most to local people.
- 41** As Central Bedfordshire was only established on 1 April 2009, the Audit Commission has not scored its assessment of how the Council manages its performance this year. In future years this assessment will be scored on a basis of 1 to 4, the same scoring mechanism as for use of resources.
- 42** The detail of the Council's Managing Performance and Organisational Assessment are being reported separately by the Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead for Bedfordshire, Nigel Smith. The key messages are however set out in the following paragraphs.
- 43** Central Bedfordshire Council now delivers services such as education and social care that used to be provided by the former Bedfordshire County Council plus all services previously provided by Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire district councils.
- 44** The Council has clear aims. Some plans for improvement are already in place. Other plans are being developed to make sure it can deliver improvement in services that matter most to residents. Councillors and officers are clear about what they want to achieve for local people and they work well together. The Council works well with local partners such as the NHS and the Fire and Rescue Service and is keen to take advantage of new opportunities such as the Total Place project which aims to improve the lives of local people and improve value for money. The Council is well prepared to make future improvements.
- 45** The Council is developing plans to improve poorly performing services, for example, adult social care. Education results need to be better in certain areas and steps are being taken to improve schools' performance. The area is becoming cleaner, safer and greener. Housing management and homelessness are particular challenging problems. The Council is supporting residents and business through the recession. Recent research shows that overall the area is performing better economically. However, the economy in the south of the area is not performing well and this could make the difference in opportunity for people living in different parts of Central Bedfordshire even greater. Clear plans are needed from the Council and its partners to show how they intend to manage growth.
- 46** The Council has a good understanding of its financial position and understands the impact of the recession. However, managing the budget for 2009/10 is a significant challenge. There are big decisions to be made on how best to make savings and ensure services offer value for money.

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# Local Government Reorganisation

- 47** In 2008 we carried out a project focusing on the key risks associated with local government reorganisation in Bedfordshire. This was particularly in relation to:
- transition planning;
  - staffing issues;
  - finance and governance; and
  - information management and technology.
- 48** The review, although focused on identifying potential gaps and areas where additional review would yield benefit, found many positives in the approach and actions being taken by the legacy authorities to establish the new councils. Despite a very challenging timescale all councils demonstrated clear recognition of the need to maintain good local government services during 2008, whilst also devoting capacity and focus to establishing new and ambitious councils.
- 49** The key areas for further action were discussed with the two new councils in October 2008 and are set out below.
- There were different understandings about the approach to shared services. This contributed to delays in decision making to establish future arrangements for the provision of some services. The criteria for agreeing which services will be shared and which disaggregated did not appear to be systematic.
  - Residents and service users did not appear to be consistently engaged in shaping future service provision.
  - There was varying utilisation of County Council expertise and knowledge.
  - Arrangements for agreeing and establishing ICT systems and data transfer were not well advanced, thus presenting a risk to future service delivery. This has been recognised as a key risk area and is now being monitored at Executive Director level. Consultants have been appointed to determine if the necessary activities and arrangements are in place for Vesting Day and to determine approaches to any risks identified.
  - The impact of delays in disaggregating staff created potential risks to delivery of other elements of the implementation plan.
  - Limited evidence of effective joint working between the two new councils to address the similar service specific issues they are facing.
- 50** There are a large number of shared services arrangements in place between the Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. We are undertaking a joint review at both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council, as part of our 2009/10 audits, to assess how the Councils are managing the risks associated with shared services.

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# Financial standing

- 51** The last year has seen the country enter a significant economic recession. The consequence locally, is an increasing demand for public services and the likelihood of reduced levels of central government funding. Together, these provide a significant challenge for local councils as they seek to continue to provide services to local residents, whilst maintaining a sound financial position.
- 52** In addition to the challenges of economic recession managing the budget for 2009/10 is a significant challenge for the new Central Bedfordshire Council. The Council is facing considerable budget pressures in 2009/10. The budget monitoring report to the Executive meeting on 10 November 2009 forecast an overspend for the year of £8.6m. The greatest pressures are on the Children's, Families and Schools budget with a forecast overspend of £2.9m and the Health and Housing and Social Care budget with a £4.8m forecast overspend, largely in respect of adult social care.
- 53** Action plans to address the overspend are in place in all of the Directorates and are monitored on a regular basis by both officers and Members. The action plans identify total savings of £4.3m, of which £0.6m are classified as high risk in terms of achievement. This therefore leaves £4.9m of the projected overspend which still has to be addressed. Directors have been instructed to identify further actions to identify savings and potential under spends to address the overspend.
- 54** Any revenue overspend will need to be met from general reserves. The expected closing balance on general reserves for 2009/10 is £3.9m (as reported to Executive on 10 November 2009) and officers have informed Members that any overspend could potentially take the Council into deficit at the year end.
- 55** I will continue to monitor the Council's response and actions in this key area. It is particularly important to identify and understand the reasons for the 2009/10 projected overspend so that an accurate budget can be set for 2010/11.

## Recommendation

- R4** Continue to take action to identify the reasons for the 2009/10 projected overspend so that an accurate budget can be set for 2010/11.

# Audit fees

- 56** The actual audit fee for Mid Bedfordshire Council was in line with the planned fee.
- 57** The actual fees for Bedfordshire County and South Bedfordshire District Councils were more than initially planned. We are in the process of agreeing the additional audit fees to be charged with your officers. The proposed additional fees are set out in Table 2 below.
- 58** As reported in the Annual Governance Report for Bedfordshire County Council the additional fee incurred on this audit was in respect of: additional work above that originally planned to assess your arrangements to secure value for money; additional work to verify the impairment figures in the accounts; and additional time required to audit the accounts in October which was in excess of the time included in our original budget.
- 59** Additional work was also required on the SBDC audit. As noted earlier there were issues with the working papers provided to support the statements of account and the availability of finance staff to resolve audit queries.
- 60** Our work on grant claims at all three authorities is still in progress and we will update the Audit Committee on the final fees for this work when the audits are complete.

**Table 3      Audit fees**

	BCC		SBDC		MBDC
	Planned	Variance	Planned	Variance	Planned and actual
Financial statements and annual governance statement including WGA and vfm conclusion	£257,783	+£15,000	£91,160	+£13,000	£75,412
Use of resources 2007/08	£19,047	0	23,430	0	£34,370
LGR	0	0	7690	0	£7690
Data quality 2007/08	£14,439	0	12,450	0	£8654
<b>Total audit fees</b>	<b>£291,269</b>	<b>+£15,000</b>	<b>£134,730</b>	<b>+£13,000</b>	<b>£126,126</b>
Certification of claims and returns	£37,079	TBC	£38,800	TBC	£32,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£328,348</b>		<b>£173,530</b>		<b>£158,126</b>



# Closing remarks

- 61** I have discussed and agreed this letter with both the Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Business Transformation of Central Bedfordshire Council. I will provide copies to all Members by 31 December 2009 and I will present this letter at the Audit Committee on 27 January 2010.
- 62** Further detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations in the areas covered by our audit are included in the reports issued to the Council during the year.

**Table 4      Audit reports**

Report	Date issued		
	BCC	SBDC	MBDC
Audit and inspection plan	June 2008	June 2008	June 2008
Annual governance report	21 September 2009 and 30 October 2009	30 October 2009	21 September 2009
Opinion on financial statements	17 November 2009	30 November 2009	2 October 2009
Value for money conclusion	17 November 2009	30 November 2009	2 October 2009
Annual audit letter	December 2009	December 2009	December 2009
Managing Performance and Organisational Assessment for Central Bedfordshire Council.	December 2009	December 2009	December 2009

- 63** Central Bedfordshire and the predecessor authorities, Bedfordshire County Council, South Bedfordshire and Mid Bedfordshire District Councils have all taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit. I also wish to thank the Council staff for their support and co-operation during the audit.

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**Availability of this letter**

**64** This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk), and also on the Council's website

Debbie Hanson  
District Auditor  
December 2009

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