

Audit plan

Central Bedfordshire Council

Audit 2011/12

Contents

- Introduction.....3
- Accounting statements and Whole of Government Accounts.....4
- Value for money.....10
- Key milestones and deadlines11
- The audit team12
- Independence and quality13
- Fees14
- Appendix 1 – Independence and objectivity17
- Appendix 2 – Basis for fee.....19
- Appendix 3 – Glossary20

Introduction

This plan sets out the work for the 2011/12 audit. The plan is based on the Audit Commission's risk-based approach to audit planning.

Responsibilities

The Audit Commission's Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies sets out the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the audited body. The Audit Commission has issued a copy of the Statement to you.

The Statement summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body begin and end and I undertake my audit work to meet these responsibilities.

I comply with the statutory requirements governing my audit work, in particular:

- the Audit Commission Act 1998; and
- the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.

My audit does not relieve management or the Audit Committee, as those charged with governance, of their responsibilities.

Accounting statements and Whole of Government Accounts

I will carry out the audit of the accounting statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB). I am required to issue an audit report giving my opinion on whether the accounts give a true and fair view.

Materiality

I will apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing my audit, in evaluating the effect of any identified misstatements, and in forming my opinion.

Identifying audit risks

I need to understand the Authority to identify any risk of material misstatement (whether due to fraud or error) in the accounting statements. I do this by:

- identifying the business risks facing the Authority, including assessing your own risk management arrangements;
- considering the financial performance of the Authority;
- assessing internal control, including reviewing the control environment, the IT control environment and internal audit; and
- assessing the risk of material misstatement arising from the activities and controls within the Authority's information systems.

I have considered the additional risks that are relevant to the audit of the accounting statements and have set these out below.

Identification of significant risks

A significant risk is a risk that requires special audit consideration, on the grounds that the risk could result in a material misstatement in the financial statements. Significant risks often relate to significant material non-routine transactions, events or judgemental matters. The significant risks I have identified are set out in the following table.

Table 1: **Significant risks**

Risk	Audit response
<p>Valuation of property, plant and equipment (PPE)</p> <p>The Authority is required to value PPE at fair value (with some exceptions). The valuation is usually an estimate, as such the figures are inherently subjective. In addition, the high monetary value of the assets held mean that even relatively modest changes in the assumptions and variables informing the valuation can have a material impact on the financial statements.</p>	<p>Review of controls over establishing estimates, including arrangements for instructing your valuers and controls over information provided to valuers.</p> <p>Procedures for reliance on the work of the valuer.</p> <p>Tests of detail on valuations and associated depreciation calculations.</p>
<p>Schools</p> <p>There may be a risk that the Authority has materially misstated its PPE due to the incorrect inclusion or omission of schools in its balance sheet.</p> <p>A significant number of Central Bedfordshire schools have gained Academy status in 2011/12. These schools will need to be removed from the Authority's balance sheet in the 2011/12 accounts.</p> <p>The Authority currently includes voluntary controlled school buildings in its balance sheet at nil value on the basis that they are owned by the Diocese. While the 2011 Code is not explicit in how different types of schools should be accounted for the Audit Commission's view is that Authorities should review schools on a case by case basis and justify their treatment with reference to IAS 16 and recognise them in the balance sheet where:</p>	<p>Review of the accounting treatment for the derecognition of schools that became academies in 2011/12.</p> <p>Review the Authority's consideration of its accounting treatment for schools and check that this is consistent with the requirements of IAS 16.</p>

Risk

(a) it is probable that future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to the entity; and
(b) the cost of the item can be measured reliably.

HRA reform

The government plans to reform local authority housing finance by adopting a self-financing model from 1 April 2012. This will be through a one-off settlement payment to or from central government on or before 28 March 2012. This will adjust the HRA debt of the Authority. Payments from government will in most cases be used to redeem an equal percentage of all PWLB debt held by the Authority. Due to the complexity, magnitude and timing of the HRA reform there is risk that the financial statements will be materially misstated.

Audit response

Review of management oversight of HRA reforms and transactions required by the Authority.
Tests of detail on the settlement payment or receipt.

Identification of specific risks

A specific risk is a specific issue related to a particular item in the financial statements. While a specific risk may not lead to a material misstatement in the accounts it does require me to carry out some focussed audit work in that area. I have identified the following specific risk for 2011/12.

Table 2: **Specific risk**

Risk	Audit response
<p>Section 106 agreements</p> <p>During the 2010/11 audit a member of the public asked questions about the Council's management and use of section 106 funds. Having reviewed the relevant documentation and comments from Council officers, I concluded that the issues raised did not affect my opinion on the financial statements or my value for money conclusion for 2010/11. I will be considering these issues further as part of my 2011/12 audit.</p>	<p>Review of Internal Audit's work on the procedures in place for managing section 106 monies.</p> <p>Review of the Authority's arrangements for ensuring that section 106 monies received are used in accordance with the terms of the relevant agreements.</p>

Testing strategy

My audit involves:

- review and re-performance of work of your internal auditors;
- testing of the operation of controls;
- reliance on the work of other auditors;
- reliance on the work of experts; and
- substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts.

I have sought to:

- maximise reliance, subject to review and re-performance, on the work of your internal auditors; and
- maximise the work that can be undertaken before you prepare your accounting statements.

The nature and timing of my proposed work is as follows, overleaf.

Table 3: Proposed work

	Review of internal audit	Controls testing	Reliance on the work of other auditors	Reliance on work of experts	Substantive testing
Interim visit	Main Accounting system Accounts payable Accounts Receivable Council Tax Rents Non-domestic rates (NNDR) Housing Benefits SWIFT Fully Funded schools	Main Accounting system (including cash and bank)			Payroll. Investments and other non-current assets – ownership. Repairs and maintenance of housing stock.
Final visit			Pensions assets and liabilities – auditor to Bedfordshire Pension Fund.	Pensions liabilities and assets – Hymans Robertson and our own consulting actuary. Valuation of property, plant and equipment – Authority’s in house valuers and Wilkes Head and Eve.	All material accounts balances and amounts. Year-end feeder system reconciliations. Substantive Analytical Review of the Rents, Council Tax and NNDR systems. Substantive testing of the SWIFT system.

Following my review of Internal Audit work and completion of walk throughs for all of the key financial systems I may have to carry out substantive testing on additional systems. I am able to carry forward assurance gained through controls testing of the Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable and Fully Funded schools systems from 2010/11.

I have provided officers with a schedule of working papers required to support the entries in the accounting statements.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside my work on the accounting statements, I will also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of my review and the nature of my report are specified by the National Audit Office.

Value for money

I am required to reach a conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

My conclusion on the Authority's arrangements is based on two criteria, specified by the Commission. These relate to the Authority's arrangements for:

- securing financial resilience – focusing on whether the Authority is managing its financial risks to secure a stable financial position for the foreseeable future; and
- challenging how the Council secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness – focusing on whether the Authority is prioritising its resources within tighter budgets and improving productivity and efficiency.

Identification of significant risks

I have not identified any additional significant risks that are relevant my conclusion on the Authority's arrangements. If my assessment changes, I will report this to the Audit Committee.

Key milestones and deadlines

The Authority is required to prepare the accounting statements by 30 June 2012. I aim to complete my work and issue my opinion and value for money conclusion by 30 September 2012.

Table 4: **Proposed timetable and planned outputs**

Activity	Date	Output
Opinion: controls and early substantive testing	January – April 2012	Pre statements memorandum
Opinion: receipt of accounts and supporting working papers	June 2012	
Opinion: substantive testing	June – September 2012	
Work to support value for money conclusion	February 2012	Auditor's report
Present Annual Governance Report at the Audit Committee	By 30 September 2012	Annual Governance Report
Issue opinion and value for money conclusion	By 30 September 2012	Auditor's report
Summarise overall messages from the audit	October 2012	Annual Audit Letter

The audit team

The key members of the audit team for the 2011/12 audit are as follows.

Table 5: **Audit team**

Name	Contact details	Responsibilities
Paul King District Auditor	paul-king@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 5811	Responsible for the overall delivery of the audit including quality of reports, signing the auditor's report and liaison with the Chief Executive.
Cathy O'Carroll Audit Manager	c-ocarroll@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 5830	Manages and coordinates the different elements of the audit work. Key point of contact for the Chief Finance Officer.

Independence and quality

Independence

I comply with the ethical standards issued by the APB and with the Commission's additional requirements for independence and objectivity as summarised in appendix 1.

I am aware of the following relationship that might constitute a threat to independence and that I am required to report to you. I have therefore put in place the following safeguard to reduce the threat.

Table 6: **Threats and safeguards**

Threat	Safeguard
A member of my staff previously worked with the Council's Head of Audit.	This member of staff will not be allocated any work that reviews Internal Audit in general or specific pieces of Internal Audit work.

Quality of service

I aim to provide you with a fully satisfactory audit service. If, however, you are unable to deal with any difficulty through me and my team please contact Chris Westwood, Director – Standards & Technical, Audit Practice, Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ (c-westwood@audit-commission.gov.uk) who will look into any complaint promptly and to do what he can to resolve the position.

If you are still not satisfied you may of course take up the matter with the Audit Commission's Complaints Investigation Officer (The Audit Commission, Westward House, Lime Kiln Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8SR).

Fees

The fee for the audit is £308,142, as set out in my letter of 7 April 2011.

The audit fee

The Audit Commission has set a scale audit fee of £308,142 which represents a 10 per cent reduction on the audit fee for 2010/11.

The scale fee covers:

- my audit of your accounting statements [and reporting on the Whole of Government Accounts return]; and
- my work on reviewing your arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources.

The scale fee reflects:

- the Audit Commission's decision not to increase fees in line with inflation;
- a reduction resulting from the new approach to local VFM audit work; and
- a reduction following the one-off work associated with the first-time adoption of International Financing Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Variations from the scale fee only occur where my assessments of audit risk and complexity are significantly different from those reflected in the 2010/11 fee. I have not identified significant differences and have therefore set the fee equal to the scale fee.

Assumptions

In setting the fee, I have made the assumptions set out in appendix 2. Where these assumptions are not met, I may be required to undertake more work and therefore increase the audit fee. Where this is the case, I will discuss this first with Chief Finance Officer and I will issue a supplement to the plan to record any revisions to the risk and the impact on the fee.

Specific actions you could take to reduce your audit fee

The Audit Commission requires me to inform you of specific actions you could take to reduce your audit fee. I have identified the following actions that you could take.

- Ensure that the weaknesses in controls in the Main Accounting, Payroll, Housing Benefits and SWIFT systems reported in my Annual Governance Report for 2010/11 are addressed to ensure that adequate controls are in place for 2011/12.
- Ensure that responsible officers are reminded of the importance of maintaining adequate evidence to support the accounts, in particular the debtors and creditors balances and the various Notes included in the accounts.

Total fees payable

In addition to the fee for the audit, the Audit Commission will charge fees for:

- certification of claims and returns; and
- the agreed provision of non-audit services under the Audit Commission's advice and assistance powers.

Based on current plans the fees payable are as follows.

Table 7: Fees

	2011/12 proposed	2010/11 actual	Variance
Audit	308,142	342,380	(34,238)
Certification of claims and returns	85,253	90,000	(4,747)
Non-audit work	0	5,600	(5,600)
Total	393,395	437,980	(44,585)

My indicative fee letter for 2010/11 issued in March 2010 estimated the fee for auditing 2010/11 claims would be £100,562. I expect the 2010/11 fee will be lower than the indicative fee and I estimate the fees for the audit of 2010/11 claims to be £90,000.

Separate to the audit fee of £342,380 noted above the Council received two rebates totalling £30,090 directly from the Audit Commission. This total rebate comprised £19,000 in respect of the transitional costs of the introduction of IFRS and £11,090 for a reduction in work on the Use of Resources assessment.

Appendix 1 – Independence and objectivity

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission must comply with the Commission’s Code of Audit Practice and Standing Guidance for Auditors. When auditing the accounting statements, auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB). These impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. The Audit Practice puts in place robust arrangements to ensure compliance with these requirements, overseen by the Audit Practice’s Director – Standards and Technical, who serves as the Audit Practice’s Ethics Partner.

Table 8: **Independence and objectivity**

Area	Requirement	How we comply
Business, employment and personal relationships	<p>Appointed auditors and their staff should avoid any official, professional or personal relationships which may, or could reasonably be perceived to, cause them inappropriately or unjustifiably to limit the scope, extent or rigour of their work or impair the objectivity of their judgement.</p> <p>The appointed auditor and senior members of the audit team must not take part in political activity for a political party, or special interest group, whose activities relate directly to the functions of local government or NHS bodies in general, or to a particular local government or NHS body.</p>	<p>All audit staff are required to declare all potential threats to independence. Details of declarations are made available to appointed auditors. Where appropriate, staff are excluded from engagements or safeguards put in place to reduce the threat to independence to an acceptably low level.</p>

Area	Requirement	How we comply
Long association with audit clients	The appointed auditor responsible for the audit should, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, be changed at least once every seven years, with additional consideration of threats to independence after five years.	The Audit Practice maintains and monitors a central database of assignment of auditors and senior audit staff to ensure this requirement is met.
Gifts and hospitality	The appointed auditor and members of the audit team must abide by the Commission's policy on gifts, hospitality and entertainment.	All audit staff are required to declare any gifts or hospitality irrespective of whether or not they are accepted. Gifts and Hospitality may only be accepted with line manager approval.
Non-audit work	<p>Appointed auditors should not perform additional work for an audited body (that is work above the minimum required to meet their statutory responsibilities) if it would compromise their independence or might result in a reasonable perception that their independence could be compromised.</p> <p>Auditors should not accept engagements that involve commenting on the performance of other auditors appointed by the Commission on Commission work without first consulting the Commission.</p> <p>Work over a specified value must only be undertaken with the prior approval of the Audit Commission's Director of Audit Policy and Regulation.</p>	All proposed additional work is subject to review and approval by the appointed auditor and the Director – Standards and Technical, to ensure that independence is not compromised.

Code of Audit Practice, Audit Commission Standing Guidance and APB Ethical Standards

Appendix 2 – Basis for fee

In setting the fee, I have assumed the following.

- The risk in relation to the audit of the accounting statements is not significantly different to that identified for 2010/11. For example:
 - internal controls are operating effectively; and
 - I secure the co-operation of other auditors.
- The risk in relation to my value for money responsibilities is not significantly different to that identified for 2010/11.
- Internal Audit meets professional standards.
- Internal Audit undertakes sufficient appropriate work on all systems that provide material figures in the accounting on which I can rely.
- The Authority provides:
 - good quality working papers and records to support the accounting statements and the text of the other information to be published with the statements;
 - other information requested within agreed timescales; and
 - prompt responses to draft reports.
- there are no questions asked or objections made by local government electors.

Where these assumptions are not met, I will have to undertake more work which is likely to result in an increased audit fee.

Appendix 3 – Glossary

Accounting statements

The annual statement of accounts that the Authority is required to prepare, which report the financial performance and financial position of the Authority in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

Annual Audit Letter

Report issued by the auditor to the Authority after the completion of the audit that summarises the audit work carried out in the period and significant issues arising from auditors' work.

Annual Governance Report

The auditor's report on matters arising from the audit of the accounting statements presented to those charged with governance before the auditor issues their opinion [and conclusion].

Annual Governance Statement

The annual report on the Authority's systems of internal control that supports the achievement of the Authority's policies aims and objectives.

Audit of the accounts

The audit of the accounts of an audited body comprises all work carried out by an auditor under the Code to meet their statutory responsibilities under the Audit Commission Act 1998.

Audited body

A body to which the Audit Commission is responsible for appointing the external auditor.

Auditing Practices Board (APB)

The body responsible in the UK for issuing auditing standards, ethical standards and associated guidance to auditors. Its objectives are to establish high standards of auditing that meet the developing needs of users of financial information and to ensure public confidence in the auditing process.

Auditing standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles and essential procedures with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the auditing standard concerned.

Auditor(s)

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

Code (the)

The Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies issued by the Audit Commission and approved by Parliament.

Commission (the)

The Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service in England.

Ethical Standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles relating to independence, integrity and objectivity that apply to the conduct of audits and with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the standard concerned.

Group accounts

Consolidated accounting statements of an Authority and its subsidiaries, associates and jointly controlled entities.

Internal control

The whole system of controls, financial and otherwise, that the Authority establishes to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, internal financial control and compliance with laws and regulations.

Materiality

The APB defines this concept as ‘an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of the accounting statements as a whole. A matter is material if its omission would reasonably influence the decisions of an addressee of the auditor’s report; likewise a misstatement is material if it would have a similar influence. Materiality may also be considered in the context of any individual primary statement within the accounting statements or of individual items included in them. Materiality is not capable of general mathematical definition, as it has both qualitative and quantitative aspects’.

The term ‘materiality’ applies only to the accounting statements. Auditors appointed by the Commission have responsibilities and duties under statute, as well as their responsibility to give an opinion on the accounting statements, which do not necessarily affect their opinion on the accounting statements.

Significance

The concept of ‘significance’ applies to these wider responsibilities and auditors adopt a level of significance that may differ from the materiality level applied to their audit of the accounting statements. Significance has both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

Those charged with governance

Those entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of the Authority. This term includes the members of the Authority and its Audit Committee.

Whole of Government Accounts

A project leading to a set of consolidated accounts for the entire UK public sector on commercial accounting principles. The Authority must submit a consolidation pack to the department for Communities and Local Government which is based on, but separate from, its accounting statements.

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0844 798 7070

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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.

