



# Shropshire & Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority audit plan

Year ending 31 March 2021



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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 Authority or all 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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# Key matters

## Factors

### Council developments

The Authority is forecasting another robust financial performance in year, and looking to the coming year with a balanced budget and required savings plans successfully identified and planned out. Per the most up to date financial data available the Authority are forecasting a £0.248m surplus against an approved revenue budget of £23.221m, with a healthy projected reserves position of around £14m.

Discussions remain ongoing with regards to possible changes in relation to the governance structure of the local Fire Service subject to a takeover bid by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia. We will continue to monitor developments and an ongoing dialogue with management.

### Impact of Covid 19 pandemic

The Authority's finance team, management and governance colleagues have adapted well to remote working arrangements. Processes and controls have been adapted where required to ensure that base level day to day financial management of the Authority's finances is maintained. Internal Audit continue to deliver their program, ensuring that assurance is provided to the governance function. Finances remain robust, with a high level of reserves in place.

However, the possibility of another wave of Covid 19 over the autumn and permanent changes to working, travel and leisure patterns present future uncertainties for the Authority in terms of possible impacts both on front line services and the way that administrative support is delivered.

## Our response

- As a firm, we are absolutely committed to audit quality and financial reporting in the local government sector. Our proposed work, as set further in our Audit Plan, has been agreed with the Director of Finance. Our fee remains under discussion with management and our regulator – further details are provided further in the plan.
- We will consider your arrangements for managing and reporting your financial resources as part of our work in completing our Value for Money work.
- We will continue to provide you with sector updates via our Standards, Audit and Performance updates.
- We have identified an increased incentive and opportunity for organisations in the public sector to manipulate their financial statements due to increasing financial pressures. We have identified a significant risk in regards to management override of control – refer to page 5
- The Authority's valuer reported a material uncertainty in regards to the valuation of properties in 2019/20 due to the Covid 19 pandemic and we expect significant uncertainty will continue in 2020/21. We identified a significant risk in regards to the valuation of properties – refer to page 6

# Introduction and headlines

## Purpose

This document provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Shropshire & Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority ('the Authority') 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 out 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 Shropshire & Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority. We draw your attention to both of these documents.

## 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:

- Authority's financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance (the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee); and
- Value for Money arrangements in place at the Authority for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee of your responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the Authority 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 Authority is fulfilling these responsibilities.

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

## Significant risks

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

- Management override of controls
- Valuation of land and buildings
- Valuation of net pension fund 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.

## Materiality

We have determined planning materiality to be £0.49m (PY £0.47m), which equates to approximately 2% of your prior year gross expenditure for the 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 £0.025m (PY £0.024m).

## Value for Money arrangements

Our risk assessment regarding your arrangements to secure value for money has not identified any significant risks at the planning stage.

## Audit logistics

Our interim visit took place in April and our final visit will take place during the summer. Our key deliverables are this Audit Plan, our Audit Findings Report and Auditor's Annual Report. Our audit approach is detailed in Appendix A.

Our fee for the audit will be £36,716 (PY: £30,471), subject to the Authority delivering a good set of financial statements and working papers.

We have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard (revised 2019) 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..

# Significant risks identified

Significant risks are defined by ISAs (UK) as risks that, in the judgement of the auditor, require special audit consideration. In identifying risks, audit teams consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood. Significant risks are those risks that have a higher risk of material misstatement.

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions (rebutted)	<p>Under ISA (UK) 240, there is a rebuttable presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p> <p>As external auditors in the public sector, we are also required to give regard to Practise Note 10, which interprets the ISA in a public sector context and directs us to consider whether the assumption also applies to expenditure.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA 240 and the nature of the revenue streams at the Authority, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue and expenditure recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- there is little incentive to manipulate revenue and expenditure recognition</li><li>- opportunities to manipulate revenue and expenditure recognition are very limited; and</li><li>- the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Shropshire &amp; Wrekin Fire &amp; Rescue Authority, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.</li></ul> <p>Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for Shropshire &amp; Wrekin Fire &amp; Rescue Authority.</p>
Management over-ride of controls	<p>Under ISA (UK) 240, there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that management override of controls is present in all entities. The Authority faces external scrutiny of its spending and this could potentially place management under undue pressure in terms of how they report performance.</p> <p>We therefore identified management override of control, in particular journals, management estimates and transactions outside the course of business as a significant risk of material misstatement.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate the design effectiveness of management controls over journals;</li><li>• Analyse the journals listing and determine the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals;</li><li>• Test unusual journals recorded during the year and after the draft accounts stage for appropriateness and corroboration;</li><li>• Gain an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied by management and consider their reasonableness with regard to corroborative evidence; and</li><li>• Evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions.</li></ul>

# Significant risks identified

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Valuation of land and buildings (PPE)	<p>The Authority revalues its land and buildings on an annual basis.</p> <p>This valuation represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved (approximately £25m in the prior period) and the sensitivity of this estimate to changes in key assumptions. .</p> <p>We have therefore identified valuation of land and buildings, particularly revaluations and impairments, as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.</p>	<p>We will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate 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>• Evaluate the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert;</li> <li>• Write to the valuer to confirm the basis on which the valuation was carried out to ensure that the requirements of the CIPFA code are met;</li> <li>• Challenge the information and assumptions used by the valuer to assess completeness and consistency with our understanding;</li> <li>• Test revaluations made during the year to see if they had been input correctly into the Authority’s balance sheet</li> </ul>
Valuation of the pension fund net liability	<p>The Authority’s pension fund net liability, as reflected in its balance sheet as the net defined benefit liability, represents a significant estimate in the financial statements.</p> <p>The pension fund liability is considered a significant estimate due to the size of the numbers involved (approximately £232m m as at 31 March 2020, including both the Firefighters’ and LGPS schemes) and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions.</p> <p>We therefore identified valuation of the Authority’s pension fund net liability as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatements.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update our understanding of the processes and controls put in place by management to ensure that the Authority’s pension fund net liability is not materially misstated and evaluate the design of the associated controls;</li> <li>• Evaluate the instructions issued by management to their management expert (an actuary) for this estimate and the scope of the actuary’s work;</li> <li>• Assess the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary who carried our the Authority’s pension fund valuation;</li> <li>• Assess the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Authority to the actuary to estimate the liability;</li> <li>• Test the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in the notes to the core financial statements with the actuarial report from the actuary;</li> <li>• Undertake procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made by reviewing the report of the consulting actuary (as auditor’s expert) and performing any additional procedures suggested within the report; and</li> <li>• Obtain assurances from the auditor of Shropshire Pension Fund as to the controls surrounding the validity and accuracy of membership data, contributions data and benefits data sent to the actuary by the pension fund and the fund assets valuation in the pension fund financial statements.</li> </ul>

# Accounting estimates and related disclosures

The Financial Reporting Council issued an updated ISA (UK) 540 (revised): *Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures* which includes significant enhancements in respect of the audit risk assessment process for accounting estimates.

## Introduction

Under ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018) auditors are required to understand and assess an entity's internal controls over accounting estimates, including:

- The nature and extent of oversight and governance over management's financial reporting process relevant to accounting estimates;
- How management identifies the need for and applies specialised skills or knowledge related to accounting estimates;
- How the entity's risk management process identifies and addresses risks relating to accounting estimates;
- The entity's information system as it relates to accounting estimates;
- The entity's control activities in relation to accounting estimates; and
- How management reviews the outcomes of previous accounting estimates.

As part of this process auditors also need to obtain an understanding of the role of those charged with governance, which is particularly important where the estimates have high estimation uncertainty, or require significant judgement.

Specifically do Standards, Audit and Performance Committee members:

- Understand the characteristics of the methods and models used to make the accounting estimates and the risks related to them;
- Oversee management's process for making accounting estimates, including the use of models, and the monitoring activities undertaken by management; and
- Evaluate how management made the accounting estimates?



# Accounting estimates and related disclosures

## Additional information that will be required

To ensure our compliance with this revised auditing standard, we will be requesting further information from management and those charged with governance during our audit for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Based on our knowledge of the Authority we have identified the following material accounting estimates for which this is likely to apply:

- Valuations of land and buildings, council dwellings and investment properties
- Depreciation
- Year end provisions and accruals
- Credit loss and impairment allowances
- Valuation of defined benefit net pension fund liabilities
- Fair value estimates

## The Authority's Information systems

In respect of the Authority's information systems we are required to consider how management identifies the methods, assumptions and source data used for each material accounting estimate and the need for any changes to these. This includes how management selects, or designs, the methods, assumptions and data to be used and applies the methods used in the valuations.

When the models used include increased complexity or subjectivity, as is the case for many valuation models, auditors need to understand and assess the controls in place over the models and the data included therein. Where adequate controls are not in place we may need to report this as a significant control deficiency and this could affect the amount of detailed substantive testing required during the audit.

If management has changed the method for making an accounting estimate we will need to fully understand management's rationale for this change. Any unexpected changes are likely to raise the audit risk profile of this accounting estimate and may result in the need for additional audit procedures.

We are aware that the Authority uses management experts in deriving some of its more complex estimates, e.g. asset valuations and pensions liabilities. However, it is important to note that the use of management experts does not diminish the responsibilities of management and those charged with governance to ensure that:

- All accounting estimates and related disclosures included in the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the financial reporting framework, and are materially accurate;
- There are adequate controls in place at the Authority over the models, assumptions and source data used in the preparation of accounting estimates.





### Estimation uncertainty

Under ISA (UK) 540 we are required to consider the following:

- How management understands the degree of estimation uncertainty related to each accounting estimate; and
- How management address this estimation uncertainty when selecting their point estimate.

For example, how management identified and considered alternative, methods, assumptions or source data that would be equally valid under the financial reporting framework, and why these alternatives were rejected in favour of the point estimate used.

The revised standard includes increased emphasis on the importance of the financial statement disclosures. Under ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018), auditors are required to assess whether both the accounting estimates themselves and the related disclosures are reasonable.

Where there is a material uncertainty, that is where there is a significant risk of a material change to the estimated carrying value of an asset or liability within the next year, there needs to be additional disclosures. Note that not all material estimates will have a material uncertainty and it is also possible that an estimate that is not material could have a risk of material uncertainty.

Where there is material estimation uncertainty, we would expect the financial statement disclosures to detail:

- What the assumptions and uncertainties are;
- How sensitive the assets and liabilities are to those assumptions, and why;
- The expected resolution of the uncertainty and the range of reasonably possible outcomes for the next financial year; and
- An explanation of any changes made to past assumptions if the uncertainty is unresolved.

### Planning enquiries

As part of our planning risk assessment procedures we have made enquiries of management via our Informing the Risk Assessment report which we use as a vehicle for updating our understanding of the Authority's controls framework. We will present this as a separate report and ask that the Committee review and approve the report to ensure we have a consistent understanding of the Authority's arrangements.

### Further information

Further details on the requirements of ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018) can be found in the auditing standard on the Financial Reporting Council's website:

[https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/0fa69c03-49ec-49ae-a8c9-cc7a2b65382a/ISA-\(UK\)-540\\_Revised-December-2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/0fa69c03-49ec-49ae-a8c9-cc7a2b65382a/ISA-(UK)-540_Revised-December-2018_final.pdf)

# 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 read your Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement to check that they are consistent with the financial statements on which we give an opinion and our knowledge of the Authority.
- We carry out work to satisfy ourselves that disclosures made in your Annual Governance Statement are in line with requirements set by CIPFA.
- 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 legislation and the Code, as and when required, including:
  - giving electors the opportunity to raise questions about your 2020/21 financial statements, consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the 2020/21 financial statements;
  - issuing a report in the public interest or written recommendations to the Council under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act).
  - application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under section 28 or a judicial review under section 31 of the Act
  - issuing an advisory notice under section 29 of the Act
- 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 regarding, and conclude on:

- whether a material uncertainty related to going concern exists; and
- the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements.

The Public Audit Forum has been designated by the Financial Reporting Council as a "SORP-making body" for the purposes of maintaining and updating Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom (PN 10). It is intended that auditors of public sector bodies read PN 10 in conjunction with (ISAs) (UK).

PN 10 has recently been updated to take account of revisions to ISAs (UK), including ISA (UK) 570 on going concern. The revisions to PN 10 in respect of going concern are important and mark a significant departure from how this concept has been audited in the public sector in the past. In particular, PN 10 allows auditors to apply a 'continued provision of service approach' to auditing going concern, where appropriate. Applying such an approach should enable us to increase our focus on wider financial resilience (as part of our VfM work) and ensure that our work on going concern is proportionate for public sector bodies. We will review the Council's arrangements for securing financial sustainability as part of our Value for Money work and provide a commentary on this in our Auditor's Annual Report (see page 13).

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# Progress against prior year audit recommendations

We identified the following issues in our 2019/20 audit of the Authority's financial statements, which resulted in 2 recommendations being reported in our 2019/20 Audit Findings Report. We provide an update below on progress against these recommendations.

## Issue and risk previously communicated

## Update on actions taken to address the issue

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**Debtor & Creditor Balances within the General Ledger:** Since the move to the new finance system during 2018/19, the way in which the finance team produces reports for the purpose of sample selection has changed. Agresso posts transactions on a cumulative basis in regard to these accounts and does not match off receipts against open items. Therefore, whilst this will generate a correct closing balance, it can be challenging for external audit to obtain a "clean" balance for sampling purposes. Furthermore, as the level of transactions in these accounts builds up over subsequent years, it may become more challenging for the finance team to track outstanding balances and perform balance sheet reconciliations to ensure the balance is correct.

We will perform testing on balance sheet items as part of our final accounts session. We will report back to the Committee in further detail via our Audit Findings Report.

**Cash Flow Forecasting:** As part of our work on the going concern assumption in 2019/20 we noted that the Authority did not produce a cash flow statement covering a period of at least 12 months' following the date of our auditor's report. As well as presenting an issue in relation to the auditing standards, there is a risk that longer term factors both locally and nationally are not taken into account during the Authority's decision making and budgeting processes.

During discussions as part of production of our Audit Plan, management have confirmed that they will produce a cash flow forecast for the extended period of time as part of the 2020/21 closedown working papers. We will report back to the Committee to confirm this within our Audit Findings Report.

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# Materiality

## The concept of materiality

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 have determined financial statement materiality based on a proportion of the gross expenditure of the Authority for the financial year. In the prior year we used the same benchmark. Materiality at the planning stage of our audit is £0.49m (PY £0.47m), which equates to approximately 2% of your forecast gross expenditure for the year. We design our procedures to detect errors in specific accounts at a lower level of precision which we have determined to be £50k for disclosures relating to senior officer remuneration, owing to the increased level of sensitivity and public scrutiny in this area

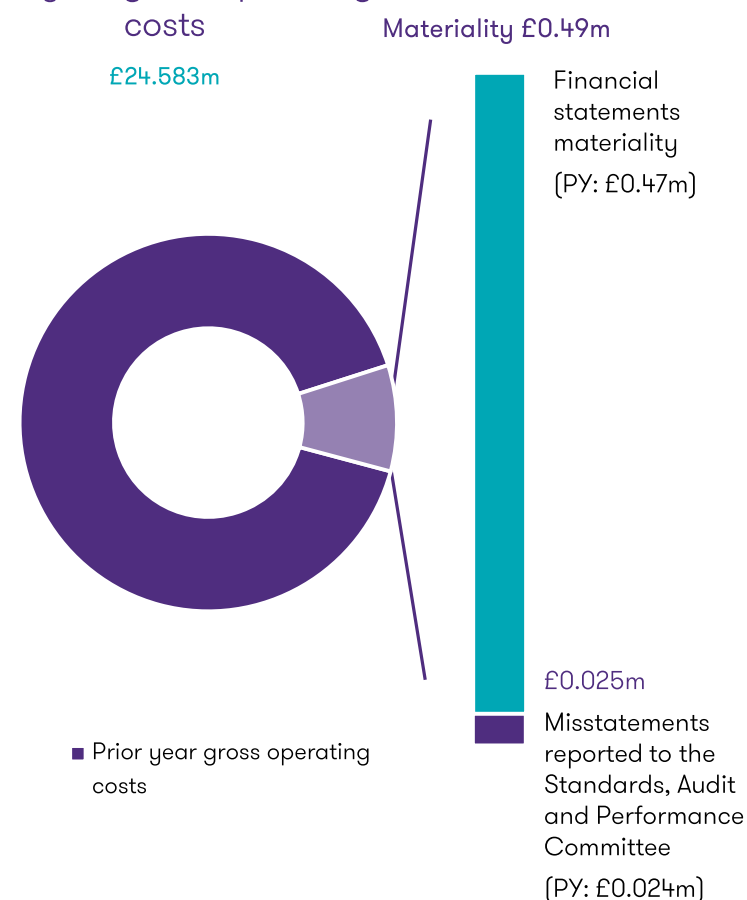
We reconsider planning materiality if, during the course of our audit engagement, we become aware of facts and circumstances that would have caused us to make a different determination of planning materiality.

## Matters we will report to the Standards, Audit and Performance

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 Standards, Audit and Performance 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 Authority, we propose that an individual difference could normally be considered to be clearly trivial if it is less than £0.025m (PY £0.024m).

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

## Prior year gross operating costs



# Value for Money arrangements

## Revised approach to Value for Money work for 2020/21

On 1 April 2020, the National Audit Office introduced a new Code of Audit Practice which comes into effect from audit year 2020/21. The Code introduced a revised approach to the audit of Value for Money. (VFM)

There are three main changes arising from the NAO's new approach:

- A new set of key criteria, covering financial sustainability, governance and improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness
- More extensive reporting, with a requirement on the auditor to produce a commentary on arrangements across all of the key criteria, rather than the current 'reporting by exception' approach
- The replacement of the binary (qualified / unqualified) approach to VFM conclusions, with far more sophisticated judgements on performance, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit.

The Code require auditors to consider whether the body has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. When reporting on these arrangements, the Code requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under three specified reporting criteria, set out in the adjacent table.

We have not identified any risks of significant weaknesses from our initial planning work. We will continue our review of your arrangements, including reviewing your Annual Governance Statement, before we issue our auditor's annual report. You should also delete the 'Potential types of recommendations' table



### Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the body delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.



### Financial Sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the body can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years)



### Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the body makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the body makes decisions based on appropriate information



# Audit logistics and team

Planning and risk assessment

Interim audit  
April 2021

Audit committee  
April 2021

Audit Plan

Year end audit  
Summer 2021

Audit committee  
September 2021

Audit Findings Report

Audit opinion

Audit committee  
December 2021

Auditor's Annual Report



## Avtar Sohal, Key Audit Partner

Avtar leads our relationship with you and takes overall responsibility for the delivery of a high quality audit, ensuring the highest professional standards are maintained with a commitment to add value to the CCGs.



## David Rowley, Audit Manager

As the engagement manager, David is responsible for overseeing delivery of our service and managing the audit process in respect of the Council. He will be in hand to answer any queries, whilst ensuring an efficient audit process.

## Harvinder Panesar, Audit Incharge

Harvinder will work with relevant officers and our operational team to ensure the smooth planning and delivery of the audits. She will oversee the day to day running of the audit and discuss any issues with you during the audit process as well as any questions you may have throughout the year.

## Audited body responsibilities

Where audited bodies 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 audits. 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 to the agreed timescales. In addition, delayed audits will incur additional audit fees.

## Our requirements

To minimise the risk of a delayed audit, you need to ensure that you:

- produce draft financial statements of good quality by the agreed timetable 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 for testing
- 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.

# Audit fees

In 2018, PSAA awarded a contract of audit for Shropshire & Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority to begin with effect from 2018/19. The fee agreed in the contract was £21,996. Since that time, there have been a number of developments, particularly in relation to the revised Code and ISA's which are relevant for the 2020/21 audit.

As referred to on page 12, the 2020/21 Code introduces a revised approach to our VFM work. This requires auditors to produce a commentary on arrangements across all of the key criteria, rather than the current 'reporting by exception' approach. Auditors now have to make far more sophisticated judgements on performance, as well as issue key recommendations if any significant weaknesses in arrangements are identified during the audit. We will be working with the NAO and other audit firms to discuss and share learning in respect of common issues arising across the sector.

The new approach will be more challenging for audited bodies, involving discussions at a wider and more strategic level. Both the reporting, and the planning and risk assessment which underpins it, will require more audit time, delivered through a richer skill mix than in previous years. Additionally, across all sectors and firms, the FRC has set out its expectation of improved financial reporting from organisations and the need for auditors to demonstrate increased scepticism and challenge and to undertake additional and more robust testing, as noted in the number of revised ISA's issued by the FRC that are applicable to audits of financial statements commencing on or after 15 December 2019, as detailed in Appendix 1.

As a firm, we are absolutely committed to meeting the expectations of the FRC with regard to audit quality and public sector financial reporting. Our proposed work and fee for 2020/21, as set out below, is detailed overleaf and has been discussed with the Director of Finance.

	Actual Fee 2018/19	Actual Fee 2019/20	Proposed fee 2020/21
External Audit	£26,496	£30,471	36,716
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	£26,496	£30,471	36,716

## Assumptions

In setting the above fees, we have assumed that the Council will:

- prepare a good quality set of accounts, supported by comprehensive and well presented working papers which are ready at the start of the audit
- provide appropriate analysis, support and evidence to support all critical judgements and significant judgements made during the course of preparing the financial statements
- provide early notice of proposed complex or unusual transactions which could have a material impact on the financial statements.

## Relevant professional standards

In preparing our fee estimate, we have had regard to all relevant professional standards, including paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the FRC's [Ethical Standard \(revised 2019\)](#) which stipulate that the Engagement Lead (Key Audit Partner) must set a fee sufficient to enable the resourcing of the audit with partners and staff with appropriate time and skill to deliver an audit to the required professional and Ethical standards.

# Audit fees – detailed analysis

Scale fee published by PSAA	£21,966
<i>Ongoing increases to scale fee first identified in 2019/20</i>	
Raising the bar/regulatory factors	£750
Enhanced audit procedures for Property, Plant and Equipment	£1,750
Enhanced audit procedures for Pensions	£1,750
Audit fee 2019/20 (net of additional 19/20 specific Covid 19 surcharge)	£26,216
<i>New issues for 2020/21</i>	
Additional work on Value for Money (VfM) under new NAO Code	£5,500
Increased audit requirements of revised ISAs	£5,000
Proposed increase to agreed 2019/20 fee	£10,500
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	£36,716



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# Independence and 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 (Revised 2019) 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 May 2020 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.

## Other services

No other services provided by Grant Thornton were identified.

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.

# Appendix 1: Revised Auditor Standards and application guidance

## FRC revisions to Auditor Standards and associated application guidance

The following Auditing Standards and associated application guidance that were applicable to 19/20 audits, have been revised or updated by the FRC, with additional requirements for auditors for implementation in 2020/21 audits and beyond.

	Date of revision	Application to 2020/21 Audits
ISQC (UK) 1 – Quality Control for Firms that Perform Audits and Reviews of Financial Statements, and other Assurance and Related Service Engagements	November 2019	✓
ISA (UK) 200 – Overall Objectives of the Independent Auditor and the Conduct of an Audit in Accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK)	January 2020	✓
ISA (UK) 220 – Quality Control for an Audit of Financial Statements	November 2019	✓
ISA (UK) 230 – Audit Documentation	January 2020	✓
ISA (UK) 240 – The Auditor’s Responsibilities Relating to Fraud in an Audit of Financial Statements	January 2020	✓
ISA (UK) 250 Section A – Consideration of Laws and Regulations in an Audit of Financial Statements	November 2019	✓
ISA (UK) 250 Section B – The Auditor’s Statutory Right and Duty to Report to Regulators of Public Interest Entities and Regulators of Other Entities in the Financial Sector	November 2019	✓

# Appendix 1: Revised Auditor Standards and application guidance continued

	Date of revision	Application to 2020/21 Audits
ISA (UK) 260 – Communication With Those Charged With Governance	January 2020	
ISA (UK) 315 – Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement Through Understanding of the Entity and Its Environment	July 2020	
ISA (UK) 500 – Audit Evidence	January 2020	
ISA (UK) 540 – Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures	December 2018	
ISA (UK) 570 – Going Concern	September 2019	
ISA (UK) 580 – Written Representations	January 2020	
ISA (UK) 600 – Special considerations – Audits of Group Financial Statements (Including the Work of Component Auditors)	November 2019	
ISA (UK) 620 – Using the Work of an Auditor’s Expert	November 2019	
ISA (UK) 700 – Forming an Opinion and Reporting on Financial Statements	January 2020	

# Appendix 1: Revised Auditor Standards and application guidance continued

	Date of revision	Application to 2020/21 Audits
ISA (UK) 701 – Communicating Key Audit Matters in the Independent Auditor’s Report	January 2020	
ISA (UK) 720 – The Auditor’s Responsibilities Relating to Other Information	November 2019	
Practice Note 10: Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom	December 2020	



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