



# The Audit Plan for Guildford Borough Council

**Year ended 31 March 2015**

26 March 2015

**Christian Heeger**

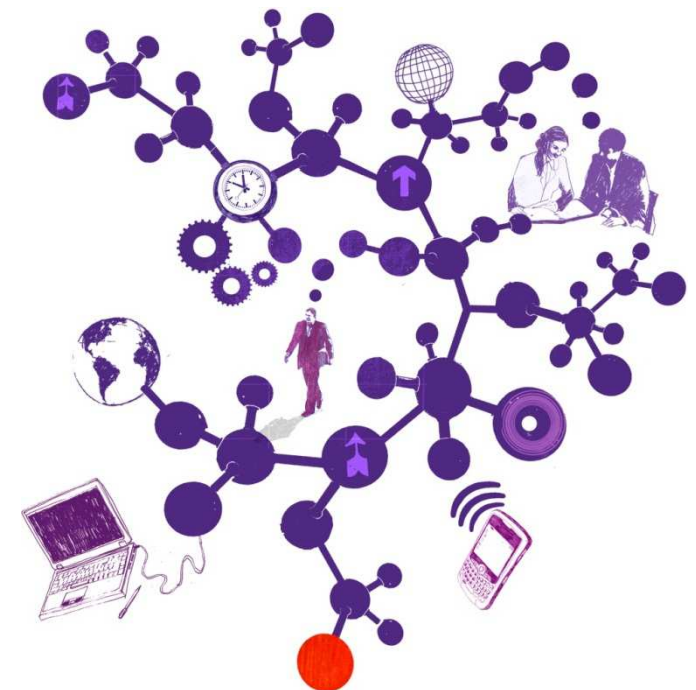
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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or any weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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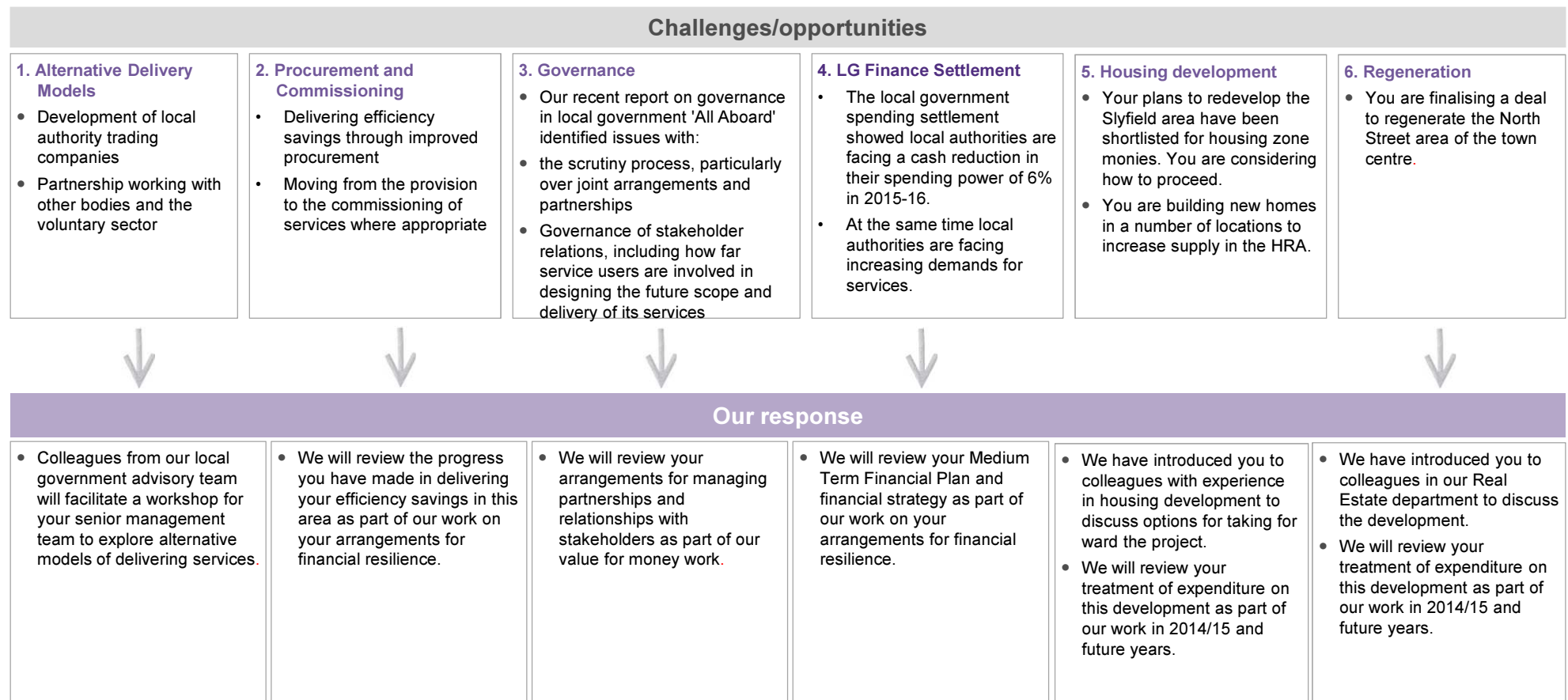
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# Understanding your business

In planning our audit we need to understand the challenges and opportunities the Council is facing. We set out a summary of our understanding below.



# Developments relevant to your business and the audit

In planning our audit we also consider the impact of key developments in the sector and take account of national audit requirements as set out in the Code of Audit Practice (the code) and associated guidance.

## Developments and other requirements

### 1. Financial reporting

- Changes to the CIPFA Code of Practice
- Adoption of new group accounting standards (IFRS 10, 11 and 12)
- provision for including overtime in calculation of backdated holiday pay following employment appeal tribunal ruling.

### 2. Legislation

- Local Government Finance settlement

### 3. Corporate governance

- Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
- Explanatory foreword

### 4. Financial Pressures

- Managing service provision with less resource
- Progress against savings plans

### 5. Other requirements

- The Council is required to submit a Whole of Government accounts pack on which we provide an audit opinion
- The Council completes grant claims and returns on which audit certification is required

## Our response

We will ensure that

- the Council complies with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice through discussions with management and our substantive testing.
- the group boundary is recognised in accordance with the Code and joint arrangements are accounted for correctly.
- you have assessed the need for any provision or contingent liability appropriately.

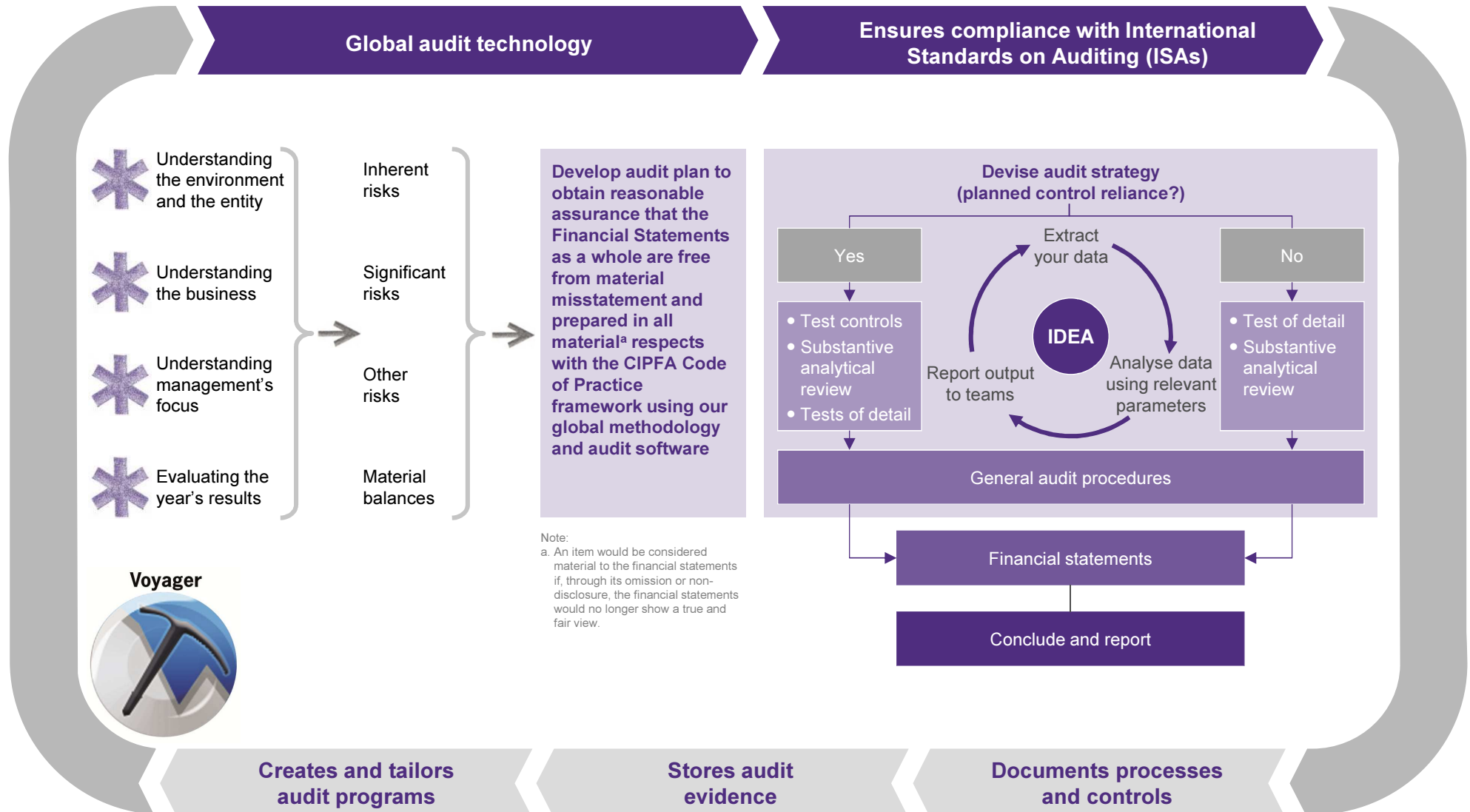
- We will discuss the impact of the legislative changes with the Council through our regular meetings with senior management and those charged with governance, providing a view where appropriate

- We will review the arrangements the Council has in place for the production of the AGS
- We will review the AGS and the explanatory foreword to consider whether they are consistent with our knowledge

- We will review the Council's performance against the 2014/15 budget, including consideration of performance against the savings plan
- We will undertake a review of Financial Resilience as part of our VfM conclusion

- We will carry out work on the WGA pack in accordance with requirements
- We will certify the housing benefit subsidy claim in accordance with the requirements specified by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd. This company will take over the Audit Commission's responsibilities for housing benefit grant certification from 1 April 2015.

# Our audit approach



# Significant risks identified

Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty' (ISA 315).

In this section we outline the significant risks of material misstatement which we have identified. There are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards (International Standards on Auditing – ISAs) which are listed below :

Significant risk	Description	Substantive audit procedures
The income cycle includes fraudulent transactions	<p>Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that income may be misstated due to the improper recognition of income.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to income recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the income streams at Guildford Borough Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from income recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is little incentive to manipulate income recognition;</li> <li>• opportunities to manipulate income recognition are very limited;</li> <li>• the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Guildford Borough Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable;</li> <li>• there are robust controls to prevent and detect material misstatement of income, including monitoring by senior management.</li> </ul>
Management over-ride of controls	Under ISA 240 the presumption that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.	<p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of entity level controls to ensure they address risk of management override.</li> <li>• Review of basis of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management in previous years to assess if there are risks for the current year.</li> <li>• Review of controls around processing of journal entries and testing of journals in the first 10 months of the year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management at year-end.</li> <li>• Testing of journal entries for the final 2 months and as part of closedown.</li> <li>• Review and testing of unusual significant transactions.</li> </ul>

## Other risks identified

The auditor should evaluate the design and determine the implementation of the entity's controls, including relevant control activities, over those risks for which, in the auditor's judgment, it is not possible or practicable to reduce the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level to an acceptably low level with audit evidence obtained only from substantive procedures (ISA 315).

In this section we outline the other risks of material misstatement which we have identified as a result of our planning.

Other risks	Description	Audit Approach
Operating expenses	<p><b>Completeness</b> Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period</p>	<p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and walkthrough of controls on the operating expenses system.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search for unrecorded liabilities either side of the balance sheet date.</li> <li>• Test purchase orders system to identify unrecorded liabilities not accrued for.</li> <li>• Document the Council's accruals process, review and test a sample of accrued amounts.</li> </ul>
Employee remuneration	<p><b>Completeness</b> Employee remuneration and benefit obligations and expenses understated</p>	<p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and walkthrough of controls on the payroll system.</li> <li>• Performed substantive testing of employee expenses during the first ten months of the year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconcile employee remuneration per the payroll system to the general ledger.</li> <li>• Perform trend analysis of movements in total employee costs and follow up testing on unexpected movements.</li> <li>• Agree the main components of senior officers' remuneration to supporting evidence.</li> <li>• For the pension fund liability recognised in the accounts, review the basis of the scheme, evaluate the work performed by the scheme actuary and test the basis on which the liability is recognised in the financial statements.</li> <li>• Review and test any liability recognised for termination benefits.</li> </ul>



## Other risks identified

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In this section we outline the other risks of material misstatement which we have identified as a result of our planning.

Other risks	Description	Audit Approach
Housing Benefits Expenditure	<b>Valuation gross</b> Welfare benefit expenditure improperly computed	<b>Work completed to date:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identification and walkthrough of controls on the housing benefits system.</li></ul> <b>Further work planned:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree housing benefits paid per the ledger to the housing benefits system and reconcile to the housing benefits subsidy claim.</li><li>• Substantive testing using the HB COUNT methodology to cover:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Checking system parameters (Module 2);</li><li>• Testing calculation of a sample of benefit cases (Module 3);</li><li>• Analytical review of expenditure against expectations (Module 4);</li><li>• Confirming claim is correctly generated from system using the software provider's guidance notes (Module 5).</li></ul></li></ul>

# Value for money

## Value for money

The Code requires us to issue a conclusion on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VfM) conclusion.

Our VfM conclusion is based on the following criteria specified by the Audit Commission:

VfM criteria	Focus of the criteria
The organisation has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience	The organisation has robust systems and processes to manage financial risks and opportunities effectively, and to secure a stable financial position that enables it to continue to operate for the foreseeable future
The organisation has proper arrangements for challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness	The organisation is prioritising its resources within tighter budgets, for example by achieving cost reductions and by improving efficiency and productivity

We have undertaken a risk assessment to identify areas of risk to our VfM conclusion. We will undertake work in the following areas to address the risks identified:

- We will review your medium term financial strategy and in particular your progress in identifying options to address the gap between available resources and expected expenditure in 2016/17 and 2017/18
- We will review how you have taken into account the various regeneration and housing developments into account in your capital programme for the coming years.
- We will consider how you have reflected challenges to the local plan and the impact of these on your strategy and provision of services.
- We will consider how you manage partnership and interact with stakeholders in designing changes to services.

The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings report and in the Annual Audit Letter. We will agree any additional reporting to the Council as required.

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## Results of interim audit work

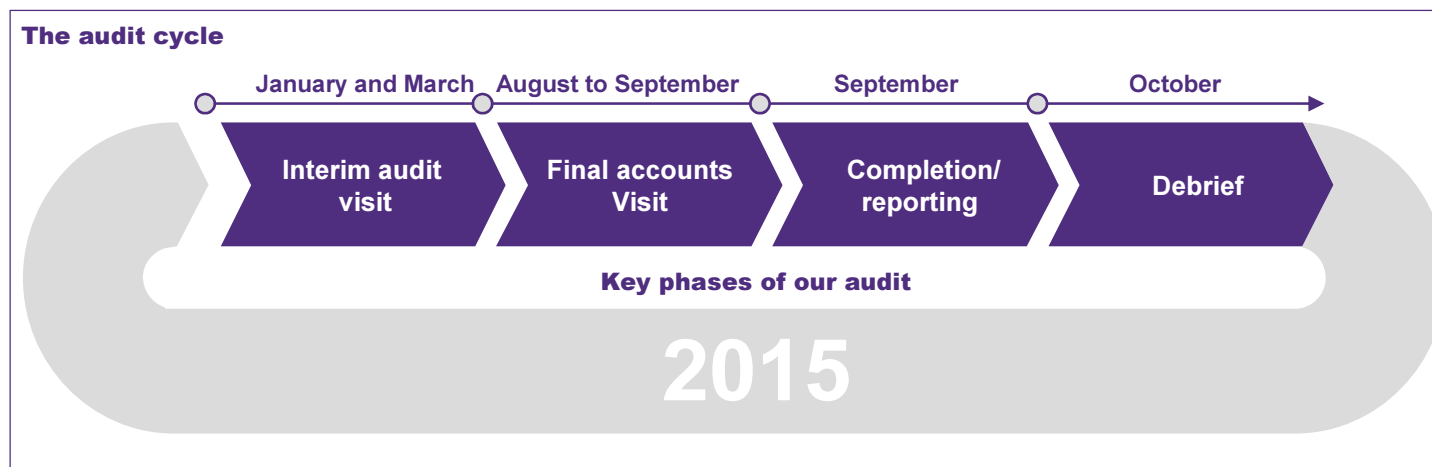
The findings of our interim audit work, and the impact of our findings on the accounts audit approach, are summarised in the table below :

	<b>Work performed and findings</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>Internal audit</b>	<p>We have completed a high level review of internal audit's overall arrangements. Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p> <p>We also reviewed internal audit's work on the Council's key financial systems to date. We have not identified any significant weaknesses impacting on our responsibilities.</p>	<p>Overall, we have concluded that the internal audit service continues to provide an independent and satisfactory service to the Council and that internal audit work contributes to an effective internal control environment at the Council.</p> <p>Our review of internal audit work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
<b>Walkthrough testing</b>	<p>We have completed walkthrough tests of controls operating in areas where we consider that there is a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements.</p> <p>Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. Internal controls have been implemented in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
<b>Entity level controls</b>	<p>We have obtained an understanding of the overall control environment relevant to the preparation of the financial statements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values</li><li>• Commitment to competence</li><li>• Participation by those charged with governance</li><li>• Management's philosophy and operating style</li><li>• Organisational structure</li><li>• Assignment of authority and responsibility</li><li>• Human resource policies and practices</li></ul>	<p>Our work has identified no material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's financial statements</p>

## Results of interim audit work continued

	Work performed	Conclusion
<b>Review of information technology controls</b>	<p>We performed a high level review of the general IT control environment, as part of the overall review of the internal controls system. We have also performed a follow up of the issues that were raised last year.</p> <p>IT (information technology) controls were observed to have been implemented in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work has identified no material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's financial statements.</p>
<b>Journal entry controls</b>	<p>We have reviewed the Council's journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy and have not identified any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's control environment or financial statements.</p> <p>To date we have undertaken detailed testing on journal transactions recorded for the first ten months of the financial year, by extracting 'unusual' entries for further review. No issues have been identified that we wish to highlight for your attention.</p>	<p>Our work to date has not identified any material weaknesses or indications of fraudulent transactions.</p> <p>We will complete our testing by reviewing and testing journal transactions for the last two months of the year and those 'closedown' journals raised as part of preparing the financial statements. This testing will be carried out as part of our audit of the financial statements.</p>
<b>Early substantive testing</b>	<p>We are in the process of undertaking early testing</p>	<p>We will report our conclusions in our next update</p>
<b>Value for money</b>	<p>We have completed our initial risk assessment and identified areas for further work which are set out in the previous section of this plan.</p>	<p>Work will be completed as part of the interim and final accounts visits and we will report findings in our audit findings report.</p>

## Key dates



Date	Activity
January 2015	Planning
January and March 2015	Interim site visit
26 March 2015	Presentation of audit plan to Corporate Governance and Standards Committee
August to September 2015	Year end fieldwork
Early September 2015	Audit findings clearance meeting with Managing Director and Head of Financial Services
24 September 2015	Report audit findings to Corporate Governance and Standards Committee
By 30 September 2015	Sign financial statements opinion

# Fees and independence

## Fees

Council audit	76,710
Grant certification	17,330
<b>Total fees (excluding VAT)</b>	<b>94,040</b>

### Our fee assumptions include:

- Supporting schedules to all figures in the accounts are supplied by the agreed dates and in accordance with the agreed upon information request list
- The scope of the audit, and the Council and its activities, have not changed significantly
- The Council will make available management and accounting staff to help us locate information and to provide explanations

### Grant certification

- Our fees for grant certification cover only housing benefit subsidy certification, which falls under the remit of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited, as the successor to the Audit Commission in this area.
- Fees in respect of other grant work, such as reasonable assurance reports, will be shown under Fees for other services.

## Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
Workshop on 2016/17 Budget pressures and Alternative Delivery Models	4,050

### Fees for other services

Fees for other services reflect those agreed at the time of issuing our Audit Plan. Any changes will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter.

### Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that in fact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Full details of all fees charged for audit and non-audit services will be included in our Audit Findings report at the conclusion of the audit.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirement of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

# Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing (ISA) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while The Audit Findings will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to the Council.

## Respective responsibilities

This plan has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission ([www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)).

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the Audit Commission and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work. Our work considers the Council's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit plan	Audit findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance		
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications		
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issue arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		
Confirmation of independence and objectivity		
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence.		
Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged.		
Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence		
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		
Non compliance with laws and regulations		
Expected modifications to the auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		
Uncorrected misstatements		
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		
Significant matters in relation to going concern		

