

Audit and Standards Committee

Date: Thursday 21 July 2022
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Committee Room 2, Shire Hall

Membership

John Bridgeman (Chair)
Councillor John Cooke
Councillor Sarah Feeney
Councillor Bill Gifford
Councillor Brian Hammersley
Councillor Christopher Kettle
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Robert Zara (Independent member)

Items on the agenda: -

- 1. General**
 - (1) Apologies**
 - (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**
 - (3) Minutes of the previous meeting** 5 - 10
- 2. External Audit Report - Warwickshire Pension Fund Annual Audit Plan, Fee Letter 21/22** 11 - 34
- 3. Audit Plan 2021/22** 35 - 62
- 4. Work Programme and Future Meeting Dates** 63 - 64
To consider items for the Committee's Work Programme and note the dates of future meetings to be held at Shire Hall, Warwick, as follows:
 - 27 September 2022 (2pm)
 - 3 November 2022 (10am)
 - 24 March 2023 (10am)
- 5. Any Other Business**
- 6. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information**
To consider passing the following resolution:

'That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.'

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 7. Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee Held on 19 May 2022 | 65 - 68 |
| 8. Internal Audit Update | 69 - 80 |

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

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Members are required to register their disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of their election of appointment to the Council. Any changes to matters registered or new matters that require to be registered must be notified to the Monitoring Officer as soon as practicable after they arise.

A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless they have a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web <https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

Public Speaking

Any member of the public who is resident or working in Warwickshire, or who is in receipt of services from the Council, may speak at the meeting for up to three minutes on any matter within the remit of the Committee. This can be in the form of a statement or a question. If you wish to speak please notify Democratic Services in writing at least two working days before the meeting. You should give your name and address and the subject upon which you wish to speak. Full details of the public speaking scheme are set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Any member or officer of the Council or any person attending this meeting must inform Democratic Services if within a week of the meeting they discover they have COVID-19 or have been in close proximity to anyone found to have COVID-19.

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Audit and Standards Committee

Thursday 19 May 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

John Bridgeman (Chair)
Councillor John Cooke
Councillor Sarah Feeney
Councillor Bill Gifford
Councillor Brian Hammersley
Councillor Christopher Kettle
Robert Zara

Officers

Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)
Sarah Duxbury, Assistant Director - Governance & Policy
Paul Clarke, Internal Audit Manager
John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families
Olivia Cooper, Service Manager (Contract Management & Quality Assurance)
Andrew Felton, Assistant Director - Finance
Chris Norton, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Treasury, Pensions, Audit, Risk & Insurance)
Rob Powell, Strategic Director for Resources
Andy Carswell, Democratic Services Officer

1. General

The Chair informed the Committee there were two new members and introduced one of them, Councillor John Cooke. The other new member, Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, was unable to attend as he had committed to another engagement prior to being appointed to the Committee.

The Chair referred to the sad passing of Councillor John Horner the previous week. He said Councillor Horner had been a long-standing member of the Committee and had made a great contribution over the years. The Chair said Councillor Horner read the paperwork assiduously, spoke well at meetings and would be missed by all. He noted a number of tributes had been paid to him at Full Council earlier in the week. Members stood for a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Horner.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 25 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair, save for an amendment to show that Paul Clarke was Internal Audit Manager and not Deputy. Arising from the minutes it was confirmed that the Warwickshire Pension Fund was at nearly 100 per cent funding whereas other Funds were higher than this figure. It was also agreed to recirculate the membership of the SEND steering group.

2. Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

Chris Norton (Strategy and Commissioning Manager - Treasury, Pensions, Audit, Insurance, and Risk) introduced the item and explained this was a draft report that would return to the Committee and to Cabinet before final ratification. It had also been considered by Corporate Board, statutory officers and an AGS evaluation panel. Chris Norton stated that although the Council faces a number of challenges the report had not identified any significant corporate governance failings that members should be made aware of.

Chris Norton said there was a corporate code of governance; however, responding to a question from the Chair about how employees are made aware of governance requirements, he explained that not all employees would read or be trained on the corporate code of governance directly. For example there may be certain employees whose job role required additional training in governance matters, and there were policies and procedures in place to ensure this took place. However, the Council has a code of behaviours that is provided to all employees on how they are expected to conduct themselves. Sarah Duxbury (Assistant Director of Governance and Policy) said there was a comprehensive suite of training and development available for new starters, which included elements of good governance, expected behaviours and the culture at Warwickshire County Council. More bespoke training would be available for officers working in areas such as finance, procurement, legal and data protection. These areas included more intensive training around good governance.

Councillor Feeney asked for an update on the Voice of Warwickshire panel, and queried whether there should be a reference to trade unions in the report. Rob Powell (Strategic Director for Resources) said the Voice of Warwickshire group had taken part in three exercises and there had been good levels of engagement with all three. The first was to gain insight into members' knowledge of local government; the second related to climate change; and the third related to levelling up. Results of the first two engagement exercises were available online, with the responses to the third exercise due to be discussed at July's Cabinet meeting. Regarding trade unions, Rob Powell said this was something that ought to be included and said he was happy for this to be added.

It was agreed the hyperlink to the code of corporate good governance included in the report would be amended after Robert Zara noted that it did not work.

Regarding the SEND inspection referenced in the report, Andy Felton (Assistant Director – Finance) said the internal actions relating to this were either completed or progressing. Additionally partner agencies were making good progress; for example the CCG had secured extra funding to help with mental health services. More information on this, and the HMICFRS fire inspection, would be included in the final version of the report. John Coleman (Assistant Director – Children and Families) said the SEND service was being monitored by the Department for Education and NHS England through monthly meetings. Targets had been broken down into four target areas and all of these were making good progress.

Regarding the HMICFRS report, Rob Powell said there had been a number of re-inspections in relation to the areas of concern that had been raised and considerable progress was being made. Cabinet had approved a new strategy relating to the areas for improvement.

Councillor Chris Kettle said he was encouraged to see the improvements being made; however he noted that in Principles A-F listed in the report there did not appear to be areas of reflection noted, whereas they were shown under Principle G. Rob Powell said this was because these were areas of improvement noted by external inspections. Any areas of concern raised internally were noted in Appendix A of the report.

Responding to a question from Councillor Feeney, Sarah Duxbury said a strategy for recruiting and retaining staff was being implemented. She said staff recruitment and retention was a national issue so attention was being given to considering what made Warwickshire County Council an attractive place to work to persuade potential recruits to join, such as the agile working offer.

The Chair noted the response to the enquiry on child sexual exploitation had been praised and recognised externally, and this was worth highlighting.

Councillor Bill Gifford noted that under the table for governance improvement actions the SEND inspection did not have an allocated action owner or target completion date, and the code of corporate governance review also did not have an action owner. Andy Felton said these had not yet confirmed in time for the draft to come to the Committee but would be by the time the final version came back for consideration. He added the action owner for the SEND report was likely to be Duane Chappell. It was also confirmed the name of the new independent commissioning service would be included in the final report. Responding to a question from Councillor Gifford, Andy Felton said the recommendations made from the capital programme were starting to be implemented and it was likely to be quarter 2 before they were in place.

The Committee endorsed the draft Annual Governance Statement for consideration by external auditors.

3. Internal Audit Annual Report 2021-22

Paul Clarke (Internal Audit Manager) introduced the item, explaining the Internal Audit Team provided an independent reassurance for services across the Council. The report provided a summary of the monitoring reports considered by the Committee throughout the past financial year. There was a strong degree of openness and transparency evidenced during the year and a clear and recognised expectation that any issues identified should be brought into the open for further consideration. Although some issues had been raised, none of them could be considered as major systemic failings. In cases where issues had been raised, action plans had been

formulated and implemented and more details on this would be available at the next Committee meeting.

Responding to a question from Councillor Cooke about assurances, Paul Clarke said the level an issue would be assigned took into account the number of issues that had been found and also their severity. For example if a number of significant weaknesses were identified, or more than four significant recommendations were made, then limited assurance would be applied. Guidance was provided in the auditors' manual to provide consistency. Paul Clarke said he was happy to discuss this with Councillor Cooke outside the meeting.

Responding to a question from the Chair, Paul Clarke said the team was not fully staffed with permanent employees but any vacancies had been filled with agency staff. A new auditor had started in the last few weeks but vacancies remained, and it had been difficult to recruit.

Councillor Kettle noted that fewer cases of moderate or low assurance were recorded in the graph in the report. Paul Clarke said this was a summary overview of the year and the same elements were not reviewed each year, so it was not necessarily possible to do a like-for-like comparison with previous years. Areas of known risk would be audited and other areas where issues had been identified would be monitored through the agreed action plans. These would be revisited later if significant issues continued to be identified once the action plans were embedded.

Councillor Feeney noted a school was mentioned in the report as being of limited assurance, and asked what work was being done to make sure schools took on any recommendations. Paul Clarke said it was not possible to audit all schools due to resource constraints. Priority was being given to schools where there was a significant change, such as a change of headteacher or governing body. Sarah Duxbury said officers in the education team would also flag up if there were any issues within a certain school, or if there was a thematic issue that had been raised that would be highlighted through the Headteacher briefing sessions to raise awareness. The Chair said it was important to encourage schools to have episodes of critical self-examination, but also for schools to feel they could ask for support. Councillor Gifford said he found the level of detail in the internal audits to be very useful and they would be helpful to school management.

Paul Clarke said the traded services draft report was nearly finalised and it was not anticipated there would be major changes before being brought to the July Committee meeting. Councillor Kettle asked if a future paper would be able to report if any concerns raised in previous years' audits had been addressed.

The Chair said he was pleased with the report and hoped it accurately reflected the work that had been carried out over the past year.

Members noted the contents of the report.

4. Audit and Standards Committee - Annual Report 2020/21

Members were content for the Annual Report to go forward to Full Council, save for an amendment to say Councillor Kettle was also a new member for the 2020/21 municipal year. It was also agreed that comments paying tribute to Councillor Horner would be added to the final report.

5. Work Programme and Future Meeting Dates

Members noted the contents of the work programme and dates of future meetings.

6. Any Other Business

Councillor Kettle said he was concerned the Council did not operate a commitment-based reporting system, even though it was in the CIPFA guidelines to public sector bodies that accounts should be reported on an accrual or commitment-based system. He said it appeared the reporting of accounts was not being done on a basis that was consistent with those produced at the end of the financial year. He asked how could the Council progress so that reports used inside and outside the authority would shift towards the required commitment-based standards throughout the year, and not just at year end. The Chair said this matter should be raised with the relevant officers and a paper may need to be presented to the Committee in due course. He requested that the matter be pursued with the relevant officers.

Councillor Gifford said he had been contacted by families hosting Ukrainian refugees who had secured a place at school but there had been a delay in their ability to start attending, and asked if there was a way this could be sped up. Rob Powell said this was an issue to be resolved elsewhere, but said the Council was aware of the issue and there was an admissions code that needed to be followed.

7. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee Held on 25 March 2022 and Matters Arising

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

Members received a confidential update on supported accommodation.

The meeting rose at 11.32am

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Chair

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Audit and Standards Committee

21 July 2022

External Auditors Report – Warwickshire Pension Fund Annual Audit Plan 2021/22

Recommendation

That the Audit and Standards Committee consider and comment on:

- 1) The Annual Audit Plan for 2021/22.

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. Our external auditors write to the Council annually to identify the audit plan and the audit fees for the Warwickshire Pension Fund, together with the rationale and scope for those fees. These are documents brought to the committee for comment each year.

1.2. The Audit Engagement Lead will attend the meeting to present the audit plan attached at Appendix A.

2. Financial Implications

2.1. The attached Audit Plan includes reference to the associated audit fee. The proposed Audit Fee for 2021/22 is £31,060. This represents an increase of 1.3% or £413 from the fee for 2020/21.

2.2. Although the fee increase between years is modest it should be noted that the fund are already paying an increased audit fee which was implemented in 20/21 in recognition of the increased auditor work needed. The latest fees are now normalising that fee rate, and we've had some additional government funding to support the sustained increase from last year and the small additional increase this year

2.3. The increase in the audit fee, and the reasons for it, have been discussed with the Strategic Director for Resources and the advice to the Committee is that the increase in fees is accepted.

3. Environmental Implications

3.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

4. Appendices

Appendix A – Annual Audit Plan 2021/22

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Elected Members have not been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Warwickshire Pension Fund Audit Plan

Year ending 31 March 2022

21 July 2022



Contents



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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 Pension Fund 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

Pension Fund developments

2022 is the year of the triennial valuation. This will not impact the 2021/22 year however will determine the level of funding and future contribution rates effective from the following year. This will also entail a significant time commitment from the pensions administration team during 2022.

The expectation on funds to invest sustainably and within environmental, social and governance initiatives is increasing with many funds setting net carbon zero targets.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have introduced secondary legislation to extend the deadline for publishing audited local authority accounts to 30 November 2022 for the 2021/22 accounts.

Recovery from Covid 19 pandemic and other macroeconomic factors

The bottom line of the fund continues to grow in line with trajectory experienced post the initial covid shock. As at 31 December 2021 this was £2.8bn. This was up on the benchmark set for the 1 year and 10-year period.

Subsequently, other economic uncertainties such as the conflict in Ukraine will continue to have an impact on the valuation of investments in the short to medium term.

Other Local matters

The County Council who are responsible for administering the fund have recently written off £2.2m in overpayments of benefits made to pensioners.

In terms of laws and regulations, there have been a small number of reportable breaches to the regulator with two at the internal dispute resolution stage.

Large transfers in assets to the LGPS pool (B2C) have been made, with a couple of diversified income funds being closed during the year.

Our response

- As a firm, we are absolutely committed to audit quality and financial reporting in the local government sector. Our proposed work and fee, as set further in our Audit Plan, has been agreed with the Strategic Director for Resources.
- We will continue to provide you with sector updates via our Audit and Standards Committee 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 Pension Fund's valuer reported a material difference in the valuation of certain Level 3 investments in 2020/21 which led to a material adjustment in the financial statements. We have identified a significant risk in regards to the valuation of Level 3 investments – refer to page 6
- Any breaches in laws and regulations identified in the period will be considered as part of our response to risks and where necessary, audit procedures will be designed to address the risk of material misstatement.

Introduction and headlines

Purpose

This document provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Warwickshire Pension Fund ('the Pension Fund') 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 agreed *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 Warwickshire Pension Fund. 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 Pension Fund's financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance.

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

Our audit approach is based on a thorough understanding of the Pension Fund'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 Level 3 investments

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 £25m (PY £25m) for the Pension Fund, which equates to 1% of your prior year net assets {as at 31/03/2021}. We are obliged to report uncorrected omissions or misstatements other than those which are 'clearly trivial' to those charged with governance. As part of our risk assessment we have considered the impact of unadjusted prior period errors. Clearly trivial has been set at £1.25m (PY £1.25m).

Audit logistics

Our interim visit took place in March and April and our final visit will take place in July. Our key deliverables are this Audit Plan and our Audit Findings Report.

Our fee for the audit will be £31,060 (PY: £30,647) for the Pension Fund, subject to the Pension Fund 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
Fraud in revenue recognition (rebutted)	<p>Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a rebuttable presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue. 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>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at the Fund, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Warwickshire Pension Fund, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable <p>Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for Warwickshire Pension Fund.</p>	No detailed audit procedures proposed
Management over-ride of controls	<p>Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p> <p>The Fund faces external scrutiny of its spending and stewardship of funds 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, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the design effectiveness of management controls over journals • analyse the journals listing and determine the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals • test unusual journals recorded during the year and after the draft accounts stage for appropriateness and corroboration • gain an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied made by management and consider their reasonableness with regard to corroborative evidence • evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions.

Significant risks identified

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Valuation of Level 3 Investments	<p>The Fund revalues its investments on an annual basis to ensure that the carrying value is not materially different from the fair value at the financial statements date.</p> <p>By their nature Level 3 investment valuations lack observable inputs. These valuations therefore represent a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of this estimate to changes in key assumptions</p> <p>Under ISA 315 significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgemental matters. Level 3 investments by their very nature require a significant degree of judgement to reach an appropriate valuation at year end.</p> <p>Management utilise the services of investment managers as valuation experts to estimate the fair value as at 31 March 2022</p> <p>We therefore identified valuation of Level 3 investments as a significant risk.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate management's processes for valuing Level 3 investments • review the nature and basis of estimated values and consider what assurance management has over the year end valuations provided for these types of investments; to ensure that the requirements of the Code are met • request confirmations from fund managers and custodian of all holdings and valuations at the period end together with a statement of transactions during the period. • for a sample of investments, test the valuation by obtaining and reviewing the audited accounts, (where available) at the latest date for individual investments and agreeing these to the fund manager reports at that date. Reconcile those values to the values at 31 March 2022 with reference to known movements in the intervening period. We will confirm the audit opinion is unqualified, that the investments are valued on a methodology consistent with IFRS reporting and note any Emphasis of Matter. • in the absence of available audited accounts, we will evaluate the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert • test revaluations made during the year to see if they have been input correctly into the Pension Fund's asset register • where available review investment manager service auditor report on design effectiveness of internal controls.

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

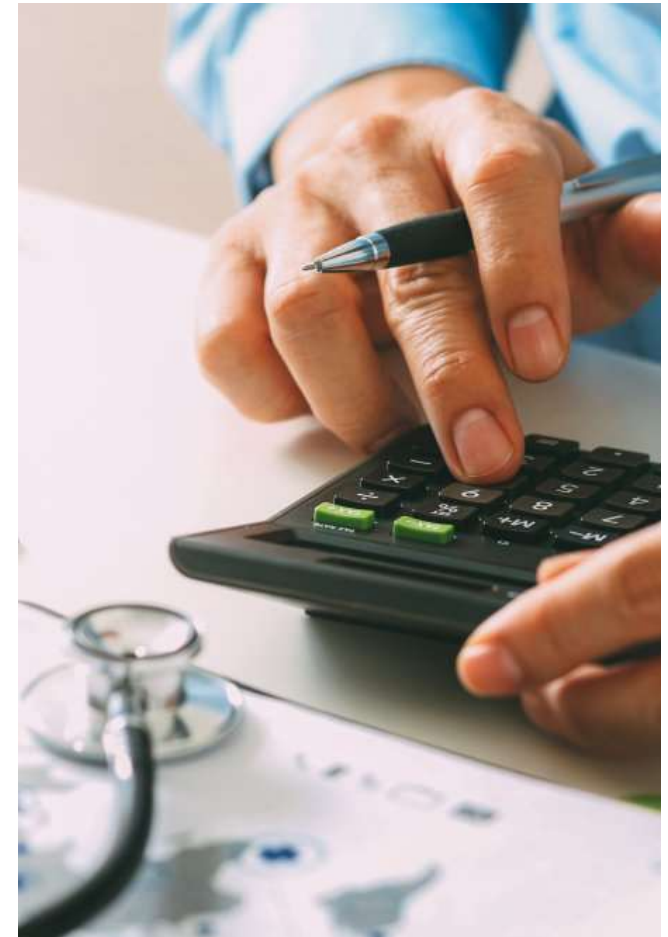
Under ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018) auditors are required to understand and assess an entity's internal controls over accounting estimates, including:

- 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 Audit and Standards 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 2022.

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

- Valuation of level 2 and level 3 investments

The Pension Fund's Information systems

In respect of the Pension Fund'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 Pension Fund uses management experts in deriving some of its more complex estimates, e.g. asset and investment. 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 Pension Fund (and where applicable its service provider or management expert) 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 which were presented to the Audit and Standards Committee in March 2022 in a separate document named 'Informing the Audit Risk Assessment'.

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

The Pension Fund is administered by Warwickshire County Council (the 'Council'), and the Pension Fund's accounts form part of the Council's financial statements.

Therefore, as well as our general responsibilities under the Code of Practice a number of other audit responsibilities also follow in respect of the Pension Fund, such as:

- We read any other information published alongside the Council's financial statements to check that it is consistent with the Pension Fund financial statements on which we give an opinion and is consistent with our knowledge of the Authority.
- We consider our other duties under legislation and the Code, as and when required, including:
 - Giving electors the opportunity to raise questions about your 2021/22 financial statements, consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the 2021/22 financial statements;
 - Issue of a report in the public interest or written recommendations to the Fund under section 24 of the Act, copied to the Secretary of State.
 - Application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 or for a judicial review under Section 31 of the Act; or
 - Issuing an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Act.
- We carry out work to satisfy ourselves on the consistency of the pension fund financial statements included in the pension fund annual report with the audited Fund accounts.

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.

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 net assets of the Pension Fund. In the prior year we used the same benchmark. Materiality at the planning stage of our audit is £25m (PY £25m), which equates to 1% of your prior year net assets as at 31 March 2021.

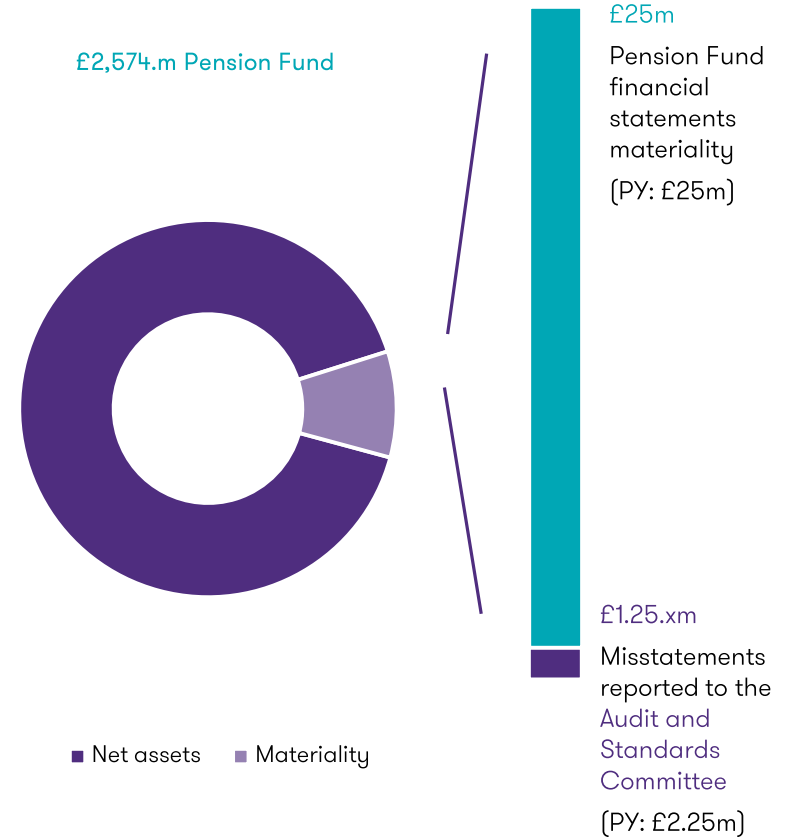
We reconsider planning materiality if, during the course of our audit engagement, we become aware of facts and circumstances that would have caused us to make a different determination of planning materiality.

Matters we will report to the Audit Committee

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 Audit Committee 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 Pension Fund, we propose that an individual difference could normally be considered to be clearly trivial if it is less than £1.25m (PY £1.25m).

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

Prior year net assets {at 31/03/2021}



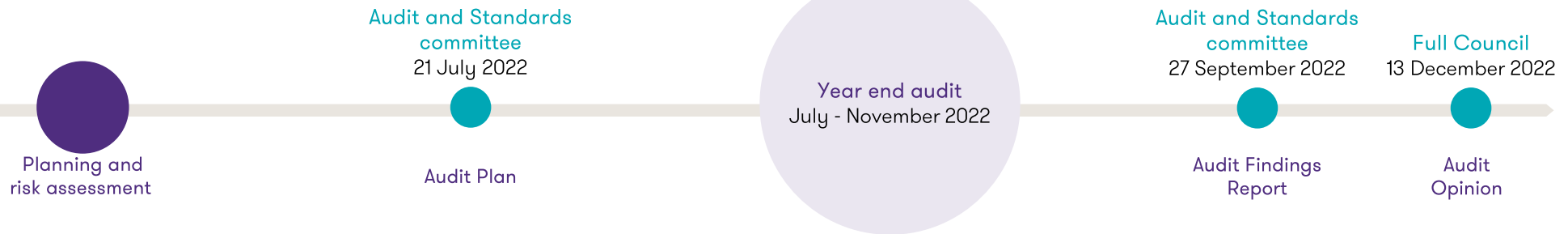
IT audit strategy

In accordance with ISA (UK) 315, we are required to obtain an understanding of the information systems relevant to financial reporting to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement. As part of this we obtain an understanding of the controls operating over relevant Information Technology (IT) systems i.e., IT general controls (ITGCs). Our audit will include completing an assessment of the design of ITGCs related to security management; technology acquisition, development and maintenance; and technology infrastructure. Based on the level of assurance required for each IT system the assessment may focus on evaluating key risk areas ('streamlined assessment') or be more in depth ('detailed assessment').

The following IT systems have been judged to be in scope for our audit and based on the planned financial statement audit approach we will perform the indicated level of assessment:

IT system	Audit area	Planned level IT audit assessment
Agresso	Financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined ITGC assessment Follow up of reported findings from the 2020/21 detailed ITGC assessment
Parent/YourHR	Payroll and HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined ITGC assessment Follow up of reported findings from the 2020/21 detailed ITGC assessment
Fair	Pensions administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined ITGC assessment Follow up of reported findings from the 2020/21 detailed ITGC assessment

Audit logistics and team



Avtar Sohal, Key Audit Partner



Avtar will be the main point of contact for the Chair, Strategic Director for Resources and Committee members. He will share his wealth of knowledge and experience across the sector providing challenge and sharing good practice. Avtar will ensure our audit is tailored specifically to you, and he is responsible for the overall quality of our audit.

Jim McLarnon, Audit Manager



Jim will work with senior members of the finance team ensuring testing is delivered and any accounting issues are addressed on a timely basis. He will attend Committee meetings with Avtar, and supervise Lena and Kiran in leading the on-site team. Jim will undertake reviews of the team's work and draft clear, concise and understandable reports

Lena Grant-Pearce and Kiran Hussain, Audit In-charges

Lena and Kiran will be the day to day contact for the audit, organising our visits and liaising with authority and pension fund staff. They will lead the on-site team and will monitor deliverables, manage our query log ensuring that any significant issues and adjustments are highlighted to management as soon as possible.

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 Warwickshire Pension Fund to begin with effect from 2018/19. The fee agreed in the contract was £18,397. 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 2021/22 audit.

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 detailed on pages 8 to 10 in relation to the updated ISA (UK) 540 (revised): Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures.

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 2021/22, as set out below has been agreed with the Strategic Director for Resources.

	Actual Fee 2019/20	Actual Fee 2020/21	Proposed fee 2021/22
Warwickshire Pension Fund Audit	£22,647	£30,647	£31,060
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	£22,647	£30,647	£31,060

Assumptions

In setting the above fees, we have assumed that the Pension Fund 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.

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 and Pension Fund.

Other services

The following other services provided by Grant Thornton were identified in the table adjacent.

The amounts detailed are fees agreed to-date for audit related and non-audit services to be undertaken by Grant Thornton UK LLP in the current financial year. These services are consistent with the Pension Fund's policy on the allotment of non-audit work to your auditors. 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.

None of the services provided are subject to contingent fees.

Service	Fees £	Threats	Safeguards
Audit related			
IAS19 Assurance letters for Admitted Bodies	7,000	Self-Interest	The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the fee for this work is £7,000 in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £31,060 and in particular relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP's turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors all mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level.

Appendix 1: Progress against prior year audit recommendations

We identified the following issues in our 2020/21 audit of the Pension Fund's financial statements, which resulted in two recommendations being reported in our 2020/21 Audit Findings Report.

Assessment	Issue and risk previously communicated	Update on actions taken to address the issue
✓	<p>Level 2 and 3 investment valuations</p> <p>We would recommend that management introduce more robust controls and procedures to address the risk of estimation uncertainty. We acknowledge that valuation data is provided in arrears and therefore is not always available at the time of accounts production, however for hard to value estimates which are subject to greater level of volatility, management should work with fund managers in order to establish any likely significant changes in value in the final quarter. Management could also perform high level reconciliations from the Q3 to Q4 position through known cash flows in order to identify investment values which may be materially different at year end.</p>	<p>Representatives of the fund have met with all L3 investment managers to discuss valuations and timeliness of these in relation to year end. The fund manager who reported material differences in the value of L3 investments when compared to what was included in the accounts, noted that 31 December was their year-end. As such, the lead time on valuations was much longer for the final quarter. The Pension Fund have challenged as to whether they can still give an indication of the values and will continue to pursue this. In all cases, management have obtained detailed information on all valuation methodologies and requested that fund managers keep them abreast of any notable shifts in the market.</p>
TBC	<p>IT general controls audit</p> <p>The IT audit team have performed a review of IT general controls operational for key systems such as the Agresso general ledger and Altair pensions administration system. This has identified the following deficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Generic shared accounts within Agresso and Oracle database supporting Agresso and Altair. b) User access for terminated employees not disabled in a timely manner c) Completeness and accuracy of Altair batch jobs d) Lack of review of information security event/ audit logs; and e) Lack of approval and testing evidence to support upgrade to Altair 	<p>Follow up of IT audit control deficiencies identified will be performed by the IT audit team, we will report our findings for the attention of those charged with governance in the audit findings report.</p>

Appendix 2: Significant improvements from the Financial Reporting Council's (FRC) quality inspection

On 29 October, the FRC published its annual report setting out the findings of its review of the work of local auditors. The report summarises the results of the FRC's inspections of twenty audit files for the last financial year. A link to the report is here: [FRC AQR Major Local Audits October 2021](#)

Grant Thornton are one of seven firms which currently delivers local audit work. Of our 330 local government and NHS audits, 87 are currently defined as 'major audits' which fall within the scope of the AQR. This year, the FRC looked at nine of our audits.

Our file review results

The FRC reviewed nine of our audits this year. It graded six files (67%) as 'Good' and requiring no more than limited improvements. No files were graded as requiring significant improvement, representing an impressive year-on-year improvement. The FRC described the improvement in our audit quality as an 'encouraging response by the firm to the quality findings reported in the prior year.' Our Value for Money work continues to be delivered to a high standard, with all of the files reviewed requiring no more than limited improvement. We welcome the FRC findings and conclusions which demonstrate the impressive improvement we have made in audit quality over the past year.

The FRC also identified a number of good practices including effective challenge of management's valuer, use of an auditor's expert to assist with the audit of a highly specialised property valuation, and the extent and timing of involvement by the audit partner on the VFM conclusion.

Our results over the past three years are shown in the table below:

Grade	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21
Good with limited improvements (Grade 1 or 2)	1	1	6
Improvements required (Grade 3)	2	5	3
Significant improvements required (Grade 4)	1	0	0
Total	4	6	9

Our continued commitment to Audit quality and continuous improvement

Our work over the past year has been undertaken during the backdrop of COVID, when the public sector has faced the huge challenge of providing essential services and helping safeguard the public during the pandemic. Our NHS bodies in particular have been at the forefront of the public health crisis. As auditors we have had to show compassion to NHS staff deeply affected by the crisis, whilst staying focused on the principles of good governance and financial management, things which are more important than ever. We are very proud of the way we have worked effectively with audited bodies, demonstrating empathy in our work whilst still upholding the highest audit quality.

Appendix 2: Significant improvements from the Financial Reporting Council's (FRC) quality inspection (cont.)

Over the coming year we will make further investments in audit quality including strengthening our quality and technical support functions, and increasing the level of training, support and guidance for our audit teams. We will address the specific improvement recommendations raised by the FRC, including:

- Enhanced training for local auditors on key assumptions within property valuations, and how to demonstrate an increased level of challenge
- Formalising our arrangements for the consideration of complex technical issues by Partner Panels.

As part of our enhanced Value for Money programme, we will focus on identifying the scope for better use of public money, as well as highlighting weaknesses in governance or financial stewardship where we see them.

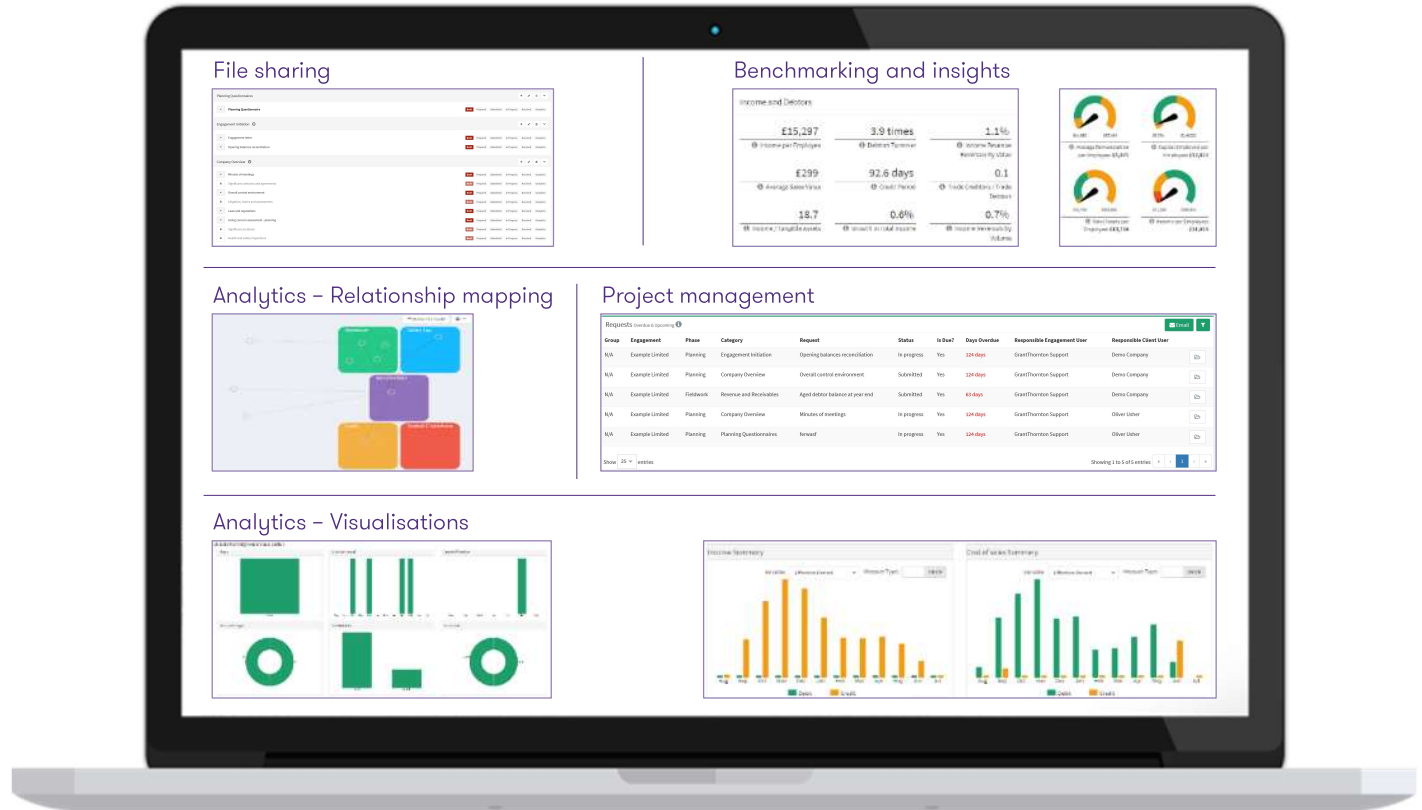
Conclusion

Local audit plays a critical role in the way public sector audits an society interact, and it depends on the trust and confidence of all those who rely on it. As a firm we're proud to be doing our part to promote good governance, effective stewardship and appropriate use of public funds.

Appendix 3: Our digital audit experience

A key component of our overall audit experience is our comprehensive data analytics tool, which is supported by Inflo Software technology. This tool has a number of key functions within our audit process:

Function	Benefits for you
Data extraction	Providing us with your financial information is made easier
File sharing	An easy-to-use, ISO 27001 certified, purpose-built file sharing tool
Project management	Effective management and oversight of requests and responsibilities
Data analytics	Enhanced assurance from access to complete data populations



Grant Thornton's Analytics solution is supported by Inflo Software technology

Appendix 3: Our digital audit experience

A key component of our overall audit experience is our comprehensive data analytics tool, which is supported by Info Software technology. This tool has a number of key functions within our audit process:



Data extraction

- Real-time access to data
- Easy step-by-step guides to support you upload your data



File sharing

- Task-based ISO 27001 certified file sharing space, ensuring requests for each task are easy to follow
- Ability to communicate in the tool, ensuring all team members have visibility on discussions about your audit, reducing duplication of work



Project management

- Facilitates oversight of requests
- Access to a live request list at all times



Data analytics

- Relationship mapping, allowing understanding of whole cycles to be obtained quickly
- Visualisation of transactions, allowing easy identification of trends and anomalies

How will analytics add value to your audit?

Analytics will add value to your audit in a number of ways. We see the key benefits of extensive use of data analytics within the audit process to be the following:

Improved fraud procedures using powerful anomaly detection

Being able to analyse every accounting transaction across your business enhances our fraud procedures. We can immediately identify high risk transactions, focusing our work on these to provide greater assurance to you, and other stakeholders.

Examples of anomaly detection include analysis of user activity, which may highlight inappropriate access permissions, and reviewing seldom used accounts, which could identify efficiencies through reducing unnecessary codes and therefore unnecessary internal maintenance.

Another product of this is identification of issues that are not specific to individual postings, such as training requirements being identified for members of staff with high error rates, or who are relying on use of suspense accounts.

More time for you to perform the day job

Providing all this additional value does not require additional input from you or your team. In fact, less of your time is required to prepare information for the audit and to provide supporting information to us.

Complete extracts from your general ledger will be obtained from the data provided to us and requests will therefore be reduced.

We provide transparent project management, allowing us to seamlessly collaborate with each other to complete the audit on time and around other commitments.

We will both have access to a dashboard which provides a real-time overview of audit progress, down to individual information items we need from each other. Tasks can easily be allocated across your team to ensure roles and responsibilities are well defined.

Using filters, you and your team will quickly be able to identify actions required, meaning any delays can be flagged earlier in the process. Accessible through any browser, the audit status is always available on any device providing you with the information to work flexibly around your other commitments.



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Audit and Standards Committee

21 July 2022

External Auditors Report – Warwickshire County Council 2021/22 Annual Audit Plan

Recommendation

The Audit and Standards Committee is asked to consider and comment on the Annual Audit Plan for 2021/22 from the External Auditors, attached at Appendix A.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. Our external auditors, Grant Thornton, have written to the Council, identifying the audit plan and the audit fees for the County Council in respect of the 2021/22 financial year, together with the rationale and scope for those fees. This document is brought to the Committee for comment each year.
- 1.2. The Audit Engagement Lead will attend the meeting to present the report attached at **Appendix A**.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1. The proposed Audit Fee for 2021/22 is £122,820. This represents an increase of £6,525 (5.6%) from the fee for 2020/21.
- 2.2. The audit fee has been discussed with the Strategic Director for Resources and the Assistant Director for Finance and the advice to the Committee is that the fees is accepted.
- 2.3. Members are asked to note that the fee level assumes that the Council will:
 - Prepare a good quality set of financial statements, supported by comprehensive and well-presented working papers which are ready at the start of the audit;
 - Provide appropriate analysis and evidence to support all critical and significant judgements made during the course of preparing the financial statements; and

- Provide early notice of proposed complex or unusual transactions which could have a material impact on the financial statements.

2.4. If we do not meet these requirements then the fee may increase. We have complied with these assumptions in previous years and continue to have a regular dialogue with the auditors throughout the year that enables discussion of issues that arise at the time. At this point in time we do not, therefore, expect to incur any additional fees.

3. Environmental Implications

3.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

4. Background Papers

4.1. None.

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Elected Members have not been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Warwickshire County Council Audit Plan

Year ending 31 March 2022

21 July 2022



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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 Council 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 Council have set their budget for next year 2022/23, and the medium-term financial strategy remains balanced to 2026/27.

The Council has made on capital loan and approved one development loan to Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) in the period, amounts are immaterial and therefore group accounts are not required. However, we will keep this assessment under review throughout the audit process.

Children's services has now moved to good from requires improvement. The authority is working through the SEND action plan which was identified as a significant weakness in VFM arrangements in 2020/21 due to poor regulator review. In addition to this, HMRIC (fire inspectorate) have qualified the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Council have identified the need to invest £3m in this area to address shortcomings.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have introduced secondary legislation to extend the deadline for publishing audited local authority accounts to 30 November 2022 for the 2021/22 accounts.

Emergency proposals to consider changes to the CIPFA Code to help alleviate delays in the publication of audited accounts have not been accepted, however the deferral of IFRS 16 to 2024/25 has been agreed but it has been advised that the Code must allow for early adoption from 1 April 2022 or 1 April 2023.

Recovery from Covid 19 pandemic

All Covid-19 related spend in the period has been adequately covered by Covid related grant income received from central government and other sources.

The Council have made the first loan from Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) in February. The initiative is geared at economic recovery in Warwickshire and investment can only be made in the region.

Other Local matters

The former Technical Accountant retired in December 2021 and the Council have been successful in recruiting into this role for the 2021/22 accounts and audit process.

Our response

- As a firm, we are absolutely committed to audit quality and financial reporting in the local government sector. Our proposed work and fee, as set further in our Audit Plan, has been agreed with the Strategic Director for Resources.
- 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 have considered actions in respect of matters identified through previous audit work, on the financial statements and our work in respect of VFM arrangements. Regarding the latter, we have identified a potential risk of significant weakness in arrangements – refer to page 14
- We will continue to provide you with sector updates via our Audit and Standards Committee 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 6

Introduction and headlines

Purpose

This document provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Warwickshire County Council ('the Council') 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 agreed 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 Warwickshire County Council. 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 Council's financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance the Audit and Standards Committee; and we consider whether there are sufficient arrangements in place at the Council for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources. Value for money relates to ensuring that resources are used efficiently to maximise the outcomes that can be achieved.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or the Audit and Standards Committee of your responsibilities. 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 audit approach is based on a thorough understanding of the Council'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 the net defined benefit 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 £15.2m (PY £14m) for the Council, which equates to 1.5% of your prior year gross expenditure for the year. We also calculate a lower threshold known as performance materiality which drives the extent of our testing, we have determined this to be £11.4m (PY £10.5m) which equates to 75% of headline materiality. 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 £760k (PY £700k).

Value for Money arrangements

Our risk assessment regarding your arrangements to secure value for money have identified the following risks of significant weakness:

- Arrangements in relation to Special Educational Needs and/ or Disabilities services in Warwickshire.
- Arrangements in relation to the efficiency, effectiveness and people of Warwickshire Fire Service.

Audit logistics

Our interim visit took place in March and April and our final visit will take place in July. Our key deliverables are this Audit Plan and our Audit Findings Report.

Our fee for the audit will be £122,820 (PY: £116,295) for the Council, subject to the Council 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
Fraud in revenue recognition (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>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at the Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Warwickshire County Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable <p>Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for Warwickshire County Council.</p>	No detailed audit procedures proposed
The expenditure cycle includes fraudulent transactions (rebutted)	<p>Practice Note 10 suggests that the risk of material misstatement due to fraudulent financial reporting that may arise from the manipulation of expenditure recognition needs to be considered, especially if an entity is required to meet financial targets.</p> <p>Having considered the risk factors relevant to the Council, we have determined that no separate significant risk relating to expenditure recognition is necessary, as the same rebuttal factors listed above relating to revenue recognition apply.</p> <p>We consider that the risk relating to expenditure recognition would relate primarily to period-end journals and accruals which are considered as part of the standard audit tests performed in relation to liabilities and our work in relation to the significant risk of management override of control as mentioned above.</p>	No detailed audit procedures proposed

Significant risks identified (continued)

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Management over-ride of controls	<p>Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the design effectiveness of management controls over journals • analyse the journals listing and determine the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals • test unusual journals recorded during the year and after the draft accounts stage for appropriateness and corroboration • gain an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied made by management and consider their reasonableness with regard to corroborative evidence • evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions.
Valuation of land and buildings	<p>The Authority revalues its land and buildings on an annual basis. This valuation represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of this estimate to changes in key assumptions.</p> <p>We therefore identified valuation of the Authority's land and buildings and investment properties as a significant risk.</p> <p>In the prior period, investment properties were immaterial and therefore out of scope of our audit. On receipt of the 2021/22 draft financial statements, we will re-assess this balance accordingly.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate, the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work • evaluate the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert • write to the valuer to confirm the basis on which the valuation was carried out • engage our own valuer to assess the instructions to the Authority's valuer, the Authority's valuer's report and the assumptions that underpin the valuation. • test revaluations made during the year to see if they had been input correctly into the Authority's asset register

Significant risks identified (continued)

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Valuation of the net defined benefit pension fund 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 statement. The pension fund net liability is considered a significant estimate due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions.</p> <p>The methods applied in the calculation of the IAS 19 estimates are routine and commonly applied by all actuarial firms in line with the requirements set out in the Code of practice for local government accounting (the applicable financial reporting framework). We have therefore concluded that there is not a significant risk of material misstatement in the IAS 19 estimate due to the methods and models used in their calculation.</p> <p>The source data used by the actuaries to produce the IAS 19 estimates is provided by administering authorities and employers. We do not consider this to be a significant risk as this is easily verifiable.</p> <p>The actuarial assumptions used are the responsibility of the entity but should be set on the advice given by the actuary. A small change in the key assumptions (discount rate, inflation rate, salary increase and life expectancy) can have a significant impact on the estimated IAS 19 liability. We have therefore concluded that there is a significant risk of material misstatement in the IAS 19 estimate due to the assumptions used in their calculation. With regard to these assumptions we have therefore identified valuation of the Authority's pension fund net liability as a significant risk.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • evaluate the instructions issued by management to their management expert (an actuary) for this estimate and the scope of the actuary's work; • assess the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the Authority's pension fund valuation; • assess the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Authority to the actuary to estimate the liability; • 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; • 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 • obtain assurances from the auditor of Warwickshire 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.

Other risks identified

Risk	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Value of Infrastructure assets and the presentation of the gross cost and accumulated depreciation in the PPE note	<p>Infrastructure assets includes roads, bridges and other community assets. As at 31 March 2021, the net book value of infrastructure assets was £474.9m which is over 31 times materiality and the Council spent £48.6m in capital additions to infrastructure assets.</p> <p>The Code requires infrastructure to be reported in the Balance Sheet at historic cost less accumulated depreciation and impairment and that where there is 'enhancement' to the assets, that the replaced components are derecognised. Where authorities are not fully compliant with these requirements, there may be a risk of material misstatement.</p> <p>In May 2022, CIPFA issued an urgent consultation on temporary proposals to change the Code in respect of the accounting treatment of infrastructure assets. CIPFA LASAAC also intend to consult on a longer term solution later in the year.</p> <p>With respect to the financial statements, there are two risks which we plan to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the risk that the value of infrastructure assets is materially misstated as a result of applying an inappropriate Useful Economic Life (UEL) to components of infrastructure assets. the risk that the presentation of the PPE note is materially misstated insofar as the gross cost and accumulated depreciation of Infrastructure assets is overstated. It will be overstated if management do not derecognise components of Infrastructure when they are replaced. <p>For the avoidance of any doubt, these two risks have not been assessed as a significant risk at this stage, but we have assessed that there is some risk of material misstatement that requires an audit response.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconcile the Fixed Asset Register to the Financial statements using our own point estimate, consider the reasonableness of depreciation charge to Infrastructure assets obtain assurance that the UEL applied to Infrastructure assets is reasonable document our understanding of management's process for derecognising Infrastructure assets on replacement and obtain assurances that the disclosure in the PPE note is not materially misstated

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

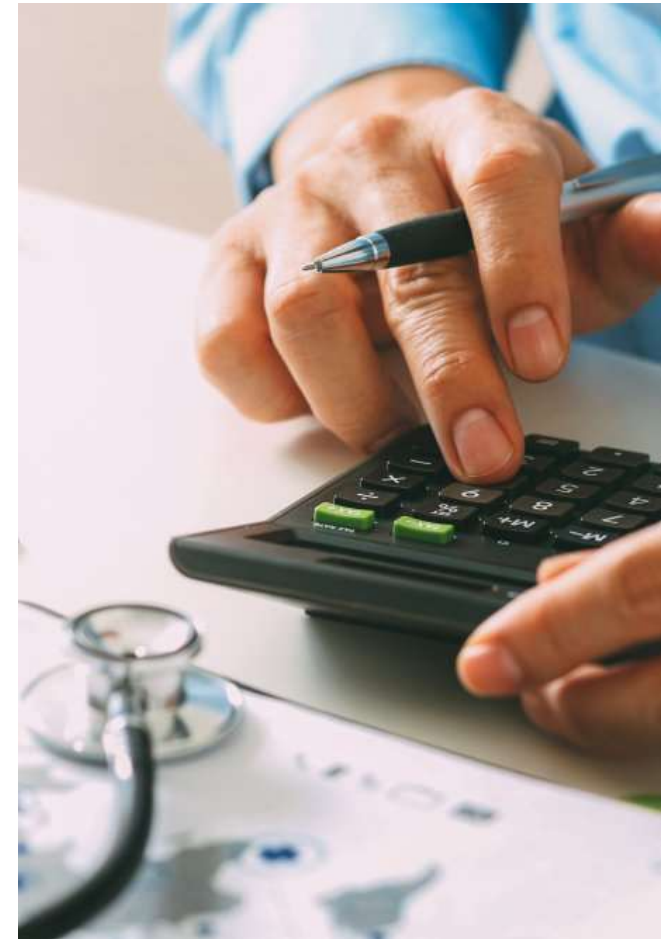
Under ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018) auditors are required to understand and assess an entity's internal controls over accounting estimates, including:

- 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 Audit and Standards 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 2022.

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

- Valuations of land and buildings and investment properties
- Depreciation
- Year end provisions and accruals, specifically for demand led services such as Adult's and Children's services
- Credit loss and impairment allowances
- Valuation of defined benefit net pension fund liabilities
- Fair value estimates
- Valuation of level 2 and level 3 investments

The Council's Information systems

In respect of the Council'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 Council 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 Council (and where applicable its service provider or management expert) 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 which were presented to the Audit and Standards Committee in March 2022 in a separate document named 'Informing the Audit Risk Assessment'.

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 Council.
- 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 2021/22 financial statements, consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the 2021/22 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.

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 Council for the prior financial year. In the prior year we used the same benchmark. Materiality at the planning stage of our audit is £15.2m (PY £14m) for the Council, which equates to 1.5% of your prior year 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 1.5% of the total amount disclosed for Senior officer remuneration due to public interest in this area of the accounts.

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.

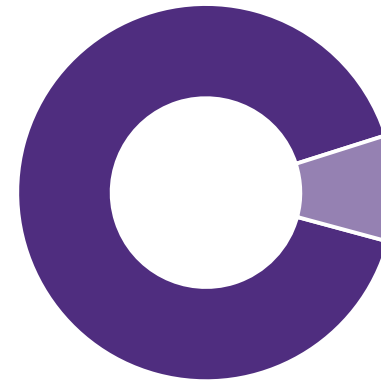
Matters we will report to the Audit Committee

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 Audit Committee 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 Council, we propose that an individual difference could normally be considered to be clearly trivial if it is less than £760k (PY £700k).

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

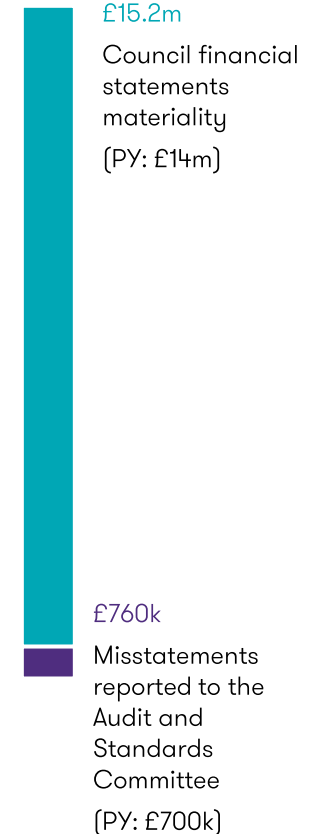
Prior year gross operating costs

£1,014m Council



■ Prior year gross operating costs

Materiality



Value for Money arrangements

Approach to Value for Money work for 2021/22

The National Audit Office (NAO) issued updated guidance for auditors in April 2020. The Code requires 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. These are set out below:



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



Risks of significant VFM weaknesses

As part of our planning work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the body's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources that we needed to perform further procedures on. The risks we have identified are detailed in the first table below, along with the further procedures we will perform. We may need to make recommendations following the completion of our work. The potential different types of recommendations we could make are set out below.

Risks of significant weakness

Those risks requiring audit consideration and procedures to address the likelihood that proper arrangements are not in place at the body to deliver value for money.



SEND arrangements

The report produced by the joint inspectorate of CQC and Ofsted identified significant concerns in relation to Special Educational Needs and/ or Disabilities services in Warwickshire. A statement of action has been agreed between the Council and its partners to address findings and there is a risk that actions may not be implemented on a timely basis or with the desired quality impact.

Response

We will obtain an understanding of the advancement made by the Council in delivering its responsibilities in relation to the agreed upon statement of action with reference to progress monitoring and any follow up inspections undertaken or planned by the regulator.



Warwickshire Fire Service

A report was published by HMICFRS in April 2022 which concluded that the fire service was graded as requires improvement across all three score card areas (Efficiency, Effectiveness and People). This is a downward trajectory from the previous review performed in 2018.

Response

As above, we will obtain an understanding of the response by the Council to the findings of this review and progress made subsequent to address recommendations of the inspectorate.

Potential types of recommendations

A range of different recommendations could be made following the completion of work on risks of significant weakness, as follows:



Statutory recommendation

Written recommendations to the body under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. A recommendation under schedule 7 requires the body to discuss and respond publicly to the report.



Key recommendation

The Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses in arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the body. We have defined these recommendations as 'key recommendations'.



Improvement recommendation

These recommendations, if implemented should improve the arrangements in place at the body, but are not made as a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the body's arrangements

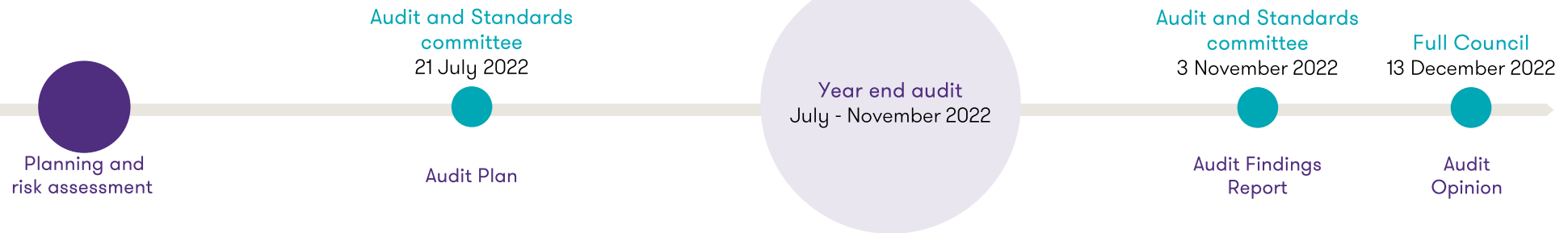
IT audit strategy

In accordance with ISA (UK) 315, we are required to obtain an understanding of the information systems relevant to financial reporting to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement. As part of this we obtain an understanding of the controls operating over relevant Information Technology (IT) systems i.e., IT general controls (ITGCs). Our audit will include completing an assessment of the design of ITGCs related to security management; technology acquisition, development and maintenance; and technology infrastructure. Based on the level of assurance required for each IT system the assessment may focus on evaluating key risk areas ('streamlined assessment') or be more in depth ('detailed assessment').

The following IT systems have been judged to be in scope for our audit and based on the planned financial statement audit approach we will perform the indicated level of assessment:

IT system	Audit area	Planned level IT audit assessment
Agresso	Financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined ITGC assessment Follow up of reported findings from the 2020/21 detailed ITGC assessment
Parent/YourHR	Payroll and HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined ITGC assessment Follow up of reported findings from the 2020/21 detailed ITGC assessment
Fair	Pensions administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined ITGC assessment Follow up of reported findings from the 2020/21 detailed ITGC assessment

Audit logistics and team



Planning and
risk assessment

Audit and Standards
committee
21 July 2022

Audit Plan

Year end audit
July - November 2022

Audit and Standards
committee
3 November 2022

Audit Findings
Report

Full Council
13 December 2022

Audit
Opinion

Avtar Sohal, Key Audit Partner



Avtar will be the main point of contact for the Chair, Strategic Director for Resources and Committee members. He will share his wealth of knowledge and experience across the sector providing challenge and sharing good practice. Avtar will ensure our audit is tailored specifically to you, and he is responsible for the overall quality of our audit.

Jim McLarnon, Audit Manager



Jim will work with senior members of the finance team ensuring testing is delivered and any accounting issues are addressed on a timely basis. He will attend Committee meetings with Avtar, and supervise Lena and Kiran in leading the on-site team. Jim will undertake reviews of the team's work and draft clear, concise and understandable reports

Lena Grant-Pearce and Kiran Hussain, Audit In-charges

Lena and Kiran will be the day to day contact for the audit, organising our visits and liaising with authority and pension fund staff. They will lead the on-site team and will monitor deliverables, manage our query log ensuring that any significant issues and adjustments are highlighted to management as soon as possible.

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 Warwickshire County Council to begin with effect from 2018/19. The fee agreed in the contract was £72,795. 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 2021/22 audit.

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 detailed on pages 8 to 10 in relation to the updated ISA (UK) 540 (revised): Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures.

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 2021/22, as set out below has been agreed with the Strategic Director for Resources.

	Actual Fee 2019/20	Actual Fee 2020/21	Proposed fee 2021/22
Warwickshire County Council Audit	£85,795	£116,295	£122,820
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	£85,795	£116,295	£122,820

Assumptions

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

- prepare a good quality set of financial statements, 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.

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

The following other services provided by Grant Thornton were identified.

[The amounts detailed are fees agreed to-date for audit related and non-audit services to be undertaken by Grant Thornton UK LLP in the current financial year. These services are consistent with the Council's policy on the allotment of non-audit work to your auditors. 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.

None of the services provided are subject to contingent fees.

Service	Fees £	Threats	Safeguards
Audit related			
Certification of Teachers' Pensions return	7,500	Self Interest	The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the fee for this work is £7,500 in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £122,820 and in particular relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP's turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors all mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level.
		Self review	We have not prepared the form which we review and do not expect material misstatements to the financial statements to arise from this service.
		Management	Changes to the return and the factual accuracy of our report will be agreed with informed management.
Non-audit related			
CFO Insights subscription	12,500	Self-Interest	A £37,500 for a three year subscription to CFO insights (£12,500 per year) was paid by the Council in 2022/23. The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the fee for this work in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £122,820 and in particular relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP's turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors all mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level.

Appendix 1: Progress against prior year audit recommendations

We identified the following issues in our 2020/21 audit of the Council's financial statements, which resulted in one recommendation being reported in our 2020/21 Audit Findings Report.

Assessment	Issue and risk previously communicated	Update on actions taken to address the issue
TBC	<p>IT general controls audit</p> <p>The IT audit team have performed a review of IT general controls operational for key systems such as the Agresso general ledger and Altair pensions administration system. This has identified the following deficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Generic shared accounts within Agresso and Oracle database supporting Agresso and Altair. b) User access for terminated employees not disabled in a timely manner c) Completeness and accuracy of Altair batch jobs d) Lack of review of information security event/ audit logs; and e) Lack of approval and testing evidence to support upgrade to Altair 	<p>Follow up of IT audit control deficiencies identified will be performed by the IT audit team, we will report our findings for the attention of those charged with governance in the audit findings report.</p>

Appendix 2: Significant improvements from the Financial Reporting Council's (FRC) quality inspection

On 29 October, the FRC published its annual report setting out the findings of its review of the work of local auditors. The report summarises the results of the FRC's inspections of twenty audit files for the last financial year. A link to the report is here: [FRC AQR Major Local Audits October 2021](#)

Grant Thornton are one of seven firms which currently delivers local audit work. Of our 330 local government and NHS audits, 87 are currently defined as 'major audits' which fall within the scope of the AQR. This year, the FRC looked at nine of our audits.

Our file review results

The FRC reviewed nine of our audits this year. It graded six files (67%) as 'Good' and requiring no more than limited improvements. No files were graded as requiring significant improvement, representing an impressive year-on-year improvement. The FRC described the improvement in our audit quality as an 'encouraging response by the firm to the quality findings reported in the prior year.' Our Value for Money work continues to be delivered to a high standard, with all of the files reviewed requiring no more than limited improvement. We welcome the FRC findings and conclusions which demonstrate the impressive improvement we have made in audit quality over the past year.

The FRC also identified a number of good practices including effective challenge of management's valuer, use of an auditor's expert to assist with the audit of a highly specialised property valuation, and the extent and timing of involvement by the audit partner on the VFM conclusion.

Our results over the past three years are shown in the table below:

Grade	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21
Good with limited improvements (Grade 1 or 2)	1	1	6
Improvements required (Grade 3)	2	5	3
Significant improvements required (Grade 4)	1	0	0
Total	4	6	9

Our continued commitment to Audit quality and continuous improvement

Our work over the past year has been undertaken during the backdrop of COVID, when the public sector has faced the huge challenge of providing essential services and helping safeguard the public during the pandemic. Our NHS bodies in particular have been at the forefront of the public health crisis. As auditors we have had to show compassion to NHS staff deeply affected by the crisis, whilst staying focused on the principles of good governance and financial management, things which are more important than ever. We are very proud of the way we have worked effectively with audited bodies, demonstrating empathy in our work whilst still upholding the highest audit quality.

Appendix 2: Significant improvements from the Financial Reporting Council's (FRC) quality inspection (cont.)

Over the coming year we will make further investments in audit quality including strengthening our quality and technical support functions, and increasing the level of training, support and guidance for our audit teams. We will address the specific improvement recommendations raised by the FRC, including:

- Enhanced training for local auditors on key assumptions within property valuations, and how to demonstrate an increased level of challenge
- Formalising our arrangements for the consideration of complex technical issues by Partner Panels.

As part of our enhanced Value for Money programme, we will focus on identifying the scope for better use of public money, as well as highlighting weaknesses in governance or financial stewardship where we see them.

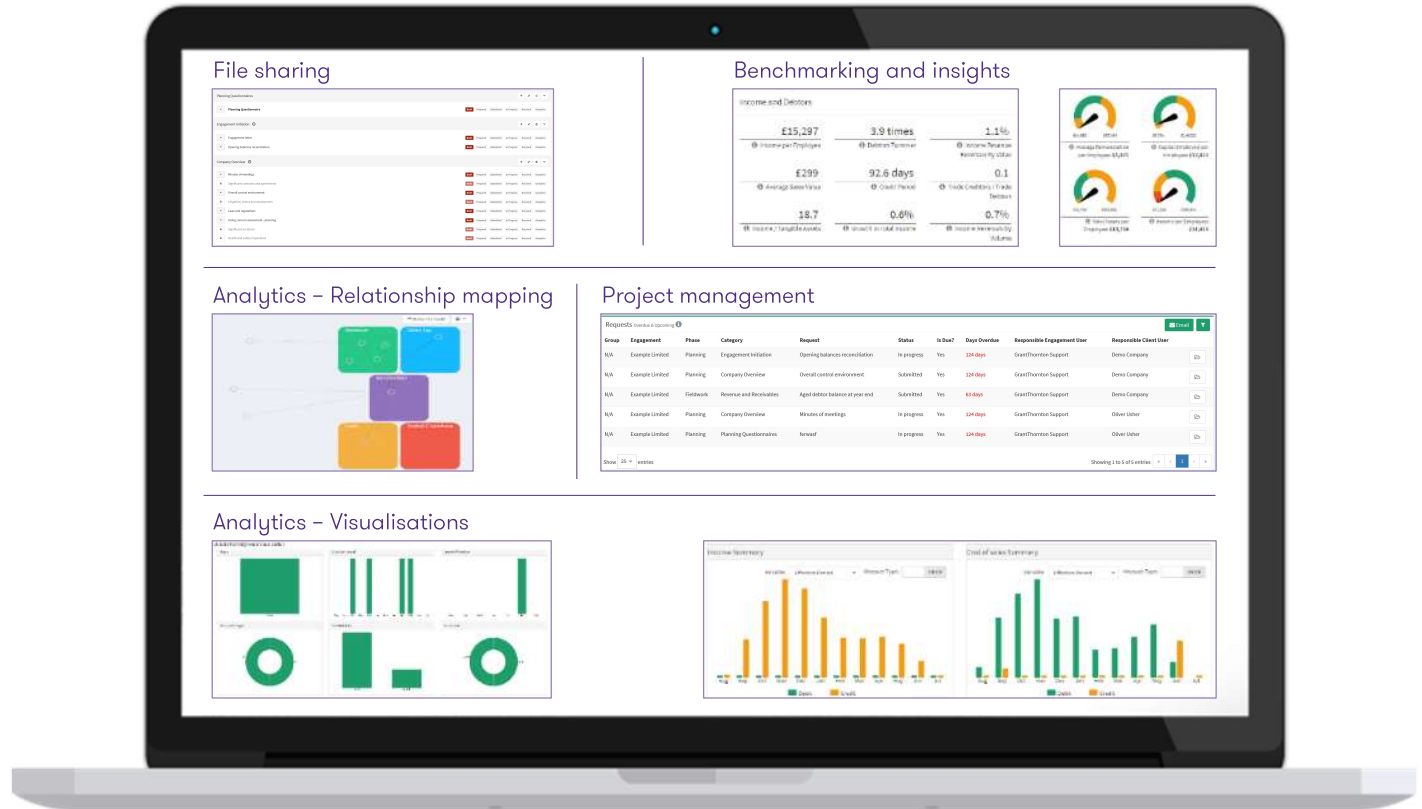
Conclusion

Local audit plays a critical role in the way public sector audits an society interact, and it depends on the trust and confidence of all those who rely on it. As a firm we're proud to be doing our part to promote good governance, effective stewardship and appropriate use of public funds.

Appendix 3: Our digital audit experience

A key component of our overall audit experience is our comprehensive data analytics tool, which is supported by Inflo Software technology. This tool has a number of key functions within our audit process:

Function	Benefits for you
Data extraction	Providing us with your financial information is made easier
File sharing	An easy-to-use, ISO 27001 certified, purpose-built file sharing tool
Project management	Effective management and oversight of requests and responsibilities
Data analytics	Enhanced assurance from access to complete data populations



Grant Thornton's Analytics solution is supported by Inflo Software technology

Appendix 3: Our digital audit experience

A key component of our overall audit experience is our comprehensive data analytics tool, which is supported by Inflo Software technology. This tool has a number of key functions within our audit process:



Data extraction

- Real-time access to data
- Easy step-by-step guides to support you upload your data



File sharing

- Task-based ISO 27001 certified file sharing space, ensuring requests for each task are easy to follow
- Ability to communicate in the tool, ensuring all team members have visibility on discussions about your audit, reducing duplication of work



Project management

- Facilitates oversight of requests
- Access to a live request list at all times



Data analytics

- Relationship mapping, allowing understanding of whole cycles to be obtained quickly
- Visualisation of transactions, allowing easy identification of trends and anomalies

How will analytics add value to your audit?

Analytics will add value to your audit in a number of ways. We see the key benefits of extensive use of data analytics within the audit process to be the following:

Improved fraud procedures using powerful anomaly detection

Being able to analyse every accounting transaction across your business enhances our fraud procedures. We can immediately identify high risk transactions, focusing our work on these to provide greater assurance to you, and other stakeholders.

Examples of anomaly detection include analysis of user activity, which may highlight inappropriate access permissions, and reviewing seldom used accounts, which could identify efficiencies through reducing unnecessary codes and therefore unnecessary internal maintenance.

Another product of this is identification of issues that are not specific to individual postings, such as training requirements being identified for members of staff with high error rates, or who are relying on use of suspense accounts.

More time for you to perform the day job

Providing all this additional value does not require additional input from you or your team. In fact, less of your time is required to prepare information for the audit and to provide supporting information to us.

Complete extracts from your general ledger will be obtained from the data provided to us and requests will therefore be reduced.

We provide transparent project management, allowing us to seamlessly collaborate with each other to complete the audit on time and around other commitments.

We will both have access to a dashboard which provides a real-time overview of audit progress, down to individual information items we need from each other. Tasks can easily be allocated across your team to ensure roles and responsibilities are well defined.

Using filters, you and your team will quickly be able to identify actions required, meaning any delays can be flagged earlier in the process. Accessible through any browser, the audit status is always available on any device providing you with the information to work flexibly around your other commitments.



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**Audit and Standards Committee
Updated Work Programme 2022 - 2023**

Item	Lead Officer	Date of meeting
Scrutiny Review – Key measurable factors to assess effectiveness of revised arrangements	Sarah Duxbury / Nic Vine	Briefing Note (to be followed by agenda item - date TBC)
Impact of Grenfell – an update from WFRS regarding flammable cladding on residential properties in Warwickshire.	WFRS	TBC
Member complaints	Sioned Harper	November 3 rd 2022

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