

Audit Committee Update Birmingham City Council Progress Report and Update Year ended 31 March 2017

25 July 2017

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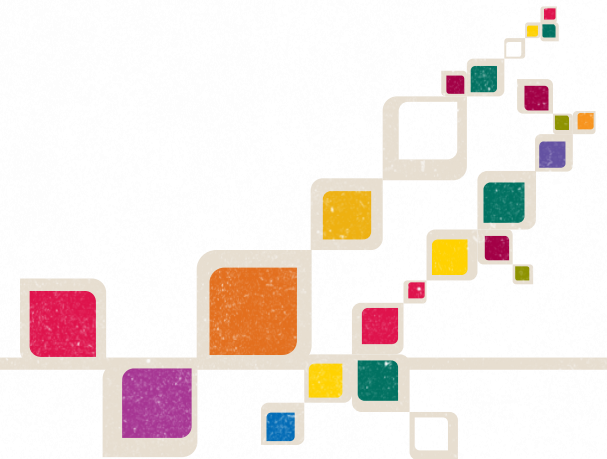
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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to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



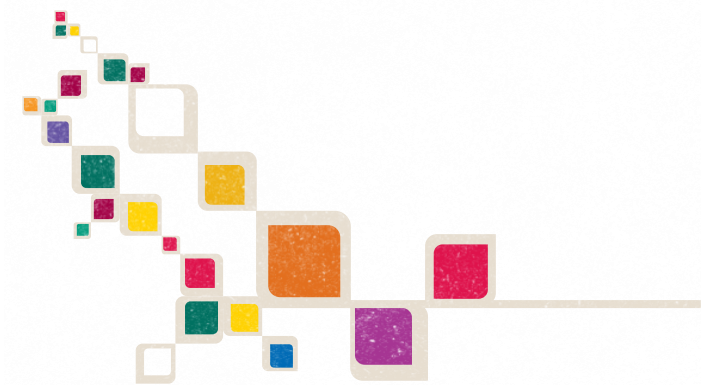
Introduction

This paper provides the Audit Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

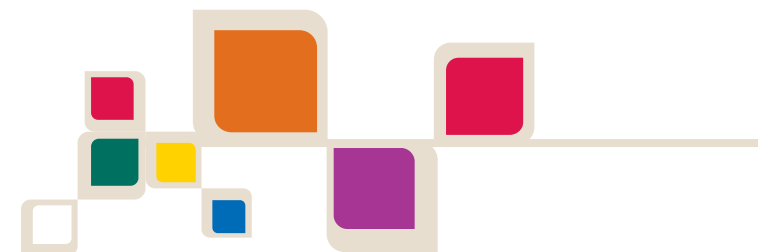
Members of the Audit Committee can find further useful material on our website www.grant-thornton.co.uk, where we have a section dedicated to our work in the public sector. Here you can download copies of our publications and articles, including the reports mentioned in this update along with other items:

- Income generation is an increasingly essential part of providing sustainable local services (March 2017); <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/the-income-generation-report-local-leaders-are-ready-to-be-more-commercial/>
- CFO Insights – reviewing council's 2015/16 spend (December 2016); <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/cfo-insights-reviewing-councils-201516-spend/>
- Fraud risk, 'adequate procedures', and local authorities (December 2016); <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/fraud-risk-adequate-procedures-and-local-authorities/>
- Brexit and local government; (April 2017) <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/a-global-britain-needs-more-local-government-not-less/> and (December 2016) <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/brexit-local-government-transitioning-successfully/>

If you would like further information on any items in this briefing, or would like to register with Grant Thornton to receive regular email updates on issues that are of interest to you, please contact either your Engagement Lead or Engagement Manager.

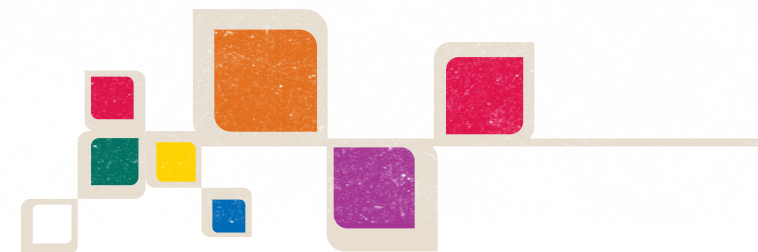


Progress at July 2017



2016/17 work	Planned Date	Complete?	Comments
Fee Letter We are required to issue a 'Planned fee letter for 2016/17' by the end of April 2016	April 2016	Yes	The 2016/17 scale audit fee is £314,168. This is set by Public Sector Audit Appointments. We also issued the fee letter for 2017/18, with no change to the fee proposed. This has previously been reported to the Audit Committee.
Accounts Audit Plan We are required to issue a detailed accounts audit plan to the Council setting out our proposed approach in order to give an opinion on the Council's 2016-17 financial statements.	March 2017	Yes	This was presented to the Audit Committee in March 2017. A separate Value for Money Conclusion Plan identifying significant risks was presented to the January Audit Committee.
Interim accounts audit Our interim fieldwork visit plan included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updated review of the Council's control environment • updated understanding of financial systems • review of Internal Audit reports on core financial systems • early work on emerging accounting issues • early substantive testing • Value for Money conclusion risk assessment. 	Completed March 2017	Yes	<p>We reported audit findings from our first block of fieldwork in our Audit Plan in March. No significant issues were raised to bring to your attention.</p> <p>As part of our formal communication between auditors and the Council's Audit Committee, as 'those charged with governance' we prepare a specific report which covers some important areas of the auditor risk assessment where we are required to make inquiries of management and the Audit Committee under auditing standards. This was also presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in March.</p>
Final accounts audit Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audit of the 2016/17 financial statements • proposed opinion on the Council's accounts • proposed Value for Money conclusion • review of the Council's disclosures in the consolidated accounts against the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16 	In progress	Completion expected by end of August 2017	<p>We are planning to complete our fieldwork and report our findings to management by the end of August as part of the transition to the earlier closedown and audit cycle that is required from 2018.</p> <p>The audit is progressing as planned and no significant issues have been identified to date which require reporting to the Audit Committee early.</p> <p>The Audit Committee is to meet to approve the financial statements and to consider our Audit Findings Report on 26 September.</p>

Progress at July 2017



2016/17 work	Planned Date	Complete?	Comments
<p>Value for Money (VfM) conclusion</p> <p>The scope of our work is unchanged to 2015/16 and is set out in the final guidance issued by the National Audit Office in November 2015. The Code requires auditors to satisfy themselves that; "the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources".</p> <p>The guidance confirmed the overall criterion as; "in all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people".</p> <p>The three sub criteria for assessment to be able to give a conclusion overall are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed decision making • Sustainable resource deployment • Working with partners and other third parties 	September 2017	No – top up required September 2017	<p>We have substantially completed our detailed procedures and will keep abreast of any emerging issues to sign off date. The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings Report.</p> <p>We qualified our 2015/16 conclusion in relation to the following risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings challenge – due to the impact of non-recurrent savings in 2015/16 and the weaknesses in the People Directorate's savings plan delivery • Services for vulnerable children – due to the concerns reported by Ofsted following their monitoring visit and the continuing need for the Council to have external oversight of its arrangement by the Children's Commissioner • Management of schools – due to Ofsted feedback indicating that there are significant governance issues in some schools and concerns reported by Ofsted on the pace of change • Improvement Panel – due to continuation of the Panel's appointment <p>We are required to bring these matters forward as part of our 2016/17 audit work. We will include our conclusion as part of our report on your financial statements.</p>
<p>Other areas of work</p> <p>Meetings with Members, Officers and others</p>	N/A	N/A	<p>We included a statutory recommendation in our 2015/16 Annual Audit Letter. This recommendation and the Council's formal response was considered at the Council meeting on 10 January 2017.</p> <p>We also wrote to the Acting Chief Executive of the Council on March 15 2017 expressing concern about the Council's ability to deliver its challenging savings programme, particularly given gaps in senior management capacity (at the time) and proposals to reduce senior management capacity in the finance department. The Council responded to the issues of capacity set out in our letter and a report was presented to Audit Committee on 20 June 2017. The Audit Engagement Lead continues to have on-going meetings with the Senior Management Team.</p>

Technical Matters





Accounting and audit issues

LAAP Bulletin 105: Closure of the 2016/17 accounts and related matters

In March, CIPFA's Local Authority Accounting Panel issued LAAP Bulletin 105. The bulletin provides further guidance and clarification to complement CIPFA's 2016/17 Guidance Notes for Practitioners and focuses on those areas that are expected to be significant for most authorities. Topics include:

- Highways Network Asset
- update to the 2016/17 code
- Telling the Story
- accounting standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted
- summary of other changes to the 2016/17 Code
- statutory guidance on the flexible use of capital receipts
- the Better Care Fund

The LAAP bulletin confirms that section P - Highways Network Asset of Module 4 no longer applies and any reference in the 2016/17 Code Guidance Notes to the Highways Network Asset does not apply. Therefore, highways authorities' accounting policies for the infrastructure class of assets are unchanged from the approach adopted in previous years, i.e. the infrastructure class of assets will be defined as it was in the 2015/16 Code and be measured at depreciated historical cost.

Telling the Story – the 2016/17 Code changed segmental reporting arrangements for the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) and introduced the Expenditure and Funding Analysis (EFA). Both the CIES and EFA include a segmental analysis which requires local authorities to report on the basis of how they are structured.



Accounting and audit issues

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18

CIPFA/LASAAC has issued the Local Authority Accounting Code for 2017/18. The main changes to the Code include:

- amendments to section 2.2 (Business Improvement District Schemes (England, Wales and Scotland), Business Rate Supplements (England), and Community Infrastructure Levy (England and Wales)) for the Community Infrastructure Levy to clarify the treatment of revenue costs and any charges received before the commencement date
- amendment to section 3.1 (Narrative Reporting) to introduce key reporting principles for the Narrative Report
- updates to section 3.4 (Presentation of Financial Statements) to clarify the reporting requirements for accounting policies and going concern reporting
- changes to section 3.5 (Housing Revenue Account) to reflect the Housing Revenue Account (Accounting Practices) Directions 2016 disclosure requirements for English authorities
- following the amendments in the Update to the 2016/17 Code, changes to sections 4.2 (Lease and Lease Type Arrangements), 4.3 (Service Concession Arrangements: Local Authority as Grantor), 7.4 (Financial Instruments – Disclosure and Presentation Requirements)
- amendments to section 6.5 (Accounting and Reporting by Pension Funds) to require a new disclosure of investment management transaction costs and clarification on the approach to investment concentration disclosure.

Sector issues and developments



National Audit Office

Protecting information across government

“Protecting information while re-designing public services and introducing the technology necessary to support them is an increasingly complex challenge. To achieve this, the Cabinet Office, departments and the wider public sector need a new approach, in which the centre of government provides clear principles and guidance and departments increase their capacity to make informed decisions about the risks involved.”

Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 14 September 2016

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/protecting-information-across-government/>

Planning for 100% local retention of business rates

“The Department faces a significant challenge in implementing 100% local retention of business rates by 2019-20. It has benefited from the experience of delivering the 50% local retention scheme and is using this experience effectively. The key question is whether there is enough money in the system to let services be delivered on the right scale and for self-sufficiency to be seen to succeed.”

Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 29 March 2017

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/planning-for-100-local-retention-of-business-rates/>

Health and social care integration

“Integrating the health and social care sectors is a significant challenge in normal times, let alone times when both sectors are under such severe pressure. So far, benefits have fallen far short of plans, despite much effort. It will be important to learn from the over-optimism of such plans when implementing the much larger NHS sustainability and transformation plans. The Departments do not yet have the evidence to show that they can deliver their commitment to integrated services by 2020, at the same time as meeting existing pressures on the health and social care systems.”

Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 8 February 2017

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/health-and-social-care-integration>

NAO Publications

Challenge question:

- Have you read the NAO reports?

Grant Thornton



Income generation

Local government is under immense financial pressure to do more with less. The 2015/16 spending review is forecast to result in a £13 billion funding hole by 2020 that requires. With further funding deficits still looming, income generation is increasingly an essential part of the solution to providing sustainable local services, alongside managing demand reduction and cost efficiency of service delivery. This report shares the insights into how and why local authorities are reviewing and developing their approach to income generation.

Our new research on income generation which includes our CFO Insights tool suggests that:

- ❖ councils are increasingly using income generation to diversify their funding base, and are commercialising in a variety of ways. This ranges from fees and charges (household garden waste, car parking, private use of public spaces), asset management (utilities, personnel, advertising, wifi concession license) and company spin-offs (housing, energy, local challenger banks), through to treasury investments (real estate development, solar farms, equity investment).
- ❖ the ideal scenario to commercialise is investing to earn with a financial and social return. Councils are now striving to generate income in way which achieves multiple strategic outcomes for the same spend; examining options to balance budgets while simultaneously boosting growth, supporting vulnerable communities and protecting the environment.

- ❖ stronger commercialisation offers real potential for councils to meet revenue and strategic challenges for 2020 onwards. Whilst there are examples of good practice and innovation, this opportunity is not being fully exploited across the sector due to an absence of a holistic and integrated approach to corporate strategy development (a common vision for success, understanding current performance, selecting appropriate new opportunities, the capacity and culture to deliver change).

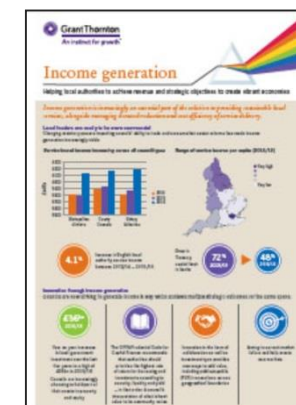
Our report helps local authorities maximise their ability to generate income by providing:

- Case study examples
- Local authority spend analysis
- Examples of innovative financial mechanism
- Critical success factors to consider

Grant Thornton publications

Challenge question:

- Have you read our income generation report?
- Is your council actively exploring options to generate income?



Our Income generation report was published on Thursday 2 March, hard copies are available from your team and via link:

<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/the-income-generation-report-local-leaders-are-ready-to-be-more-commercial/>

A Manifesto for a Vibrant Economy

Grant Thornton publications

Developing infrastructure to enable local growth

Cities and shire areas need the powers and frameworks to collaborate on strategic issues and be able to raise finance to invest in infrastructure priorities. Devolution needs to continue in England across all places, with governance models not being a “one-size-fits all”. Priorities include broadband, airport capacity in the North and east-west transport links.

Addressing the housing shortage, particularly in London and the Southeast, is a vital part of this. There simply is not enough available land on which to build, and green belt legislation, though designed to allow people living in cities space to breath, has become restrictive and is in need of modernisation. Without further provision to free up more land to build on, the young people that we need to protect the future of our economy will not be able to afford housing, and council spending on housing the homeless will continue to rise.

Business rates are also ripe for review – a property-based tax is no longer an accurate basis for taxing the activity and value of local business, in particular as this source of funding becomes increasingly important to the provision of local authority services with the phasing out of the Government’s block grant.

Demographic and funding pressures mean that the NHS no longer remains sustainable, and the integration of health and social care – recognised as critical by all key decision makers – remains more aspiration than reality. .

There is an opportunity for communities to take a more holistic approach to health, for example creating healthier spaces and workplaces and tackling air quality, and to use technology to provide more accessible, cheaper diagnosis and treatment for many routine issues

Finding a better way to measure the vibrancy of places

When applied to a place we can see that traditional indicators of prosperity such as GVA, do not tell the full story. To address this we have developed a [Vibrant Economy Index](#) to measure the current and future vibrancy of places. The Index uses the geography of local authority areas and identifies six broad objectives for society: prosperity, dynamism and opportunity, inclusion and equality, health wellbeing and happiness, resilience and sustainability, and community trust and belonging.

The city of Manchester, for example, is associated with dynamic economic success. While our Index confirms this, it also identifies that the Greater Manchester area overall has exceptionally poor health outcomes, generations of low education attainment and deep-rooted joblessness. These factors threaten future prosperity, as success depends on people’s productive participation in the wider local economy, rather than in concentrated pockets.

Every place has its own challenges and opportunities. Understanding what these are, and the dynamic between them, will help unlock everybody’s ability to thrive. Over the coming months we will continue to develop the Vibrant Economy Index through discussions with businesses, citizens and government at a national and local level.

Challenge question:

- Have you read our manifesto?



<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/documents/creating-manifesto-vibrant-economy-draft-recommendations.pdf>

Guy Clifton – Head of Local Government Advisory

Publications

Providing key insight and examples of best practice to local government, police, fire and rescue services.



Innovation in public financial management

Our research on international public financial management shows it is evolving, from having a narrow focus on budgeting, towards a wider mandate as a key driver of policy and strategy across all levels of government, public services, state enterprises and public-private partnerships.



Turning up the volume

Our Business Location Index identifies the most desirable and affordable areas for investment in England, by looking at a combination of economic performance, people & skills, environment & infrastructure and cost.

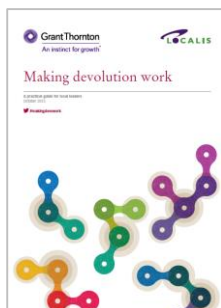
Our aim is to give local authorities and LEPs the tool to better understand and market their strength and assets to increase inward investment and inform their devolution discussions.



Reforging local government

The autumn statement identified how councils will need better financial management and further efficiency to achieve the projected 29% savings. This presents a serious challenge to manage councils that have already become lean.

Our report looks at the financial challenge facing councils, the new governance agenda that will challenge traditional arrangements and expectations, and the way forward for the public sector through devolution, innovation, collaboration and cultural change.



Making devolution work

This report gets under the bonnet of the devolutionary conversations taking place between Whitehall and local government across England. It offers a practical guide to local leaders by outlining the benefits of devolution, the areas of priority to central government and the key questions that must be addressed in order to produce a successful devolution bid.



Growing healthy communities

It has long been recognised that the health of a population is strongly linked to the circumstances in which people live.

Our health and wellbeing index looks at the health determinants and outcomes of an area, highlights the scale and nature of inequality across the country and reiterates the need for a local, place-based approach to tackling health outcomes. It also identifies the wider economic determinants on an area's circumstances, emphasising the need for local collaboration between public sector bodies.



Spreading their wings

Our first report in a series looking at alternative delivery models in local government looks at local authority trading companies (LATCs).

The need to improve performance against the continuing financial pressure in the public sector has led to an increase in innovative solutions to the challenges, such as alternative delivery models.

Our report provides a guide on building a successful LATC, identifying the areas that must be considered at each stage of the process, as well as offering a number of examples of best practice.

Hardcopies of these reports are available from your audit team



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