

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

January 2017

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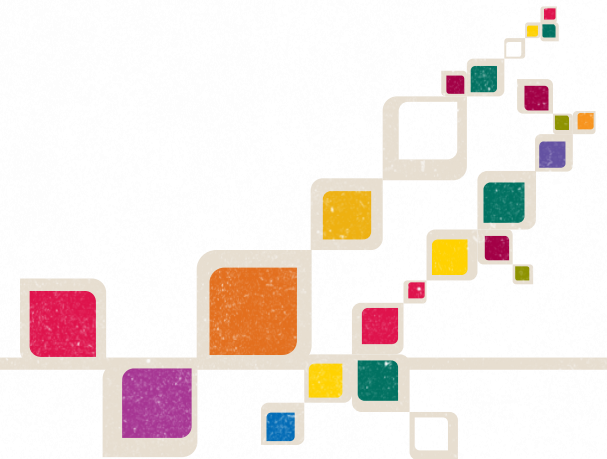
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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to 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

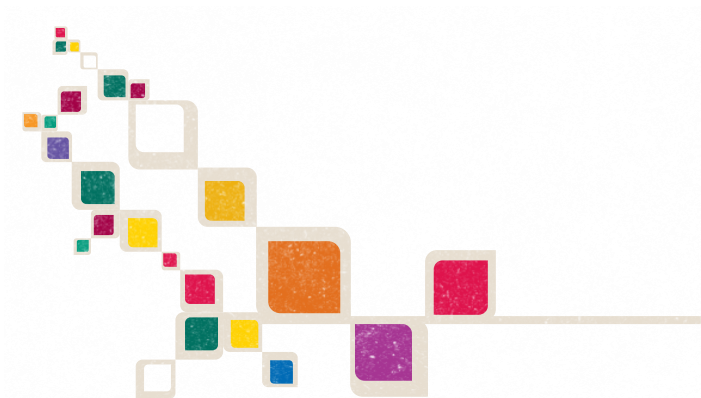
This paper provides the Audit Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

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:

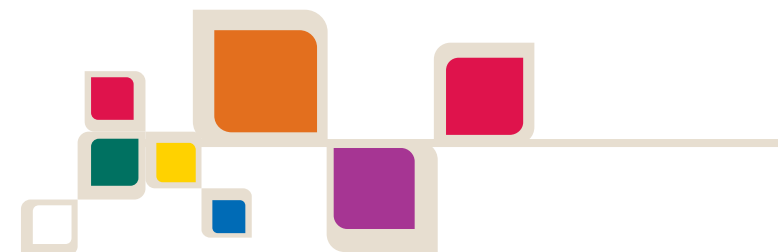
- CFO Insights – reviewing council's 2015/16 spend (December 2016); <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/cfo-insights-reviewing-councils-201516-spend/>
- Fraud risk, 'adequate procedures', and local authorities (December 2016); <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/fraud-risk-adequate-procedures-and-local-authorities/>
- New laws to prevent fraud may affect the public sector (November 2016); <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/new-laws-to-prevent-fraud-may-affect-the-public-sector/>
- Brexit: local government – transitioning successfully (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.

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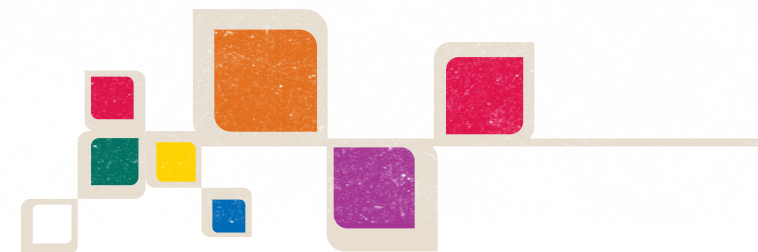


Progress at January 2017



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.
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 2016	In Progress	We will present our Accounts Audit Plan to the March Audit Committee meeting. Our Value for Money Conclusion Plan, identifying the significant risks is included as a separate agenda item.
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. 	January – March 2017	In Progress	Our interim audit work is currently underway. We are working closely with the Finance Team and there are no matters that we wish to bring to your attention at this time.
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 	June – August 2017	No	Early testing will be completed at interim visits to provide efficiencies to the final accounts visit. We are planning to start our final accounts audit in early June.

Progress at January 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 	January – March 2017	In Progress	<p>We have completed an initial risk assessment and our VfM Conclusion plan is included as a separate agenda item. 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.</p>
<p>Other areas of work</p> <p>Statutory recommendations under s24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014</p>	Ongoing	Ongoing	<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>

Technical Matters



Highways network asset

On 14 November CIPFA/LASAAC announced a deferral of the move to measuring the Highways Network Asset ('HNA') at depreciated replacement cost in local authority financial statements for 2016/17. This is due to delays in obtaining updated central rates information that was required for the valuations.

CIPFA/LASAAC will issue an Update to the 2016/17 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom to confirm this decision once it has completed the full due process before publication. CIPFA/LASAAC will review this position at its meeting in March 2017 with a view to implementation in 2017/18 and will consider whether central rates and the central assurance processes will be delivered in a timely manner to allow successful implementation. It expects that the 2017/18 Code will be on the same basis as planned for 2016/17, i.e. not requiring restatement of preceding year information.

In August, CIPFA published the 'Code of Practice on the Highways Network Asset (2016 Edition)' and additional guidance to aid the implementation process.

Delivering Good Governance

In April, CIPFA and SOLACE published 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)' and this applies to annual governance statements prepared for the 2016/17 financial year. The key focus of the framework is on sustainability – economic, social and environmental – and the need to focus on the longer term and the impact actions may have on future generations.

Local authorities should be:

- reviewing existing governance arrangements against the principles set out in the Framework
- developing and maintaining an up-to-date local code of governance, including arrangements for ensuring on-going effectiveness
- reporting publicly on compliance with their own code on an annual basis and on how they have monitored the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year and on planned changes.

The framework applies to all parts of local government and its partnerships and should be applied using the spirit and ethos of the Framework rather than just rules and procedures

Telling the story – Changes in 2016/17 CIPFA Code

CIPFA has been working on the 'Telling the Story' project, which aims to streamline the financial statements and improve accessibility to the user. This has resulted in changes to CIPFA's 2016/17 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom ('the Code').

The main changes affect the presentation of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement ('CIES'), the Movement in Reserves Statement ('MIRS') and segmental reporting disclosures. A new Expenditure and Funding Analysis has been introduced.

The key changes are:

- the cost of services in the CIES is to be reported on basis of the local authority's organisational structure rather than the Service Reporting Code of Practice (SERCOP) headings
- an 'Expenditure & Funding Analysis' note to the financial statements provides a reconciliation between the way local authorities are funded and the accounting measures of financial performance in the CIES
- the changes will remove some of the complexities of the current segmental note
- other changes to streamline the current MIRS providing options to report Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure (previously shown as Surplus and Deficit on the Provision of Services and Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure lines) and removal of earmarked reserves columns.

Other amendments have been made to the Code:

- changes to reporting by pension funds in relation to the format and fair value disclosure requirements to reflect changes to the Pensions SORP
- other amendments and clarifications to reflect changes in the accounting standards.

Sector issues and developments



National Audit Office reports

Below is a selection of reports issued during 2016 which may be of interest to Audit Committee members. Please see the website for all reports issued by the NAO.



Overview: Local government

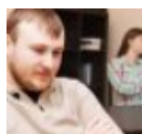
Published:
9 Nov 2016

This Overview looks at the local government landscape during the last financial year and summarises both matters of likely interest to Parliament as well as our work with local authorities. The NAO prepares statutory guidance on how local auditors should meet their responsibilities.

Sector(s): [Local services](#)

Performance Improvement area(s): [Departmental Overviews](#), [Local service delivery](#)

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/overview-local-government/>



The Troubled Families programme: update

Published:
18 Oct 2016

This report is a factual update to support the Committee of Public Accounts' evidence session on the government's Troubled Families programme on 19 October 2016. It is based primarily on published sources, information supplied by the Department for Communities and Local Government and previous reports published by the National Audit Office.

Sector(s): [Community and society](#), [Local services](#)

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-troubled-families-programme-update/>

Local Government Association

Below is a selection of reports issued recently which may be of interest to audit committee members. These are available on the website:

<http://www.local.gov.uk/publications>

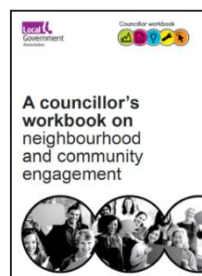


Provisional LG Finance Settlement for 2017/18

12 January 2017

The LGA has published its responses to the DCLG consultation on proposals for the local government finance settlement for 2017 to 2018 and for the approach to future local government finance settlements.

<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/8150261/Local+Government+Finance+Settlement+1718+LGA+response.pdf/dd8d32e1-ec9f-4314-8121-7aae2195f89f>



A councillor's workbook on neighbourhood and community engagement

11 January 2017

Neighbourhood and community engagement has a rightful place as one of the key processes involved in planning and decision making. As such, it should not be viewed as an additional task, but as a core part of the business



Building our homes, communities and future: The LGA housing commission final report

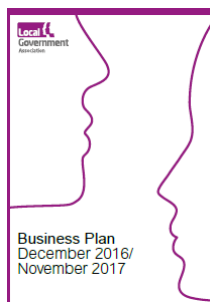
22 December 2016

The Local Government Association (LGA) Housing Commission was established to help councils deliver their ambition for places. It has been supported by a panel of advisers and has engaged with over 100 partners; hearing from councils, developers, charities, health partners, and many others. All partners agree that there is no silver bullet, and all emphasise the pivotal role of councils in helping provide strong leadership, collaborative working, and longer-term certainty for places and the people that live there.

Local Government Association

Below is a selection of reports issued recently which may be of interest to audit committee members. These are available on the LGA website:

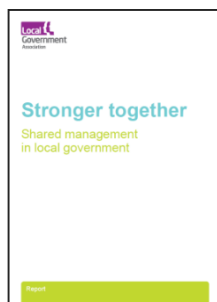
<http://www.local.gov.uk/publications>



Business Plan December 2016/November 2017

30 December 2016

Britain's exit from the EU means that we are reshaping the way our country is run. Our vision is one of a rejuvenated local democracy, where power from Westminster and from the EU is significantly devolved to local level and citizens feel they have a meaningful vote and real reason to participate in civic life and their communities.



Stronger together: shared management in local government

29 November 2016

Around 45 councils across England share a chief executive and senior management team in about 20 different partnerships. Most also share at least some services. These councils have already delivered savings of at least £60 million through greater efficiencies and the other benefits of collaboration, with more savings planned



Adult social care funding: 2016 state of the nation report

2 November 2016

Adult social care is an absolutely vital public service that supports some of our most vulnerable people and promotes the wellbeing and independence of many more

Grant Thornton



Integrated Reporting

Looking beyond the report

The move away from reporting based on historic financial information is beginning to gain momentum and Integrated Reporting is now mandatory in some countries.

In the UK, CIPFA proposed in their consultation document that the narrative report from 2017/18 reflects elements of the International Integrated Reporting Council's framework whilst the Treasury is encouraging public sector organisations to adopt Integrated Reporting.

Integrated reporting: Looking beyond the report was produced by our global Integrated Reporting team, based in the UK, New Zealand and South Africa, to help organisations obtain the benefits of Integrated Reporting.

The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) describes Integrated Reporting as *"enhancing the way organisations think, plan and report the story of their business."*

At Grant Thornton, we fully agree with this and, in our view, the key word is 'enhancing' because a lot of the elements to support effective Integrated Reporting are likely to be in place already.

But anyone focussing purely on the production of the report itself will not reap the full benefits that effective Integrated Reporting can offer.

Instead, think of Integrated Reporting as demonstrating "integrated thinking" across your entire organisation, with the actual report being an essential element of it.

Our methodology is based on six modules which are designed to be independent of each other.

1. **Secure support** – effective Integrated Reporting needs leadership from the top.
2. **Identify stakeholders** – who are they and how can you engage with them?
3. **Identify the capitals for your organisation** – what resources do you use to create value?
4. **What do you have – and what do you need?** – do you have the data you need and is it accurate?
5. **Set limits and create boundaries** – make sure your report is focussed.
6. **Review and improve** – Integrated Reporting is a continuous learning process.

Our approach to Integrated Reporting is deliberately simple; experience has shown us that this works best. Things are often only complicated because people made them that way.

Our experienced, independent teams can help you keep focused throughout the entire Integrated Reporting process and can support you, no matter what stage you are at. Please speak to your Engagement Lead if you would like to discuss this further.

Grant Thornton publications

Challenge question:

- Have you thought about how the principles of Integrated Reporting can help your organisation become more focussed?



Integrated reporting
Looking beyond the report
November 2016



Integrated Thinking and Reporting

Focusing on value creation in the public sector

Grant Thornton has seconded staff to the International Integrated Reporting Council on a pro bono basis for a number of years.

They have been working on making the principles of Integrated Reporting <IR> relevant to the public sector and co-authored a recent report by CIPFA and the World Bank: *Integrated thinking and reporting: focusing on value creation in the public sector - an introduction for leaders*.

Around one third of global gross domestic product (GDP) is made up by the public sector and this is being invested in ensuring there is effective infrastructure, good educational opportunities and reliable health care. In many ways, it is this investment by the public sector that is helping to create the conditions for wealth creation and preparing the way for the success of this and future generations.

Traditional reporting frameworks, focussed only on historic financial information, are not fit-for-purpose for modern, multi-dimensional public sector organisations.

Integrated Reporting supports sustainable development and financial stability and enables public sector organisations to broaden the conversation about the services they provide and the value they create.

The public sector faces multiple challenges, including:

- Serving and being accountable to a wide stakeholder base;
- Providing integrated services with sustainable outcomes;
- Maintaining a longer-term perspective, whilst delivering in the short term; and
- Demonstrating the sustainable value of services provided beyond the financial.

The <IR> Framework is principle based and enables organisations to tailor their reporting to reflect their own thinking and strategies and to demonstrate they are delivering the outcomes they were aiming for.

Integrated Reporting can help public sector organisations deal with the above challenges by:

- Addressing diverse and often conflicting public accountability requirements;
- Focussing on the internal and external consequences of an organisation's activities;
- Looking beyond the 'now' to the 'near' and then the 'far';
- Considering the resources used other than just the financial.

The report includes examples of how organisations have benefitted from Integrated Reporting.

CIPFA Publications

Challenge question:

- Have you reviewed the CIPFA guide to Integrated Reporting in the public sector?



Brexit

Planning can help organisations reduce the impact of Brexit

Several months have passed since the referendum to leave the European Union (EU), during which there has been a flurry of political activity, including the party conference season.

After many years of relative stability, organisations will need to prepare themselves for a period of uncertainty and volatility and will need to keep their risk registers under constant review. The outcome of the US Presidential election in November 2016 has added to this uncertainty.

The High Court ruling that Parliament should have a say before the UK invokes Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty – which triggers up to two years of formal EU withdrawal talks – will not, in our view, impact on the final outcome. There appears to be a general political consensus that Brexit does mean Brexit, but we feel there could be slippage beyond the original timetable which expected to see the UK leave the EU by March 2019.

2017 elections in The Netherlands (March), France (April/May), and Germany (October/November) will complicate the Brexit negotiation process and timeline at a time when Brexit is more important for the UK than it is for the remaining 27 Member States

The question still remains, what does Brexit look like?

While there may be acceptance among politicians that the UK is leaving the EU, there is far from any agreement on what our future relationship with the continent should be.

So, what do we expect based on what has happened so far?

Existing EU legislation will remain in force

We expect that the Government will introduce a “Repeal Act” (repealing the European Communities Act of 1972 that brought us into the EU) in early 2017.

As well as undoing our EU membership, this will transpose existing EU regulations and legislation into UK law. We welcome this recognition of the fact that so much of UK law is based on EU rules and that trying to unpick these would not only take many years but also create additional uncertainty.

Taking back control is a priority

It appears that the top priority for government is 'taking back control', specifically of the UK's borders. Ministers have set out proposals ranging from reducing our dependence on foreign doctors or cutting overseas student numbers. The theme is clear: net migration must fall.

Grant Thornton update

Challenge questions:

- Have you assessed the potential impact of Brexit on your organisation?
- Does your risk register include Brexit and is this regularly updated and reported?

Leaving the Single Market appears likely

The tone and substance of Government speeches on Brexit, coupled with the wish for tighter controls on immigration and regulation, suggest a future where the UK enjoys a much more detached relationship with the EU.

Potential existing examples for the UK's future relationship, such as the 'Norwegian' or 'Swiss' models, seem out of the question. The UK wants a 'bespoke deal'.

Given the rhetoric coming from Europe, our view is that this would signal an end to the UK's membership of the Single Market. With seemingly no appetite to amend the four key freedoms required for membership, the UK appears headed for a so-called 'Hard Brexit'. It is possible that the UK will seek a transitional arrangement, to give time to negotiate the details of our future trading relationship.

Brexit

This is of course, all subject to change, and, politics, especially at the moment, moves quickly.

Where does this leave the public sector?

After a relatively stable summer, we expect there will be increased volatility as uncertainty grows approaching the formal negotiation period.

Planning can help organisations reduce the impact of Brexit

The chancellor has acknowledged the effect this may have on investment and signalled his intention to support the economy, delaying plans to get the public finances into surplus by 2019/20.

We expect that there will be some additional government investment in 2017, with housing and infrastructure being the most likely candidates.

Clarity is a long way off. However, public sector organisations should be planning now for making a success of a hard Brexit, with a focus on:

Staffing – organisations should begin preparing for possible restrictions on their ability to recruit migrant workers and also recognise that the UK may be a less attractive place for them to live and work. Non-UK employees might benefit from a degree of reassurance as our expectation is that those already here will be allowed to stay. Employees on short term or rolling contracts might find it more difficult to stay over time.

Financial viability – public sector bodies should plan how they will overcome any potential shortfalls in funding (e.g. grants, research funding or reduced student numbers).

Market volatility – for example pension fund and charitable funds investments and future treasury management considerations.

International collaboration – perhaps a joint venture or PPP scheme with an overseas organisation or linked research projects.

Grant Thornton update

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- Have you assessed the potential impact of Brexit on your organisation?
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For regular updates on Brexit, please see our website:

<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/brexit-planning-the-future-shaping-the-debate/>



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