Islington Council indicative external audit plan

Year ending 31 March 2023

June 2023

Contents

Your key Grant Thornton team members are:

Paul Dossett
Key Audit Partner
T 020 7728 2936
E Paul.Dossett@uk.gt.com

Ade Oyerinde
Director
T 020 7728 3332
E Ade.O.Oyerinde@uk.gt.com

Raymund Daganio
Manager
T 020 7728 3086
E Raymund.L.Daganio@uk.gt.com

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.

Key matters

National context

For the general population, rising inflation rates, in particular for critical commodities such as energy, food and fuel, is pushing many households into poverty and financial hardship, including those in employment. At a national government level, recent political changes have seen an emphasis on controls on spending, which in turn is placing pressure on public services to manage within limited budgets.

Local Government funding continues to be stretched with increasing cost pressures due to the cost of living crisis, including higher energy costs, increasing pay demands, higher agency costs and increases in supplies and services. Local authority front-line services play a vital role in protecting residents from rising costs; preventing the most vulnerable from falling into destitution and helping to build households long-term financial resilience. At a local level, councils are also essential in driving strong and inclusive local economies, through their economic development functions and measures like increasing the supply of affordable housing, integrating skills and employment provision, and prioritising vulnerable households to benefit from energy saving initiatives. Access to these services remains a key priority across the country, but there are also pressures on the quality of services. These could include further unplanned reductions to services and the cancellation or delays to major construction projects such as new roads, amenities and infrastructure upgrades to schools, as well as pothole filling.

Our recent value for money work has highlighted a number of governance and financial stability issues at a national level, which is a further indication of the mounting pressure on audited bodies to keep delivering services, whilst also managing transformation and making savings at the same time.

In planning our audit, we will take account of this context in designing a local audit programme which is tailored to your risks and circumstances.

Audit Reporting Delays

In a report published in January 2023 the NAO have highlighted that since 2017-18 there has been a significant decline in the number of local government body accounts including an audit opinion published by the deadlines set by government. The NAO outline a number of reasons for this and proposed actions. In March 2023, we issued About time?, which explored the reasons for delayed publication of audited local authority accounts. In our view, it is critical to early sign off that draft local authority accounts are prepared to a high standard and supported by strong working papers.

Local authority accounts are becoming increasingly complex as accounting standards evolve and local authorities enter more and more innovative financing arrangements and income generation projects. A significant challenge in managing local audits is the differing needs of various stakeholders. The local government sector, central government and regulators need to agree on the purpose of local audit and find a consensus on improving efficiency in publishing accounts. These delays are exacerbated by capacity constraints in both local auditors and local government. A new workforce strategy is being developed by the director of local audit at the Financial Reporting Council, but improving the attractiveness of a career in local audit and local authority accounting will require a lot of focus. You can find more insight and guidance on the key challenges for local audit in our report. https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/insights/report-key-challenges-in-local-audit-accounting/

Key matters

The financial challenge

The Council achieved a net general fund position in 2022/23 despite the external challenges faced including cost of living crisis, high inflation and interest rates and increasing demand for Council services. In delivering the balanced position, it required the drawdown of reserves of £18m plus £5m general contingency reserve built into the original budget. Directorates with the most significant overspends were Adults, Corporate and Environment due to various reasons including unavailability of beds in care home, reduced parking income and 2022/23 pay award. Housing Revenue Account provisional outturn is an in-year deficit of £13m. Capital expenditure of £152m was delivered against a revised 2022/23 budget of £169m representing 90% spend against budget.

The 2023/24 settlement has provided a potential increase in council core spending power in cash. The Council approved the budget for 2023/24 total budget requirement of £260m; an increase of £51m from 2022/23. The Council also approved a 4.99% Council tax increase compared to 2022/23 comprising 2% specifically for expenditure on adult social care and 2.99% for all expenditure. The total budget efficiencies built into the general fund budget is £11m. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy delivers a balanced budget for 2023/24.

Our Responses

- There has been a delay in signing off the Council's 2021-22 financial statements. This is due to additional information coming to light following the March 2023 pension fund triennial valuation that has resulted in amendments to the financial statements and some additional audit work. This is a national rather than local issue. This is expected to be resolved by early July and has no impact on this plan or our ability to continue with the 2022-23 audit.
- 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 out further in our Audit Plan, has been agreed with the Corporate Director of Resources.
- We will consider your arrangements for managing and reporting your financial resources as part of our audit in completing our Value for Money work.
- Our value for money work will also consider your arrangements relating to governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- We will continue to provide you and your Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) with sector updates providing our insight on issues from a range of sources and other sector commentators via our Audit Committee updates.
- We hold annual financial reporting workshops for our audited bodies to access the latest technical guidance and interpretation, discuss issues with our experts and create networking links with other audited bodies to support consistent and accurate financial reporting across the sector.
- 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 7.

Introduction and headlines

Purpose

This document provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Islington Council ('the Council') for those charged with governance.

Respective responsibilities

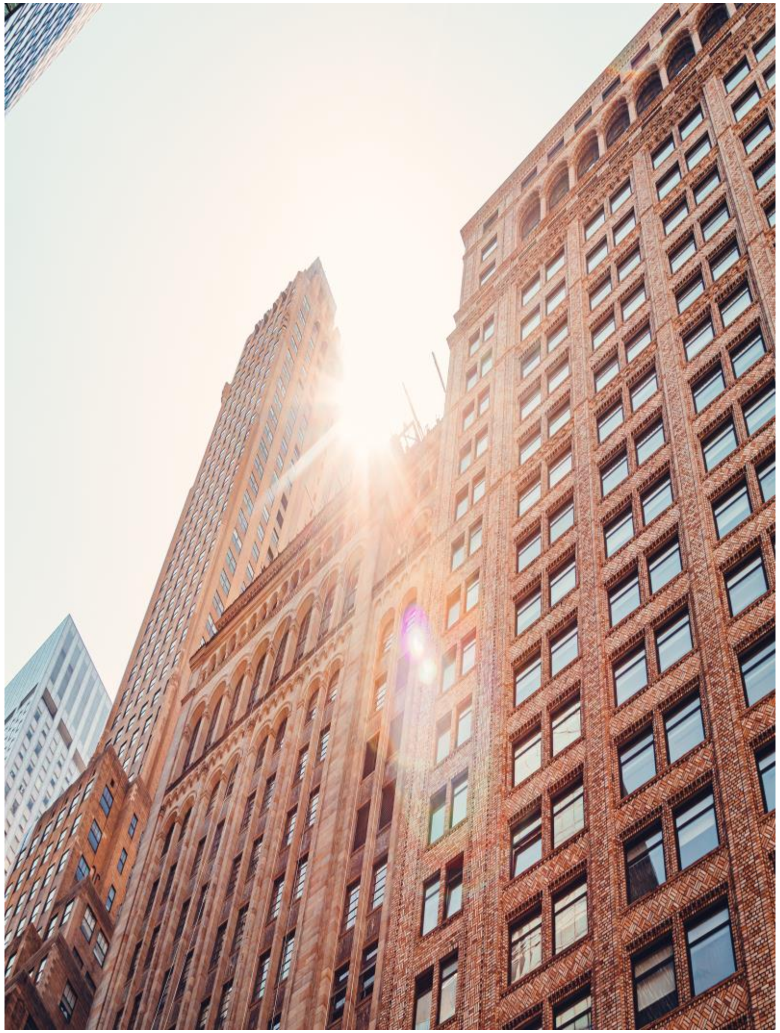
The National Audit Office ('the NAO') has issued a document entitled Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'). This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is expected from the audited body. Our respective responsibilities are also set out in the agreed in the Terms of Appointment and Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), the body responsible for appointing us as auditor of Islington 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 Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory)); 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 in order to maximise the outcomes that can be achieved.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or the Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) 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.



Introduction and headlines

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 including dwellings.
- Valuation of Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
- Valuation of the pension fund net 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.

Group Audit

The Council has one wholly owned subsidiary namely Islington Company Limited (ICo). The Council's judgement for the subsidiary accounts, if material, are to consolidate into the accounts to form Group Accounts. Gross turnover, assets and liabilities for ICo are not material.

Materiality

We have determined planning materiality to be £18.9m (PY £17.1m) for the Council, which equates to 1.5% of your 2022/23 draft operating costs for the year. We are obliged to report uncorrected omissions or misstatements other than those which are 'clearly trivial' to those charged with governance. Clearly trivial has been set at £0.9m (PY £0.8m).

Value for Money arrangements

Our risk assessment regarding your arrangements to secure value for money has not identified any risks of significant weakness. We will continue to update our risk assessment until we issue our Auditor's Annual Report.

We will follow up on improvement recommendations raised in 2021/22 covering:

- enhanced reporting on savings delivery to Members
- improvements to the risk management process, and
- Development of a Data Quality Strategy.

New Auditing Standards

There are two auditing standards which have been significantly updated this year. These are ISA 315 (Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement) and ISA 240 (the auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statements). We provide more detail on the work required later in this plan.

Audit logistics

Our planning visit will take place between June and September and our final visit will take place between October and December. Our key deliverables are this Audit Plan, our Audit Findings Report and Auditor's Annual Report.

Our proposed fee for the audit will be £229,064 for the Council, subject to the Council delivering a good set of financial statements and working papers and no significant new financial reporting matters arising that require additional time and/or specialist input.

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. We set out the indicative significant risks in the following slides.

Risk	Risk relates to	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Presumed risk of fraud in revenue recognition ISA (UK) 240	Council	Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a rebuttable presumed risk of material misstatement 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. Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA 240, and the nature of the revenue streams of Islington Council, we have determined that it is likely that the presumed risk of material misstatement due to the improper recognition of revenue can be rebutted, because: • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition; • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited; and • the culture and ethical frameworks of public sector bodies, Islington Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable. Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for the Council at the time of our planning however we will keep this assessment under review.	
Management over-ride of controls	Council	We will: • 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; and • evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions.	We will: • 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; and • evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions.

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

Significant risks identified

Risk	Risk relates to	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Valuation of land and buildings including dwellings	Council	The Council carries out a rolling programme of valuations that ensures all land and buildings required to be measured at current value is revalued at least every five years. This valuation represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved (£4.7 billion as at 31 March 2022) and the sensitivity of this estimate to changes in key assumptions. Management has engaged the services of a valuer to estimate the current value as at 31 March 2023. We therefore identified valuation of land and buildings including dwellings, particularly revaluations and impairments, as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.	We will: • 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 to ensure that the requirements of the Code are met; • challenge the information and assumptions used by the valuer to assess the completeness and consistency with our understanding, which will include engaging our own valuer to assess the instructions issued by the Council to their valuer, the scope of the Council's valuers' work, the Council's valuers' reports and the assumptions that underpin the valuations; • assess the value of a sample of assets in relation to market rates for comparable properties; • test a sample of beacon properties in respect of council dwellings to consider whether their valuation assumptions are appropriate and whether they are truly representative of the other properties within that beacon group; • test, on a sample basis, revaluations made during the year to see if they had been input correctly into the Council's asset register; and • evaluate the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not materially different from current value at year end.

Management should expect engagement teams to challenge management in areas that are complex, significant or highly judgmental which may be the case for accounting estimates and similar areas. Management should also expect to provide to engagement teams with sufficient evidence to support their judgments and the approach they have adopted for key accounting policies referenced to accounting standards or changes thereto.

Where estimates are used in the preparation of the financial statements management should expect teams to challenge management's assumptions and request evidence to support those assumptions.

Significant risks identified

Risk	Risk relates to	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Accuracy and presentation of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and similar contracts liabilities and associated disclosures	Council	You have five schemes to be accounted for as PFI arrangements which cover housing, street lighting, BSF and care homes schemes. The total liability relating to these schemes on prior year balance sheet was £452m. As these PFI transactions are significant, complex and involve a degree of subjectivity in the measurement of financial information, we have categorised them as a significant risk of material misstatement.	We will: • review your PFI models and assumptions contained therein. • compare your PFI models to previous year to identify any changes. • Consider the impact of inflation on the PFI model • review and test the output produced by your PFI models to generate the financial balances within the financial statements. • review the PFI disclosures to assess whether they are consistent with International Accountancy Standard IFRIC12. We will check additional disclosures that you include within the financial statements to the PFI models.
Valuation of the pension fund net liability	Council	The Council's pension fund net liability, as reflected in its balance sheet as the net defined benefit liability, represents a significant estimate in the financial statements. The pension fund net liability is considered a significant estimate due to the size of the numbers involved (£926m in the Council's prior year balance sheet) and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions.	We will: • update our understanding of the processes and controls put in place by management to ensure that the Council'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 Council's pension fund valuation. • assess the reasonableness of the actuary's assumptions and calculations in-line with the relevant standards, including their consideration of the ongoing impact of the McCloud, Goodwin and Guaranteed Minimum Pension cases. • assess the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Council 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.

Management should expect engagement teams to challenge management in areas that are complex, significant or highly judgmental which may be the case for accounting estimates and similar areas. Management should also expect to provide to engagement teams with sufficient evidence to support their judgments and the approach they have adopted for key accounting policies referenced to accounting standards or changes thereto.

Where estimates are used in the preparation of the financial statements management should expect teams to challenge management's assumptions and request evidence to support those assumptions.

Other risks identified

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 Report.

Risk	Risk relates to	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Fraud in Expenditure Recognition	Council	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 an entity is required to meet financial targets. Having considered the risk factors relevant to Islington Council and the nature of the expenditure at the Council, we have determined that no separate significant risk relating to expenditure recognition is necessary, as the same rebuttal factors listed on page 7 relating to revenue recognition apply. 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 below and our testing in relation to the significant risk of management override of controls as set out on page 7.	We will: • obtain an understanding of the design effectiveness of controls relating to operating expenditure. • perform testing over post year end transactions to assess completeness of expenditure recognition. • test a sample of operating expenses to gain assurance in respect of the accuracy of expenditure recorded during the financial year.

'In respect of some risks, the auditor may judge that it is not possible or practicable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence only from substantive procedures. Such risks may relate to the inaccurate or incomplete recording of routine and significant classes of transactions or account balances, the characteristics of which often permit highly automated processing with little or no manual intervention. In such cases, the entity's controls over such risks are relevant to the audit and the auditor shall obtain an understanding of them.' (ISA (UK) 315)

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 2022/23 financial statements, consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the 2022/23 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.

Progress against prior year audit recommendations

We identified the following issues in our 2021/22 audit of the Council's financial statements, which resulted in 2 recommendations being reported in our 2021/22 Audit Findings Report.

Assessment	Issue and risk previously communicated	Update on actions taken to address the issue
In progress	**Journals** Our review of journals posted by superusers identified over 22,000 such journals which is unusual. We challenged management to understand why and assess if these group of journals created a greater risk of management override of controls. We understand these journals were income transactions which go through Civica, the Income Management system. Transactions are initially posted into suspense if the transaction doesn't match the rule set against the income account. At the end of each day, clearing takes place superusers and sometime by finance staff, after which a reconciliation document is produced by a system administrator who has processed the batch, which reconciles Cedar records to Civica. Each reconciliation is reviewed and signed off by a different superuser. **Recommendation** The use of superusers in day to day finance activities creates a greater risk of management override. However, manual intervention of this magnitude by superusers is inefficient and does not represent value for money. We recommend management review the whole process to minimise the volume of income transactions initially posted to a temporary suspense and clearance of the daily suspense be limited to finance teams only.	Management response
In progress	**Working papers and cleansing of data** Some income, expenditure balance sheet took longer to audit due to the significant number of contra entries and small value of items within the population resulting in larger than expected samples for testing Where both credit and debit items within an item of balance for testing are material, we are required to test both debit and credit items separately, doubling sample sizes in many cases. Risk audit takes additional time to complete and increased cost to the audit. **Recommendation** In order to improve the quality of the working papers provided for audit and the efficiency of the audit process, we recommend management continue to review and cleanse individual population listings for sample testing.	Management response

Our approach to materiality

The concept of 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.

Matter	Description	Planned audit procedures
1	**Determination** We have determined financial statement materiality based on a proportion of the gross expenditure of the Council for the financial year. Materiality at the planning stage of our audit is £18.9m for Islington Council, which equates to 1.5% of your draft gross expenditure for the period.	We determine planning materiality in order to: – establish what level of misstatement could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements – assist in establishing the scope of our audit engagement and audit tests – determine sample sizes and – assist in evaluating the effect of known and likely misstatements in the financial statements
2	**Other factors** An item does not necessarily have to be large to be considered to have a material effect on the financial statements.	An item may be considered to be material by nature where it may affect instances when greater precision is required. – We have identified senior officer remuneration as a balance where we will apply a lower materiality level, as these are considered sensitive disclosures. We have set a materiality of £100,000.
3	**Reassessment of materiality** Our assessment of materiality is kept under review throughout the audit process.	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.
4	**Other communications relating to materiality we will report to the Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory)** 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 and Audit Committee (Advisory) 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.	We report to the Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) any unadjusted misstatements of lesser amounts to the extent that these are identified by our audit work. 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 £0.9m (PY £0.8m). 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 Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) to assist it in fulfilling its governance responsibilities.

Our approach to materiality

The concept of 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. Our indicative materiality is set below.

	Council Amount (£)	Qualitative factors considered
Materiality for the financial statements	18,900,000	This benchmark is determined as a percentage of the Council's Gross Cost of Services Expenditure in year, which has remained at approximately 1.5%.
Performance materiality	13,230,000	Performance Materiality is based on a percentage (70%) of the overall materiality.
Trivial matters	945,000	This balance is set at 5% of overall materiality

IT audit strategy

In accordance with ISA (UK) 315 Revised, we are required to obtain an understanding of the relevant IT and technical infrastructure and details of the processes that operate within the IT environment. We are also required to consider the information captured to identify any audit relevant risks and design appropriate audit procedures in response. 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 and implementation of relevant ITGCs. We say more about ISA 315 Revised on slide 18.

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
Cedar	Financial reporting	We will consider the design but not the operating effectiveness of the ITGCs
Northgate	Council Tax, Business Rates, Grants	We will consider the design but not the operating effectiveness of the ITGCs
Resource Link	Payroll	We will consider the design but not the operating effectiveness of the ITGCs
Altair	Pensions	We will consider the design but not the operating effectiveness of the ITGCs

Value for Money arrangements

Approach to Value for Money work for the period ended 31 March 2023

The National Audit Office issued its latest Value for Money guidance to auditors in January 2023. The Code expects auditors to consider whether a body has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Auditors are expected to report any significant weaknesses in the body's arrangements, should they come to their attention. In undertaking their work, auditors are expected to have regard to three specified reporting criteria. These are as set out below:

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

How the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

Financial Sustainability

How the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.

Governance

How the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.

We have not identified any risks of significant weaknesses from our initial planning work. We will continue our review of your arrangements, including reviewing your Annual Governance Statement, before we issue our auditor's annual report. We will follow up on improvement recommendations raised in 2021/22 covering:

- enhanced reporting on savings delivery to Members
- improvements to the risk management process, and
- development of a Data Quality Strategy.

Audit logistics and team

Planning and risk assessment

Interim audit
June - September

Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory)
July

Audit Plan

Year end audit
October - December

Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory)
November

Audit Findings Report

Audit opinion

Auditor's Annual Report

Paul Dossett, Key Audit Partner

Paul is responsible for overall quality control; accounts opinions; final authorisation of reports; liaison with the Audit Committee, the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director Resources. He will share his wealth of knowledge and experience across the sector providing challenge and sharing goodpractice. Paul will ensure our audit is tailored specifically to you, and he is responsible for the overall quality of our audit work. Paul will sign your audit opinion.

Ade Oyerinde, Director

Ade is responsible for overall audit management, quality assurance of audit work and output, and liaison with the Audit Committee, Director of Finance and finance team. He will undertake reviews of the team's work and draft reports, ensuring they remain clear, concise and understandable. Ade will be responsible for the delivery of our work on your arrangements in place to secure value for money.

Raymund Daganio, Manager

Raymund is responsible for management and review of audit fieldwork, final accounts work. He will monitor the deliverables, liaise with your finance team and address any significant issues with senior management.

Sabrina Hisham, Assistant Manager

Sabrina is responsible for management and delivery of audit fieldwork, final accounts work. She will monitor the deliverables, manage the query log with your finance team and highlight any significant issues and adjustments to senior management.

Audited Entity responsibilities

Where audited entities 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 clients. Where the elapsed time to complete an audit exceeds that agreed due to an entity 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 an entity 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 deadline you have agreed with us, including all notes 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 and updated Auditing Standards including ISA 315 Revised

In 2017, PSAA awarded a contract of audit for Islington Council to begin with effect from 2018/19. The fee agreed in the contract was £175,429. 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 2022/23 audit. For details of the changes which impacted on years up to 2021/22 please see our prior year Audit Plans.

The major change impacting on our audit for 2022/23 is the introduction of ISA (UK) 315 (Revised) - Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement ('ISA 315'). There are a number of significant changes that will impact the nature and extent of our risk assessment procedures and the work we perform to respond to these identified risks. Key changes include:

- Enhanced requirements around understanding the Council's IT Infrastructure, IT environment. From this we will then identify any risks arising from the use of IT. We are then required to identify the IT General Controls ('ITGCs') that address those risks and test the design and implementation of ITGCs that address the risks arising from the use of IT.
- Additional documentation of our understanding of the Council's business model, which may result in us needing to perform additional inquiries to understand the Council's end-to-end processes over more classes of transactions, balances and disclosures.
- We are required to identify controls within a business process and identify which of those controls are controls relevant to the audit. These include, but are not limited to, controls over significant risks and journal entries. We will need to identify the risks arising from the use of IT and the general IT controls (ITGCs) as part of obtaining an understanding of relevant controls.
- Where we do not test the operating effectiveness of controls, the assessment of risk will be the inherent risk, this means that our sample sizes may be larger than in previous years.

These are significant changes which will require us to increase the scope, nature and extent of our audit documentation, particularly in respect of your business processes, and your IT controls. We will be unable to determine the full fee impact until we have undertaken further work in respect of the above areas. However, for an authority of your size, we estimate an initial increase of £5,000. We will let you know if our work in respect of business processes and IT controls identifies any issues requiring further audit testing. There is likely to be an ongoing requirement for a fee increase in future years, although we are unable yet to quantify that.

The other major change to Auditing Standards in 2022/23 is in respect of ISA 240 which deals with the auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statements. This Standard gives more prominence to the risk of fraud in the audit planning process. We will let you know during the course of the audit should we be required to undertake any additional work in this area which will impact on your fee.

Taking into account the above, our proposed work and fee for 2022/23, as set out below, is detailed overleaf and has been agreed with the Corporate Director Resources.

Audit fees

	Estimated Fee 2021/22	Proposed fee 2022/23
Islington Council Audit Fee (excluding VAT)	£290,237	£229,064

Assumptions

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

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

Relevant professional standards

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

Audit fees – detailed analysis

New scale fee	**£175,429**
Reduced materiality	£5,625
Use of expert	£5,260
Additional Requirements – Payroll Change of Circumstances (Information Provided by the Entity) IPE Testing	£500
Collection Fund – relief testing	£750
Value for Money audit – new NAO requirements	£20,000
ISA 540	£6,000
ISA 315	£5,000
Additional journals testing	£3,000
Infrastructure	£2,500
Triennial valuation work	£3,500
Quality review – response to FRC (Quality Partner)	£1,500
Total proposed audit fees 2022/23 (excluding VAT)	**£229,064**

By setting the fees out in the plan the fee proposals are agreed and thereafter subject to PSAA approval

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 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.

Independence and non-audit services

Other services

The following other service provided by Grant Thornton was 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 Teacher's Pension Return	10,000	Self-Interest (because this is a recurring fee)	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 £10,000 in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £229,064 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.
Certification of Housing Benefits subsidy	32,400	Self-Interest (because this is a recurring fee)	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 £32,400 in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £229,064 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.
Certification of Housing Capital Receipts	7,500	Self-Interest (because this is a recurring fee)	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 £229,064 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.
Non-audit related			
None			

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	•	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit, form, timing and expected general content of communications including significant risks and Key Audit Matters	•	
Confirmation of independence and objectivity of the firm, the engagement team members and all other indirectly covered persons	•	•
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence. Relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged. Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	•	•
Significant matters in relation to going concern	•	•
Matters in relation to the group audit, including: Scope of work on components, involvement of group auditors in component audits, concerns over quality of component auditors' work, limitations of scope on the group audit, fraud or suspected fraud	n/a	n/a
Views about the qualitative aspects of the Group's accounting and financial reporting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures		n/a
Significant findings from the audit		•
Significant matters and issue arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		•
Significant difficulties encountered during the audit		•
Significant deficiencies in internal control identified during the audit		•
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		•
Identification or suspicion of fraud(deliberate manipulation) involving management and/or which results in material misstatement of the financial statements (not typically council tax fraud)		•
Non-compliance with laws and regulations		•
Unadjusted misstatements and material disclosure omissions		•
Expected modifications to the auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		•

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

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

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via an audit progress memorandum.

Respective responsibilities

As auditor we are responsible for performing the audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the 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 those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

Grant Thornton

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