

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL  
AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**24 April 2015**

**Report of: Service Director (Finance)**

**Title: Grant Thornton's Audit Plan 2014-15**

**Ward: Citywide**

**Officer presenting report: Grant Thornton UK LLP**

**Contact telephone number:**

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Audit Committee note, and comment as appropriate, on Grant Thornton's Annual Audit Plan for 2014-15.

**Summary**

Attached to this report is the Grant Thornton Audit Plan 2014-15, which sets out the work they will carry out in discharging their responsibilities to give an opinion on the Council's financial statements and a conclusion on the Council's arrangements for achieving value for money.

**The key considerations set out within this report are:**

This plan sets out Grant Thornton's responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

The plan includes an assessment of current local risks relevant to the audit and the proposed response to these risks.

**Policy**

None affected by this report. The Audit Commission has statutory responsibility for inspection and assessment at the Council. Grant Thornton are the Council's appointed external auditors. In carrying out their audit and inspection duties they have to comply with the relevant

statutory requirements. In particular these are the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Code of Audit Practice with regard to audit, and the Local Government Act 1999 with regard to best value and inspection.

### **Consultation**

**Internal:** Grant Thornton consulted with Senior finance officers before finalising the Audit Plan.

**External:** None.

### **Other Options Considered**

Not applicable.

### **Risk Assessment**

Not as a result of this report.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

There are no issues arising from this report.

### **Legal and Resource Implications**

None arising from this report.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Grant Thornton's Audit Plan 2014-15.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**Background Papers:** None



# The Audit Plan for Bristol City Council

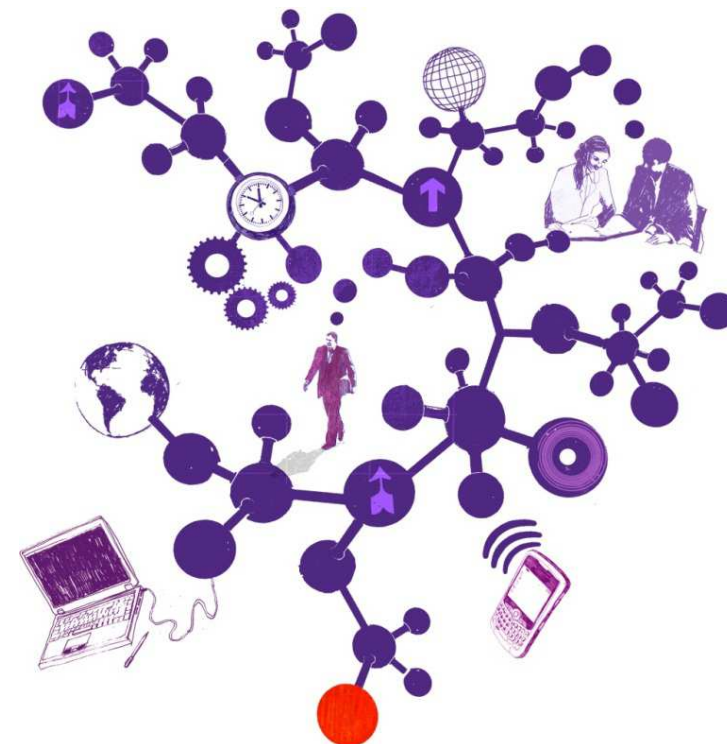
Year ended 31 March 2015

13 April 2015

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

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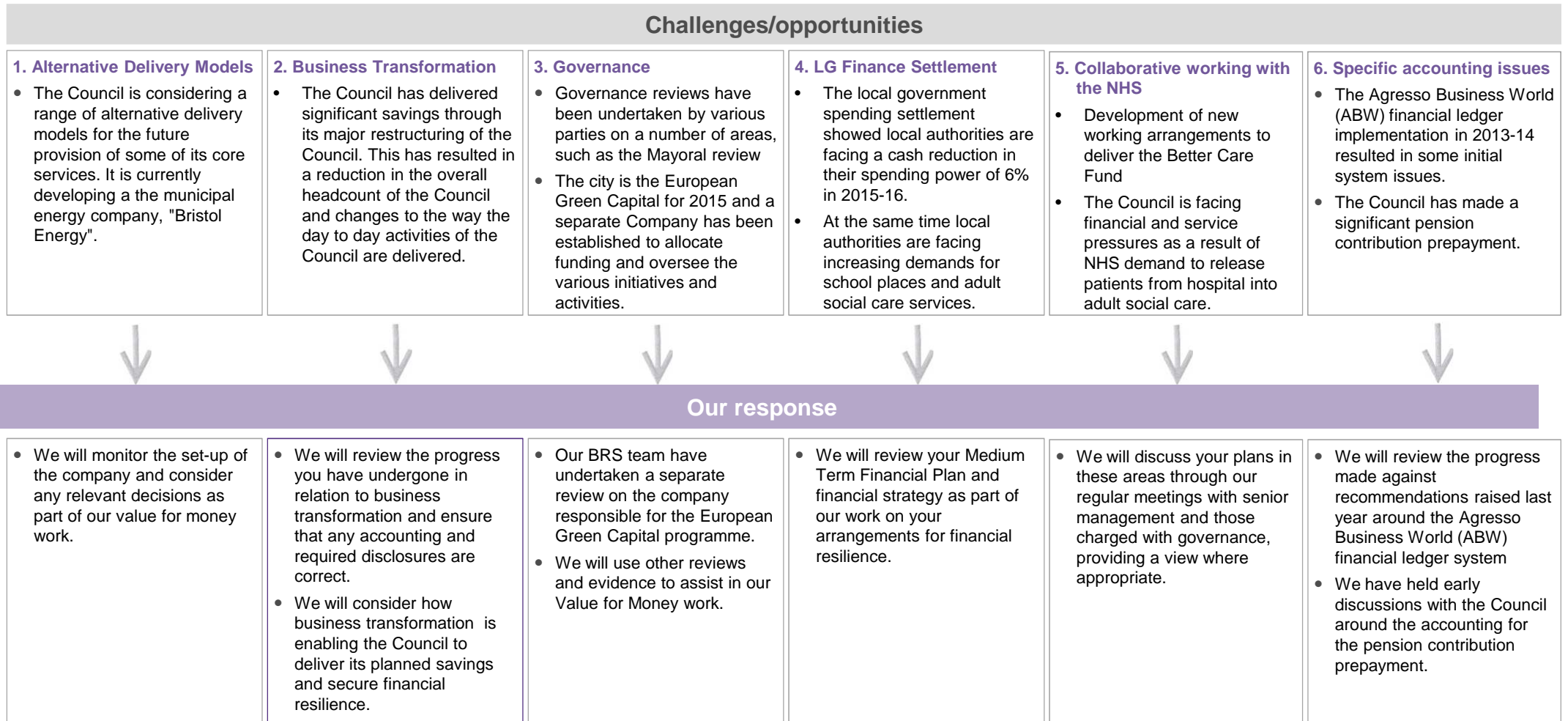
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# Understanding your business

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



# Developments relevant to your business and the audit

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

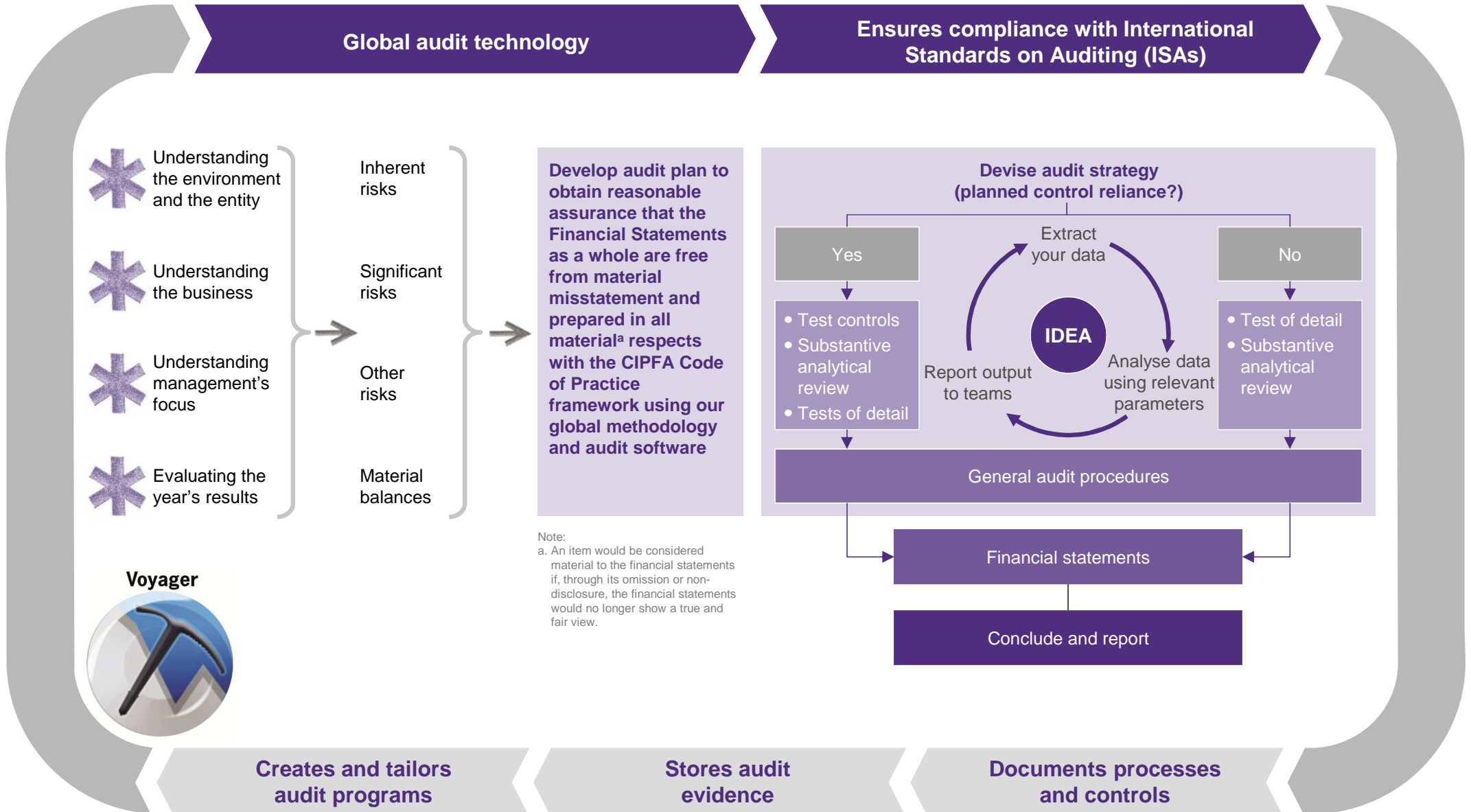
## Developments and other requirements

|   |  |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>1. Financial reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the CIPFA Code of Practice</li> <li>• Changes to the recognition of school land and buildings on local authority balance sheets</li> <li>• Adoption of new group accounting standards (IFRS 10,11 and 12)</li> </ul> | <p><b>2. Legislation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government Finance settlement and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015</li> </ul> | <p><b>3. Corporate governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Governance Statement (AGS)</li> <li>• Explanatory foreword</li> </ul> | <p><b>4. Better Care Fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better Care Fund (BCF) plans and the associated pooled budgets will be operational from 1 April 2015</li> </ul> | <p><b>5. Financial Pressures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing service provision with less resource</li> <li>• Progress against savings plans</li> </ul> | <p><b>6. Other requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council is required to submit a Whole of Government accounts pack on which we provide an audit opinion</li> <li>• The Council completes grant claims and returns on which audit certification is required</li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|

## Our response

|  |  |  |   |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| <p>We will ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Council complies with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice through discussions with management and our substantive testing</li> <li>• schools are accounted for correctly and in line with the latest guidance</li> <li>• the group boundary is recognised in accordance with the Code and joint arrangements are accounted for correctly</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will discuss the impact of the legislative changes with the Council through our regular meetings with senior management and those charged with governance, providing a view where appropriate</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will review the arrangements the Council has in place for the production of the AGS</li> <li>• We will review the AGS and the explanatory foreword to consider whether they are consistent with our knowledge</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will consider whether the BCF is a risk in the context of our VfM conclusion and will carry out further work if required</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will review the Council's performance against the 2014/15 budget, including consideration of performance against the savings plan</li> <li>• We will undertake a review of Financial Resilience as part of our VfM conclusion</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will carry out work on the WGA pack in accordance with requirements</li> <li>• We will certify the housing benefit subsidy claim in accordance with the requirements specified by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd. This company will take over the Audit Commission's responsibilities for housing benefit grant certification from 1 April 2015.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|

# Our audit approach



Note:  
 a. An item would be considered material to the financial statements if, through its omission or non-disclosure, the financial statements would no longer show a true and fair view.



# Significant risks identified

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

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

| Significant risk                                   | Description   | Substantive audit procedures  |
|--|---|---|
| The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions | <p>Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p> | <p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Bristol City Council , we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition</li> <li>• opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited</li> <li>• the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Bristol City Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.</li> </ul> |
| Management over-ride of controls                   | Under ISA 240 the presumption that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.   | <p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing of journal entries for periods 1 -11</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management</li> <li>• Testing of journal entries for period 12 and any closing periods</li> <li>• Review of unusual significant transactions</li> </ul>   |

# Other risks identified

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

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

| Other risks                         | Description  | Audit Approach   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Operating expenses                  | Creditors related to core activities (e.g. supplies) understated or not recorded in the correct period | <p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation and walkthrough of the operating expenses system controls</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year end testing of creditors balances to subsequent payments to identify any un-accrued expenses</li> </ul>                  |
| Employee remuneration               | Employee remuneration and benefit obligations and expenses understated                                 | <p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation and walkthrough of the payroll system controls</li> <li>Trend analysis on monthly payroll totals</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconciliation of payroll system to general ledger and financial statements</li> </ul> |
| Welfare Expenditure                 | Welfare benefit expenditure improperly computed  | <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation and walkthrough of the welfare benefits system controls</li> <li>Reconciliation of claim to the general ledger</li> <li>Completion of housing benefits subsidy certification</li> </ul>   |
| Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) | Property, plant and equipment activity not valid   | <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation and walkthrough of the PPE system controls</li> <li>Testing of PPE additions and subsequent expenditure on PPE assets</li> <li>Where significant, testing of disposals, heritage assets and REFCUS</li> <li>Testing of investment properties</li> </ul>                         |

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# Value for money

## Value for money

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

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

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

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

- key indicators of performance
- strategic financial planning
- financial governance
- financial control
- delivery of planned savings
- medium term financial planning

The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings report and in the Annual Audit Letter.

# Results of interim audit work

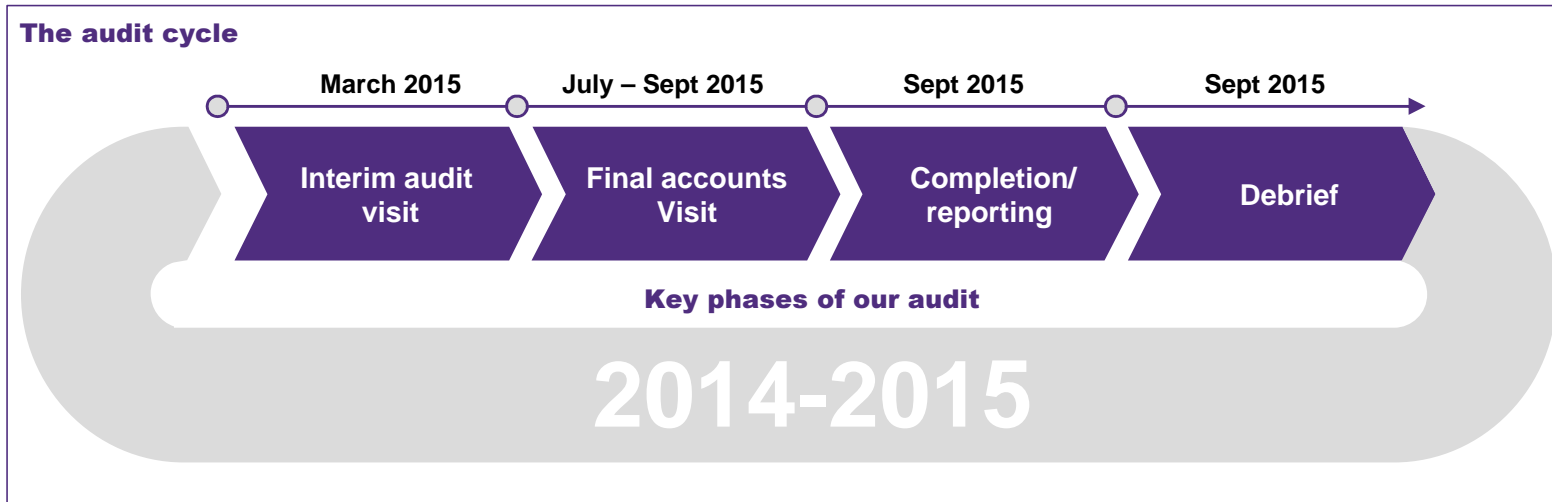
The findings of our interim audit work, and the impact of our findings on the accounts audit approach, are summarised in the table below:

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

## Results of interim audit work cont'd

|  | <b>Work performed</b>   | <b>Conclusion</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Review of information technology controls</b> | Our information systems specialist is due to performed a high level review of the general IT control environment, as part of the overall review of the internal controls system. We will also performed a follow up of the issues that were raised last year. | We will report our findings once this work has been completed.  |
| <b>Journal entry controls</b>                    | We have reviewed the Council's journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy. We have tested journal entries posted in the first 11 months of the financial year.   | We will undertake testing on the remaining journals posted in the financial year as part of our final accounts visit. |
| <b>Early substantive testing</b>                 | We have taken early substantive testing on employee remuneration, income and expenditure transactions for the first eleven months of the financial year. No issues have been identified that we wish to highlight for your attention.                         | We will complete testing on the remaining transactions for the financial year during our year end audit visit.        |

# Key dates



| <b>Date</b>                  | <b>Activity</b>  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>March 2015</b>            | Planning   |
| <b>March 2015</b>            | Interim site visit   |
| <b>April 2015</b>            | Presentation of audit plan to Audit Committee                            |
| <b>July – September 2015</b> | Year end fieldwork   |
| <b>September 2015</b>        | Audit findings clearance meeting with Director of Finance                |
| <b>September 2015</b>        | Report audit findings to those charged with governance (Audit Committee) |
| <b>September 2015</b>        | Sign financial statements opinion  |

# Fees and independence

## Fees

|                                   | £              |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Council audit                     | *271,583       |
| Grant certification               | 11,810         |
| <b>Total fees (excluding VAT)</b> | <b>283,393</b> |

## \*Fee Variation – Business Rates

Following its consultation exercise, the Audit Commission Board has approved a supplementary fee for 2014/15 for audit work required on business rates. This represents a £1,070 increase to the fee reported in the 2014/15 fee letter presented to the Audit Committee in May 2014.

## Our fee assumptions include:

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

## Fees for other services

| Service   | Fees £ |
|---|--------|
| Business Risk Services Review of the company responsible for delivering the European Green Capital 2015 project | 8,700  |

## Grant certification

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

## Fees for other services

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

## Independence and ethics

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

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

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

# Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

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

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

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

## Respective responsibilities

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

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

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

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

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





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