

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Corporate Governance Committee 19 September 2016

### External Audit – Progress Report and Update (Year end 31 March 2016)

This is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Richard Parrish

Report Author: Jo Nacey, Finance Manager

#### 1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This is a regular update report for Members by our external auditors, Grant Thornton. Specifically the report provides an update in relation to their work for the 2015/16 financial year and also provides an update in relation to emerging national issues.

#### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the update report.

#### 3 Risk Assessment

##### Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
The details of any specific risks identified will be contained in the attached report			

#### 4 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 Each year our external auditors, Grant Thornton, are required to carry out prescribed audit work and this report provides a useful progress update on the work undertaken to date.
- 4.2 Additionally, the report shares headlines on some national issues that may have an impact upon the Council.

#### 5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities

- 5.1 There are no direct implications.

#### 6 Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct implications.

## **7 Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no legal implications from this report.

## **8 Environmental Impact Implications**

8.1 There are no direct implications.

## **9 Community Safety Implications**

9.1 There are no direct implications.

## **10 Equality and Diversity Implications**

10.1 There are no direct implications.

## **11 Social Value Implications**

11.1 There are no direct implications.

## **12 Partnership Implications**

12.1 There are no direct implications.

## **13 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

13.1 There are no direct implications.

## **14 Asset Management Implications**

14.1 There are no direct implications.

## **15 Consultation Implications**

15.1 There are no direct implications.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A	Grant Thornton – Audit Update
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# Corporate Governance Committee Taunton Deane Borough Council Progress Report and Update Year ended 31 March 2016

Sept 2016

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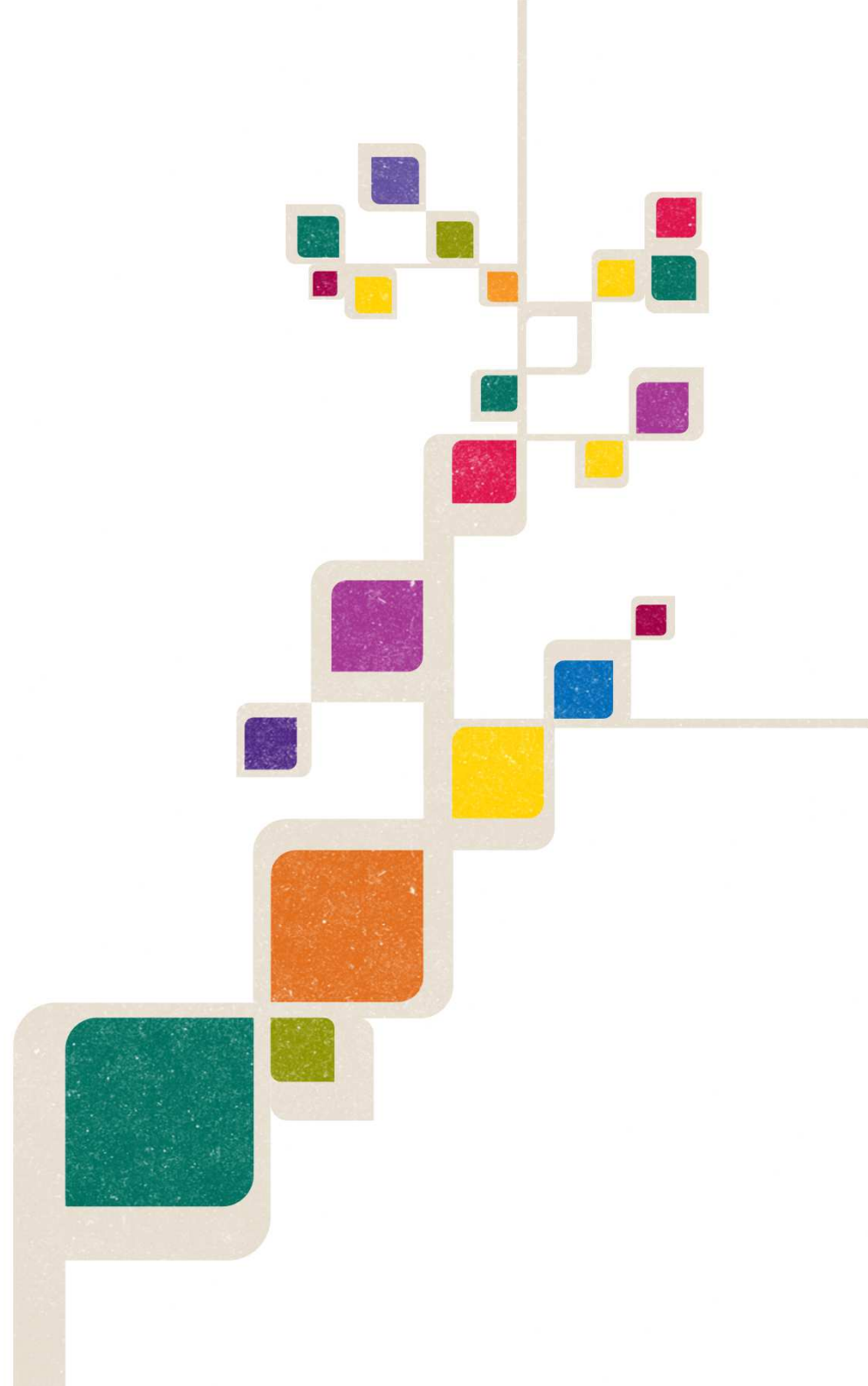
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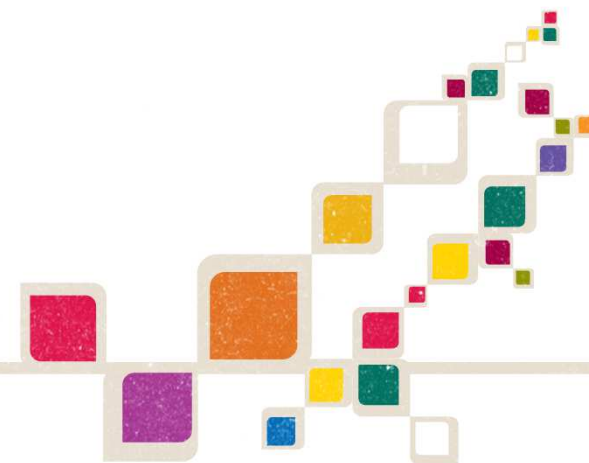
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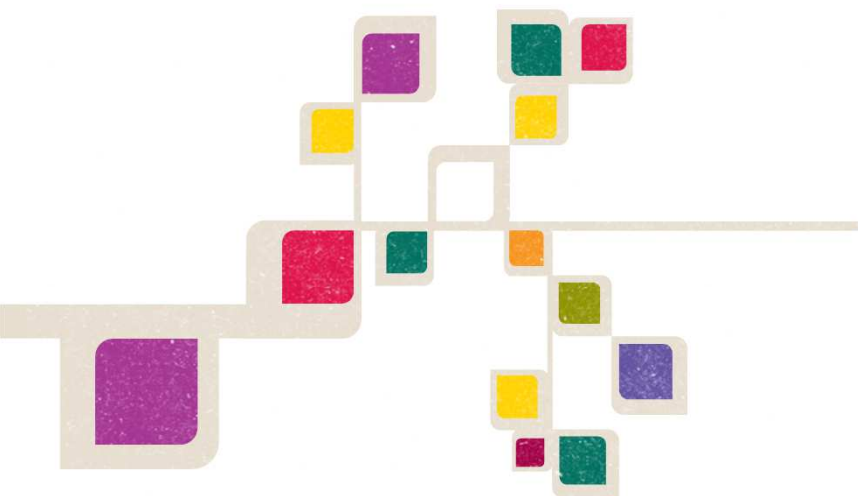
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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to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



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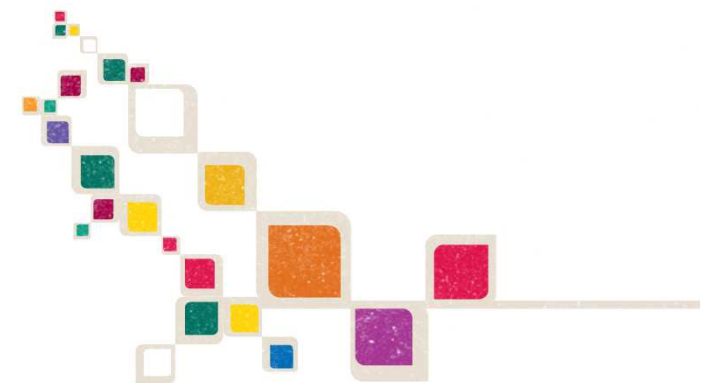
# Introduction

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

Members of the Corporate Governance Committee can find further useful material on our website [www.grant-thornton.co.uk](http://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:

- Building a successful joint venture company (April 2016) <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company/>
- Advancing closure (July 2016) <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/advancing-closure-the-benefits-to-local-authorities>

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



# Progress at 8 September 2016



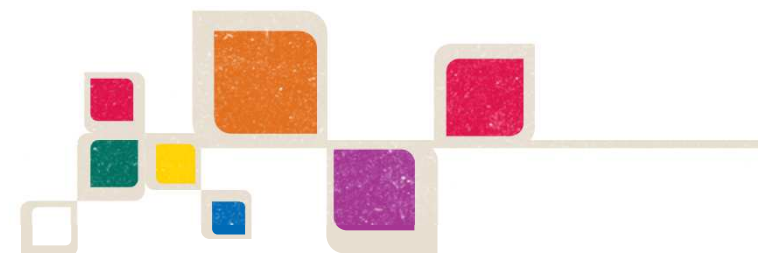
 **Progress against plan**  
On track

 **Opinion and VfM conclusion**  
Plan to give before deadline of 30 September 2016

 **Outputs delivered**  
Fee letter, Progress Reports, delivered to plan

2015/16 work	Planned Date	Complete?	Comments
<b>Fee letter</b>	April 2015	Yes	The fee letter was presented at the June 2015 meeting
<b>Accounts Audit Plan</b> 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 2015-16 financial statements.	January – February 2016	Yes	The Audit Plan was presented at the March 2016 meeting.
<b>Interim accounts audit</b> Our interim fieldwork visit plan included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• updated review of the Council's control environment</li> <li>• updated understanding of financial systems</li> <li>• review of Internal Audit reports on core financial systems</li> <li>• early work on emerging accounting issues</li> <li>• early substantive testing</li> <li>• proposed Value for Money conclusion.</li> </ul>	January- February 2016	Yes	As reported at the March meeting, there were no issues to bring to the Committee's attention.
<b>Final accounts audit</b> Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• audit of the 2015-16 financial statements</li> <li>• proposed opinion on the Council's accounts</li> <li>• proposed Value for Money conclusion</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	July - August	In progress	Our audit started on 4 July 2016 as planned. Most of our work was completed by the end of July. However, we were asked to defer our review of the Collection Fund to the beginning of September as it had to be re-worked. At the time of writing, our work on the Collection Fund is in progress.  There is one further area of work in progress and this relates to the valuation of land and buildings and investment properties.

# Progress at 8 September 2016



2015/16 work	Planned Date	Complete?	Comments
<p><b>Value for Money (VfM) conclusion</b></p> <p>The scope of our work has changed 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"> <li>• Informed decision making</li> <li>• Sustainable resource deployment</li> <li>• Working with partners and other third parties</li> </ul>	March - July	Yes	The results of our initial risk assessment were reflected in the Audit Plan, whilst the results of our detailed work are reported in the Audit Findings Report, which is on the agenda.
<p><b>Other areas of work</b></p> <p>Housing benefit certification</p>	September – October 2016	Not yet due	The deadline for certification of the housing benefit return is 30 November 2016. We have undertaken some early work, but we will not conclude our work until October 2016.



# Grant Thornton Sector Issues





# Brexit: What happens next and what does it mean for you?

The people of the UK have made a decision to leave the EU. What happens next - and the implications for businesses and organisations in the UK - is less clear.

We have produced an analysis of what we know about the mechanics of leaving the EU, our assessment of some of the external factors that may affect organisations over the coming months and years, and a summary of the different models for trading relationships outside the EU. This can be found on our website and we have attached copies to this report.

In thinking about the impact organisations will want to consider not only legal and regulatory changes but also market reactions, consumer and business behaviours, and the wider political and economic environment. The Council will have a role in both shaping its own response and in helping organisations in the City respond to a changing environment. We can expect three broad phases of reaction to Brexit:

- initial volatility
- medium term uncertainty and instability
- longer term transition

The impact of this will be different for every organisation. In looking at the threats and opportunities these phases create, and planning how the Council can create and protect value, you may wish to consider the short, medium and long term implications for issues like people and talent, strategic ambitions, financing, risk, operations and protecting investment.

We believe that in the coming weeks and months, dynamic organisations have a critical role to play in helping to shape the future of Britain. Grant Thornton is leading a campaign which explores how we can build a vibrant economy. You can find out more here: <http://vibranteconomy.co.uk/>

We would welcome views on what the priorities should be for government and the UK to create a new economy outside the EU.

Emerging issues

How is the Council responding to the outcome of the EU referendum?

# Financial sustainability of local authorities: capital expenditure and resourcing

National Audit Office

According to the NAO, Local authorities in England have maintained their overall capital spending levels but face pressure to meet debt servicing costs and to maintain investment levels in their existing asset bases.

Since 2010-11, local authorities have faced less pressure on their resources to support capital expenditure as compared to revenue. Although local authorities' revenue spending power fell by over 25 per cent in real terms from 2010-11 to 2015-16, the NAO estimates that capital grants to authorities marginally increased from 2010-11 to 2014-15, (excluding education).

Capital spending by authorities increased by more than five per cent in real terms overall between 2010-11 and 2014-15, but this is uneven across local authorities and service areas. Almost half of authorities reduced their capital spending. Most service areas saw an increase in capital spend with the exception of culture and leisure: capital spending fell by 22 per cent overall in this area.

The NAO's report, published on 15 June, found that authorities face a growing challenge to continue long-term investment in their existing assets. Total spending has remained stable, but increasingly capital activities are focused on 'invest to save' and growth schemes that cover their costs or have potential to deliver a revenue return. Many areas of authorities' asset management programmes do not meet these criteria and are now seen as a lower priority.

The report also notes that local authorities' debt servicing costs have grown as a proportion of revenue spending as revenue resources have fallen. A quarter of single-tier and county councils now spend the equivalent of 10 per cent or more of their revenue expenditure on debt servicing, with metropolitan district councils being particularly exposed.

According to the NAO, DCLG has rightly focused on revenue issues in the 2015 Spending Review but in future reviews will need to focus more on capital. The Department is confident from its engagement with authorities that revenue pressures are their main concern, however the NAO's analysis demonstrates that capital costs exert significant and growing pressure on revenue resources.

The full report is available at:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-sustainability-of-local-authorities-capital-expenditure-and-resourcing/>



# Grant Thornton Technical update







## Accounting and audit issues

### Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17

CIPFA/LASAAC has issued the Local Authority Accounting Code for 2016/17. The main changes to the Code include:

- the new measurement requirements at depreciated replacement cost for the Highways Network Asset (HNA), which doesn't apply to Taunton Deane Borough Council and
- the requirement for local authorities to report in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on the same basis as they are organised and report in the year (ie. no longer following SERCOP). This is accompanied by the introduction of a new Expenditure and Funding Analysis which provides a reconciliation between the way local authorities budget and report during the year and the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.



## Accounting and audit issues

### Flexible use of capital receipts

DCLG has issued a [Direction and Statutory Guidance](#) on the flexible use of capital receipts to fund the revenue costs of reform projects. The direction applies from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2019.

The Direction sets out that expenditure which 'is incurred by the Authorities that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years for any of the public sector delivery partners' can be treated as capital expenditure.

Capital receipts can only be used from the disposals received in the years in which the flexibility is offered rather than those received in previous years.

Authorities must have regard to the Statutory Guidance when applying the Direction.



# Grant Thornton Publications and events





# Website Relaunch

We have recently launched our new-look website. Our new homepage has been optimised for viewing across mobile devices, reflecting the increasing trend for how people choose to access information online. We wanted to make it easier to learn about us and the services we offer.

You can access the page using the link below – <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/industries/public-sector/>





# Advancing closure: the benefits to local authorities

With new regulation bringing forward the required publishing date for accounts local authorities must consider the areas needed to accelerate financial reporting.

In February 2015, regulations were laid before parliament confirming proposals to bring forward the date by which local authority accounts must be published in England. From 2017-18, authorities will need to publish their audited financial statements by 31 July, with Wales seeking to follow a similar approach over the next few years.

Many local government bodies are already experiencing the benefits of advancing their financial reporting processes and preparing their accounts early, including:

- raising the profile of the finance function within the organisation and transforming its role from a back office function to a key enabler of change and improvement across the organisation;
  - high quality financial statements as a result of improved quality assurance arrangements;
  - greater certainty over in-year monitoring arrangements and financial outturn position for the year, supporting members to make more informed financial decisions for the future;
  - improved financial controls and accounting systems, resulting from more efficient and refined financial processes; and
  - allowing finance officers more time to focus on forward looking medium term financial planning and transformational projects, to address future financial challenges.
- While there is no standard set of actions to achieve faster close there are a number of consistent key factors across the organisations successfully delivering accelerated closedown of their accounts, which our report explores in further details:
- Enabling sustainable change requires committed leadership underpinned by a culture for success
  - Efficient and effective systems and processes are essential
  - Auditors and other external parties need to be on board and kept informed throughout

Grant Thornton reports

Grant Thornton  
An instinct for growth

Advancing closure  
Transforming the financial reporting of  
local authority accounts



<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/advancing-closure-the-benefits-to-local-authorities/>



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