

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Corporate Governance Committee – 19 May 2014

External Audit Plan 2013/14

Report of the Assistant Director - Corporate Services (Richard Sealy)

(This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Williams)

1. Executive Summary

This report introduces the External Audit Plan for 2013/14. This is prepared by our external auditors, Grant Thornton, and is detailed in the appendix to the report.

The report, which will be presented by Grant Thornton, summarises their approach to the 2013/14 audit programme, provides information on the work already undertaken, the tasks yet to be completed, the timescales and the auditors view on risk.

2. Background

2.1 Each year our external auditors, Grant Thornton, provide a plan, which details their approach to the audit work required in respect of the preceding financial year (2013/14). Specifically this audit work focuses on the provision of an audit opinion in relation to the accounts, value for money (VFM) and associated key risks.

2.2 The plan for 2013/14 is set out in Appendix A.

3. Finance Comments

3.1 The report sets out the external auditors view on key risk areas for the Council and their approach to auditing them.

4. Legal Comments

4.1 There are no legal implications from this report.

5. Links to Corporate Aims

5.1 There are no direct implications.

6. Environmental Implications

6.1 There are no implications.

7. Community Safety Implications

7.1 There are no implications.

8. Equalities Impact

8.1 There are no implications.

9. Risk Management

9.1 Any risks identified will feed into the corporate risk management process.

10. Partnership Implications

10.1 The Assistant Director – Corporate Services and the Internal Audit Team (SWAP) will take the issues flagged in this report into account when reviewing the areas of risk to be reviewed by Internal Audit in the current and future years.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Members are requested to note the External Audit Plan for 2013/14 received from Grant Thornton.

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APPENDIX A – The Audit Plan for Taunton Deane Borough Council for the year ending 31 March 2014

The Audit Plan for Taunton Deane Borough Council

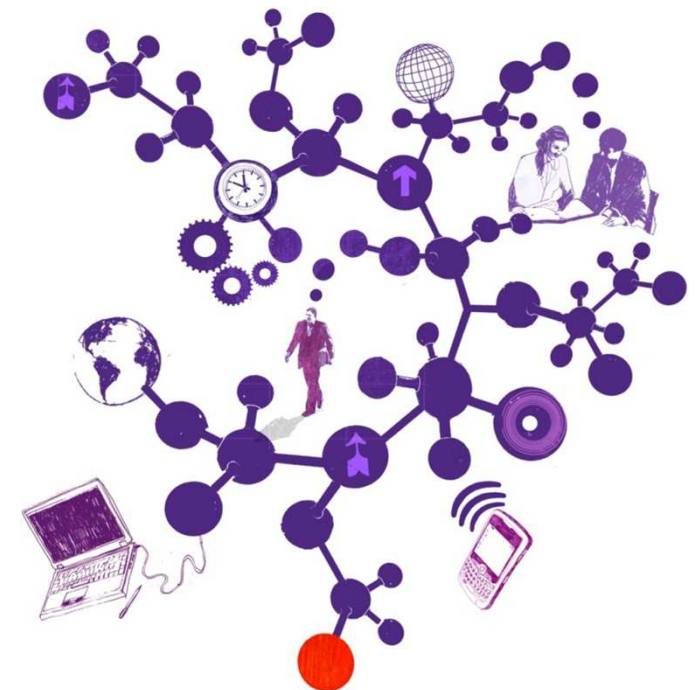
Year ended 31 March 2014

19 May 2014

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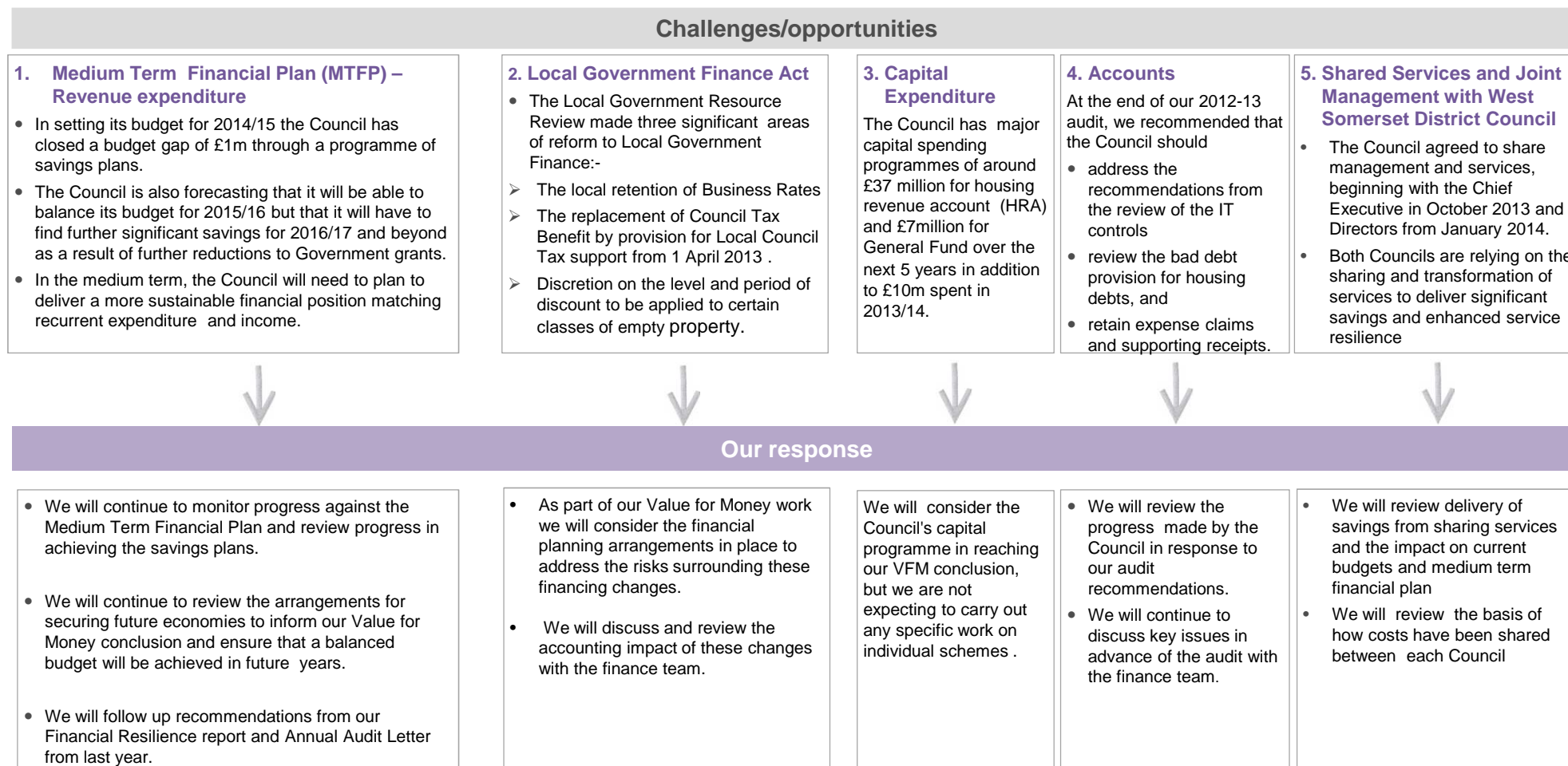
The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible 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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1. 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.



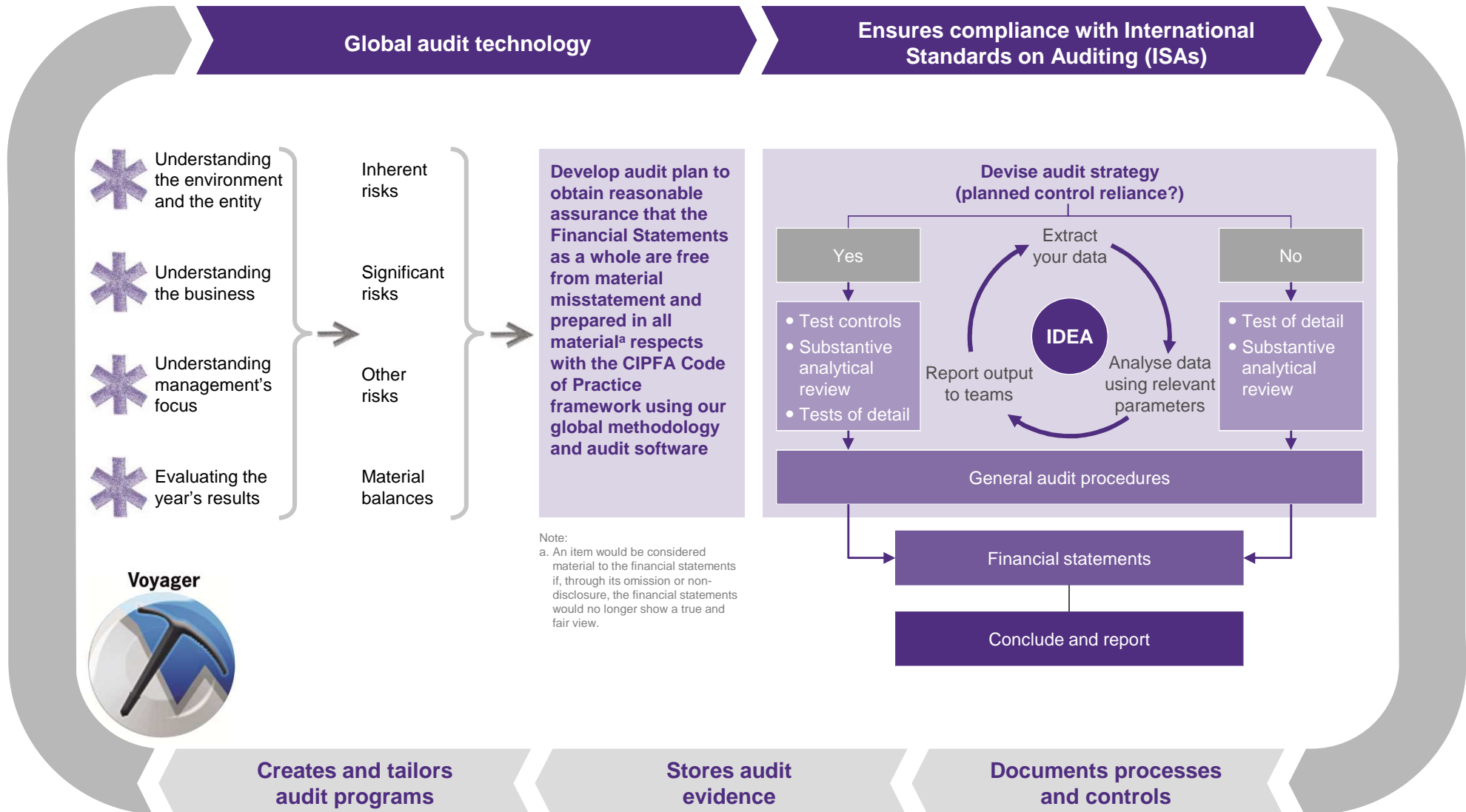
2. Developments relevant to your business and the audit

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>1. Financial reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the CIPFA Code of Practice • Clarification of Code requirements around PPE valuations • Changes to NDR accounting and provisions for business rate appeals 	<p>2. Legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Finance settlement • Welfare reform Act 2012 	<p>3. Corporate governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Governance Statement (AGS) • Explanatory foreword 	<p>4. Pensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of 2013/14 changes to the Local Government pension Scheme (LGPS) 	<p>5. Financial Pressures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing service provision with less resource • Progress against savings plans 	<p>6. Other requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is required to submit a Whole of Government accounts pack on which we review. • The Council completes grant claims and returns on which audit certification is required

Our response					
<p>We will ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council complies with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice and business rate appeals through discussions with management and our substantive testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the arrangements the Council has in place for the production of the AGS • We will review the AGS and the explanatory foreword to consider whether they are consistent with our knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review how the Council dealt with the impact of the 2013/14 changes through our meetings with senior management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the Council's performance against the 2013/14 budget, including consideration of performance against the savings plan • We will undertake a review of Financial Resilience as part of our VFM conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will carry out work on the WGA pack in accordance with requirements • We will certify grant claims and returns in accordance with Audit Commission requirements

3. Our audit approach



4. 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	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.	<p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and testing of revenue recognition policies • Testing of material revenue streams
Management over-ride of controls	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management <p>Further work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management • Testing of journal entries • Review of unusual significant transactions

5. 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 reasonably possible risks	Description	Work completed to date	Further work planned
Operating expenses	Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough tests of design and operation of controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantive testing of operating expenditure and year end adjustments / reconciliations Review and testing of creditors/liability balances of unusual and large amounts Review of unrecorded liabilities and after date payments to ensure all liabilities identified
Employee remuneration	Employee remuneration accrual understated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough tests of design and operation of controls Initial substantive testing of Employees for months one to 11 to underlying supporting documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantive testing of the month 12 payroll payments to underlying evidence Agreement of payroll accruals to schedules and underlying evidence. Review of senior officers pay disclosures and agreement to underlying data. Analytical procedures over the payroll figures throughout the year to ensure that it is reasonable and complete. Reconciliation of the payroll system figures to the general ledger figures
Welfare Expenditure	Welfare benefit expenditure improperly computed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough tests of design and operation of controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantive testing of welfare expenditure will occur for the whole year to gain assurance over the welfare expenditure figures

5. Other risk identified (continued)

Other reasonably possible risks	Description	Work completed to date	Further work planned
Housing Rent Revenue Account	Revenue transactions not recorded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough tests of design and operation of controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing to ensure that the Council has recognised all material HRA revenue including the review of the reasonableness of the total rent debit and reconciliations to rent accounts to the total properties in the HRA
Property, Plant & Equipment	PPE activity not valid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None – work to be completed at the year end. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough test to review the design and operation of controls over the PPE system. Testing of a sample of additions and disposals Testing of depreciation
Property, Plant & Equipment	Revaluation measurement not correct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None – work to be completed at the year end. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough test to review the design and operation of controls over the PPE system. Testing the revaluation figures to ensure that they are reasonable. Testing the revaluation figures in the Fixed Asset Register to the Valuer's Report.

6. 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
Internal audit	<p>We have reviewed internal audit's overall arrangements in accordance with auditing standards. 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>
Walkthrough testing	<p>We have completed 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 has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. Internal controls have been implemented in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
Journal entry controls	<p>We have reviewed the Council's journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy and have not identified any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's control environment or financial statements.</p>	<p>Overall, no significant issues have been identified in the journal policies or procedures, or the journals identified and tested to date.</p> <p>Further journal testing will occur to ensure that testing on the journals in the remainder of the year will be completed.</p>
Early substantive testing	<p>Some early substantive testing has been carried out on Payroll transactions in months one to 11, and some initial trend analysis has been undertaken.</p>	<p>No issues have been identified with the testing that has been completed to date. Further testing will need to be undertaken to cover the remainder of the year.</p>

7. 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:

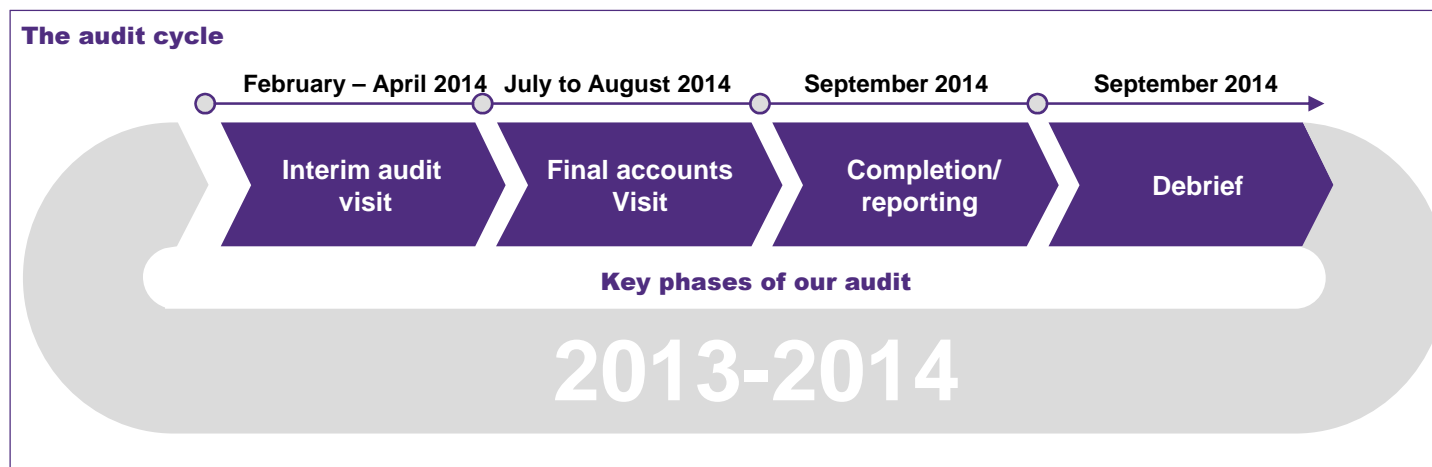
VfM criteria	Focus of the criteria
The organisation has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience	The organisation has robust systems and processes to manage financial risks and opportunities effectively, and to secure a stable financial position that enables it to continue to operate 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 financial performance
- strategic financial planning
- financial governance
- financial control
- delivery of savings against the 2013/14 budget
- the medium term financial plan (MTFP) and capital programme

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.

8. Key dates



Date	Activity
February	Planning
February to April 2014	Interim site visit
May 2014	Presentation of audit plan to Corporate Governance Committee
July to September 2014	Year end fieldwork
September 2014	Audit findings clearance meeting with Director of Operations
September 2014	Report audit findings to those charged with governance (Corporate Governance Committee)
September 2014	Sign financial statements opinion

9. Fees and independence

Fees

	£
Council audit	66,605
Grant certification (indicative)	15,606
Total fees (excluding VAT)	82,211

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
None	Nil

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

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.

10. 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).

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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