

Briefing on audit matters

Published for those charged with governance



This document is intended to assist the members and officers of the Council to understand the major aspects of our audit approach, including explaining the key concepts behind the Deloitte Audit methodology including audit objectives and materiality.

Further, it describes the safeguards developed by Deloitte to counter threats to our independence and objectivity.

This document will only be reissued if significant changes to any of those matters highlighted above occur.

We will usually communicate our audit planning information and the findings from the audit separately. Where we issue separate reports these should be read in conjunction with this "Briefing on audit matters".

Approach and scope of the audit

Primary audit objectives

We conduct our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) as adopted by the UK Auditing Practices Board ("APB"). Our statutory audit objectives are:

- to express an opinion in true and fair view terms to the members on the financial statements;
- to express an opinion as to whether the accounts have been properly prepared in accordance with the relevant financial reporting framework;
- to express an opinion as to whether the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2010/11 based on International Financial Reporting Standards;
- to form an opinion on whether adequate accounting records have been kept by the Council; and
- to express an opinion as to whether the audited body has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Other reporting objectives

Our reporting objectives are to:

- present significant reporting findings to the members. This will highlight key judgements, important accounting policies and estimates and the application of new reporting requirements, as well as significant control observations; and
- provide timely and constructive letters of recommendation to management. This will include key business process improvements and significant controls weaknesses identified during our audit.

Materiality

The concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to appropriate accounting principles and statutory requirements.

"Materiality" is defined in the International Accounting Standards Board's "Framework for the Preparation and Presentation of Financial Statements" in the following terms:

"Information is material if its omission or misstatement could influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements. Materiality depends on the size of the item or error judged in the particular circumstances of its omission or misstatement. Thus, materiality provides a threshold or cut-off point rather than being a primary qualitative characteristic which information must have if it is to be useful."

We determine materiality based on professional judgment in the context of our knowledge of the audited entity, including consideration of factors such as shareholder expectations, industry developments, financial stability and reporting requirements for the financial statements.

We determine materiality to:

- determine the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures; and
- evaluate the effect of misstatements.

The extent of our procedures is not based on materiality alone but also local considerations of the Council, the quality of systems and controls in preventing material misstatement in the financial statements, and the level at which known and likely misstatements are tolerated by you in the preparation of the financial statements.

For local statutory reporting purposes, individual materiality levels will be set for each of the subsidiary companies.

Uncorrected misstatements

In accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) ("ISAs (UK and Ireland)") we will communicate to you all uncorrected misstatements (including disclosure deficiencies) identified during our audit, other than those which we believe are clearly trivial.

ISAs (UK and Ireland) do not place numeric limits on the meaning of 'clearly trivial'. The Audit Engagement Partner, management and the members of the audit committee will agree an appropriate limit for 'clearly trivial'. In our report we will report all individual identified uncorrected misstatements in excess of this limit and other identified errors in aggregate.

We will consider identified misstatements in qualitative as well as quantitative terms.

Audit methodology

Our audit methodology takes into account the changing requirements of auditing standards and adopts a risk based approach. We utilise technology in an efficient way to provide maximum value to the Council and create value for management and the Council whilst minimising a “box ticking” approach.

Our audit methodology is designed to give officers and members the confidence that they deserve.

For controls considered to be ‘relevant to the audit’ we evaluate the design of the controls and determine whether they have been implemented (“D & I”). The controls that are determined to be relevant to the audit will include those:

- where we plan to obtain assurance through the testing of operating effectiveness;
- relating to identified risks (including the risk of fraud in revenue recognition, unless rebutted and the risk of management override of controls);
- where we consider we are unable to obtain sufficient audit assurance through substantive procedures alone; and
- to enable us to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements and design and perform further audit procedures.

Other requirements of International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland)

ISAs (UK and Ireland) require we communicate the following additional matters:

ISA (UK & Ireland)	Matter
ISQC 1	Quality control for firms that perform audits and review of financial statements, and other assurance and related services engagements
240	The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statements
250	Consideration of laws and regulations in an audit of financial statements
265	Communicating deficiencies in internal control to those charged with governance and management
450	Evaluation of misstatements identified during the audit
505	External confirmations
510	Initial audit engagements – opening balances
550	Related parties
560	Subsequent events
570	Going concern
600	Special considerations – audits of group financial statements (including the work of component auditors)
705	Modifications to the opinion in the independent auditor's report
706	Emphasis of matter paragraphs and other matter paragraphs in the independent auditor's report
710	Comparative information – corresponding figures and comparative financial statements
720	Section A: The auditor's responsibilities relating to other information in documents containing audited financial statements

Independence policies and procedures

Important safeguards and procedures have been developed by Deloitte to counter threats or perceived threats to our objectivity, which include the items set out below.

Safeguards and procedures

- Every opinion (not just statutory audit opinions) issued by Deloitte is subject to technical review by a member of our independent Professional Standards Review unit.
- Where appropriate, review and challenge takes place of key decisions by the Second Partner and by the Independent Review Partner, which goes beyond ISAs (UK and Ireland), and ensures the objectivity of our judgement is maintained.
- We report annually to the members our assessment of objectivity and independence. This report includes a summary of non-audit services provided together with fees receivable.
- There is formal consideration and review of the appropriateness of continuing the audit engagement before accepting reappointment.
- Periodic rotation takes place of the audit engagement partner, the independent review partner and key partners involved in the audit in accordance with our policies and professional and regulatory requirements.
- In accordance with the Revised Ethical Standards issued by the APB, there is an assessment of the level of threat to objectivity and potential safeguards to combat these threats prior to acceptance of any non-audit engagement. This would include particular focus on threats arising from self-interest, self-review, management, advocacy, over-familiarity and intimidation. Any non audit work which exceeds a de minimis amount set by the Audit Commission must be approved by the Commission prior to agreeing to carry out the work.
- In the UK, statutory oversight and regulation of auditors is carried out by the Professional Oversight Board (POB) which is an operating body of the Financial Reporting Council. The Firm's policies and procedures are subject to external monitoring by both the Audit Inspection Unit (AIU), which is a division of POB, and the ICAEW's Quality Assurance Directorate (QAD). The AIU is charged with monitoring the quality of audits of economically significant entities and the QAD with monitoring statutory compliance of audits for all other entities. Both report to the ICAEW's Audit Registration Committee. The AIU also reports to POB and can inform the Financial Reporting Review Panel of concerns it has with the accounts of individual companies.
- Our work is carried out in line with the Audit Commission standing guidance for local government auditors. Compliance with that guidance and the quality of our work is subject to the Audit Commission's annual Quality Review Process.

Independence policies

Our detailed ethical policies' standards and independence policies are issued to all partners and employees who are required to confirm their compliance annually. We are also required to comply with the policies of other relevant professional and regulatory bodies.

Amongst other things, these policies:

- state that no Deloitte partner (or any immediate family member) is allowed to hold a financial interest in any of our UK audited entities;
- require that professional staff may not work on assignments if they (or any immediate family member) have a financial interest in the audited entity or a party to the transaction or if they have a beneficial interest in a trust holding a financial position in the audited entity;
- state that no person in a position to influence the conduct and outcome of the audit (or any immediate family member) should enter into business relationships with UK audited entities or their affiliates;
- prohibit any professional employee from obtaining gifts from audited entities unless the value is clearly insignificant; and
- provide safeguards against potential conflicts of interest.

Remuneration and evaluation policies

Partners are evaluated on roles and responsibilities they take within the firm including their technical ability and their ability to manage risk.

APB Revised Ethical Standards

The Auditing Practices Board (APB) has issued five ethical standards for auditors that apply a 'threats' and 'safeguards' approach.

The five standards cover:

- maintaining integrity, objectivity and independence;
- financial, business, employment and personal relationships between auditors and their audited entities;
- long association of audit partners and other audit team members with audit engagements;
- audit fees, remuneration and evaluation of the audit team, litigation between auditors and their audited entities, and gifts and hospitality received from audited entities; and
- non-audit services provided to audited entities.

Our policies and procedures comply with these standards.