

North Yorkshire County Council

Progress report to the Audit Committee on the 2020/21 audit

Issued on 10 September for the meeting on 20 September 2021

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Introduction

The key messages in this report

Audit quality is our number one priority. We plan our audit to focus on audit quality and have set the following audit quality objectives for this audit:

- A robust challenge of the key judgements taken in the preparation of the financial statements.
- A strong understanding of your internal control environment.
- A well planned and delivered audit that raises findings early with those charged with governance.

I have pleasure in presenting our progress report to the Audit Committee of North Yorkshire County Council (the Council) for the 2020/21 audit. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance and co-operation during this year's external audit.

The scope of our audit was set out within our planning report presented to the Audit Committee in March 2021.

Status of our Statement of Accounts audit

We have the following principal matters to complete as part of our audit:

- Receipt and review of reports from our specialist teams (pensions/valuation);
- Receipt of bank/investment confirmation letters for Scarborough Nursery, Wokingham Borough Council and Bank of Scotland;
- Bank statement evidence for two subsequent receipts samples;
- Supporting information for non-current debtor with Yorwaste Ltd;
- Completion of accruals, grant income, grants received in advance, and other services expenditure testing;
- Completion of pensions testing;
- Completion of internal quality assurance procedures, including follow-up queries arising from review;
- Review of final version of the financial statements;
- Receipt of signed management representation letter; and
- Our review of events since 31 March 2021 through to signing.

Status of our Value for Money audit

Our Value for Money work is on-going, and will be reported in our Auditor's Annual Report, which has a publication deadline under the National Audit Office Auditor Guidance Note 3 of three months after the signing of the Audit Opinion.

From our work to date, we have not identified any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

Our opinion will state that our work is ongoing.

Introduction

The key messages in this report (continued)

Conclusions from our testing

- The key judgements in the audit process related to:
 - The completeness of accrued expenditure; and
 - Management override of controls.
- Based on our work to date, we have not identified any significant audit adjustments or disclosure deficiencies.
- Based on the current status of our audit work, we envisage issuing an unmodified audit opinion, with no reference to any matters in respect of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources, or the Annual Governance Statement.

Narrative Report & Annual Governance Statement

- We have reviewed the Council's Annual Report and Annual Governance Statement to consider whether it is misleading or inconsistent with other information known to us from our audit work.
- The Annual Governance Statement complies with the Delivering Good Governance guidance issued by CIPFA.
- We have no matters to raise with you in respect of the Narrative Report.

Duties as public auditor

- We did not receive any queries or objections from local electors this year.
- We have not identified any matters that would require us to issue a public interest report. We have not had to exercise any other audit powers under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Whole of Government Accounts (WGA)

- The Council is above the threshold for WGA reporting.
- We are required to report our overall audit opinion and key issues from our audit to the National Audit Office following completion of the audit. We are required to perform testing on the Council's WGA submission, checking its consistency to the audited financial statements and reporting our findings to the National Audit Office (together with our audit opinion and key issues from our audit).

Nicola Wright
Audit Partner

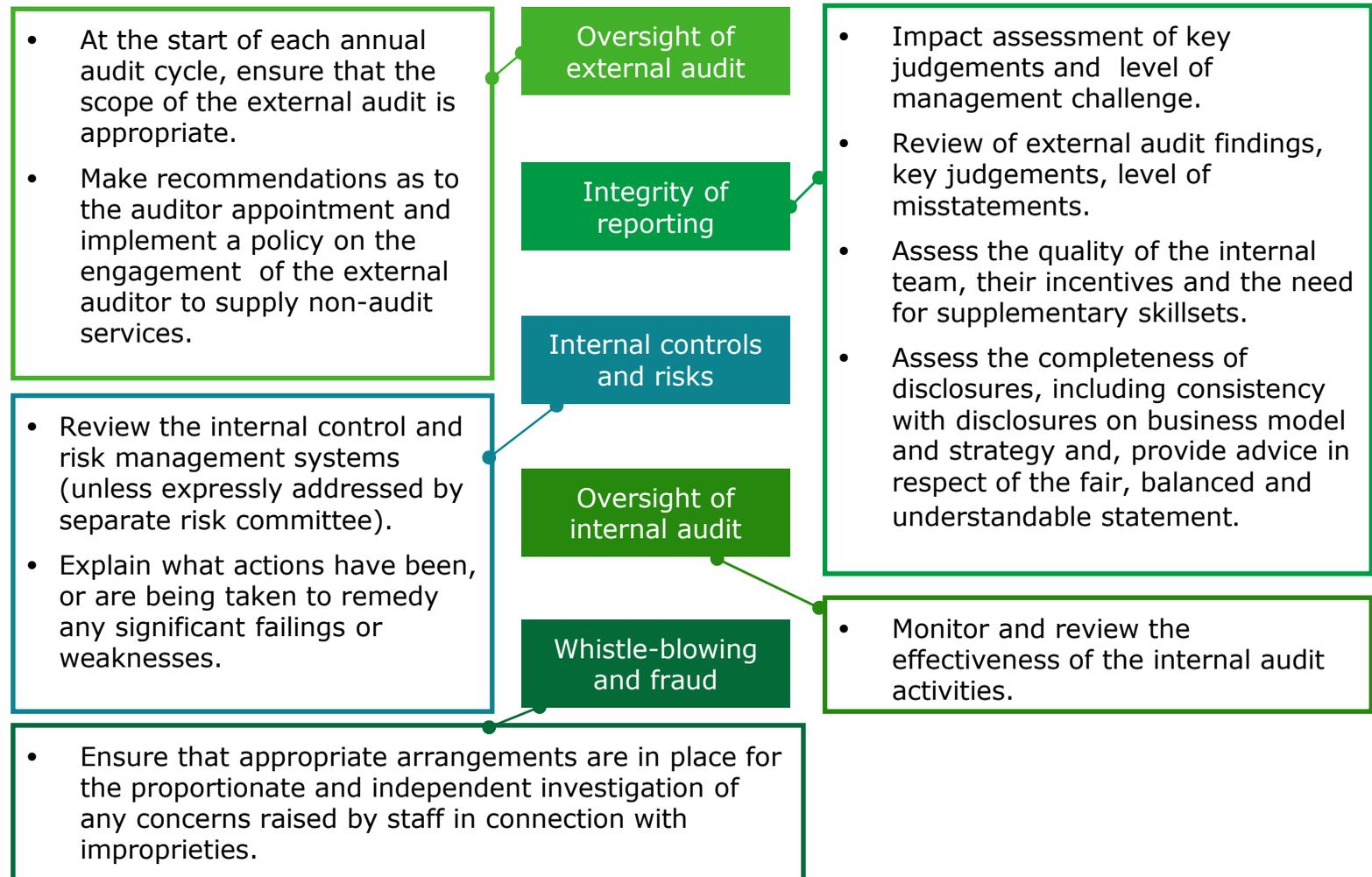
Responsibilities of the Audit Committee

Helping you fulfil your responsibilities

Why do we interact with the Audit Committee?



As a result of regulatory change in recent years, the role of the Audit Committee has significantly expanded. We set out here a summary of the core areas of Audit Committee responsibility to provide a reference in respect of these broader responsibilities and highlight throughout the document where there is key information which helps the Audit Committee in fulfilling its remit.



Quality indicators

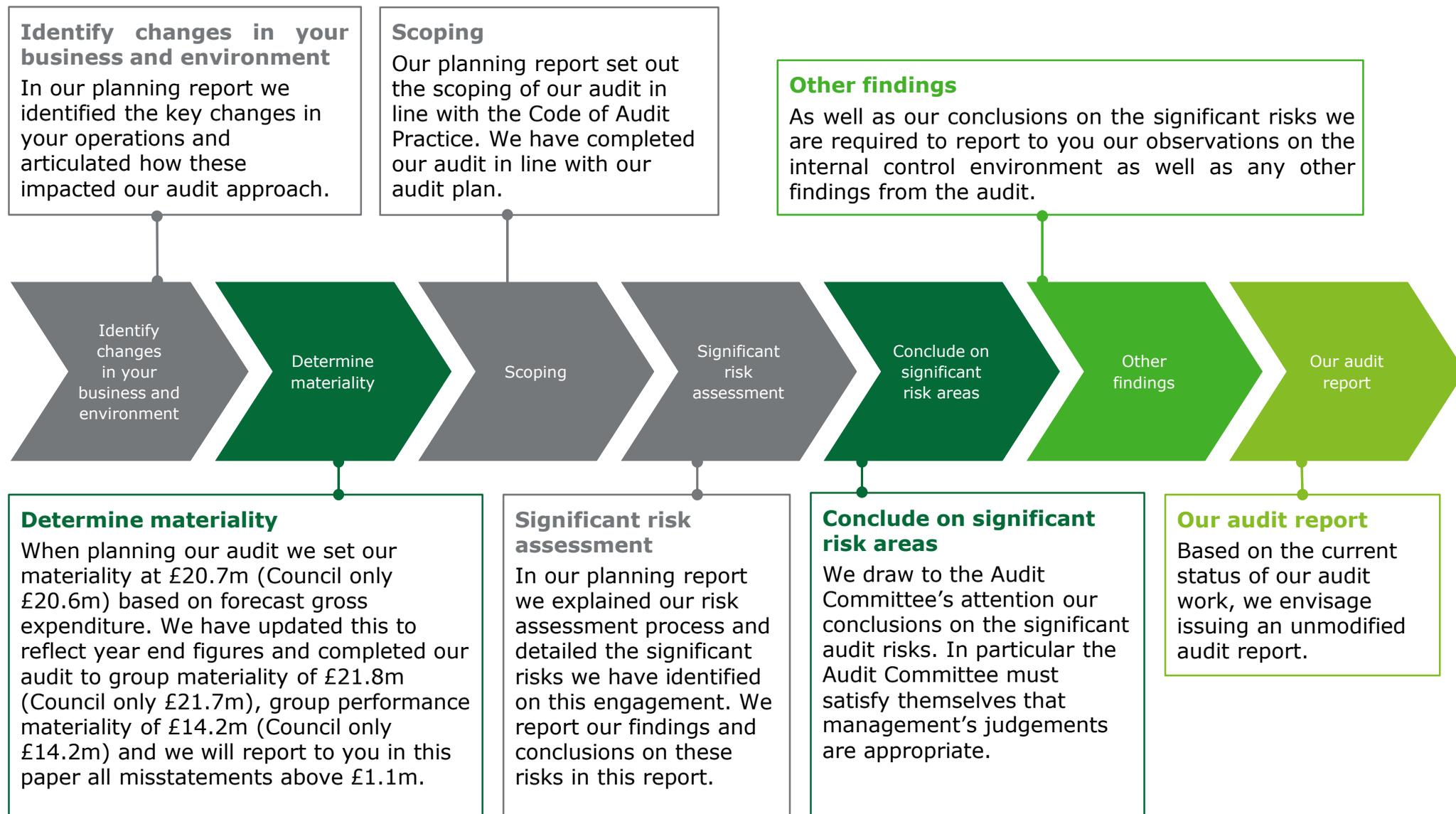
Impact on the execution of our audit

Management and those charged with governance are in a position to influence the effectiveness of our audit, through timely formulation of judgements, provision of accurate information, and responsiveness to issues identified in the course of the audit. This slide summarises some key metrics related to your control environment which can significantly impact the execution of the audit. We consider these metrics important in assessing the reliability of your financial reporting and provide context for other messages in this report.

Area	Grading	Reason
Timing of key accounting judgements		The Council made changes to the accounting treatment for a substantial proportion (approximately £40m) of the capital grants received in advance during 2020/21. We recommend that any significant changes are discussed in advance of the preparation of the financial statements and the beginning of the audit so that we are able to provide early input.
Access to finance team and other key personnel		The audit team have been provided with good access to key members of the finance team and wider Council personnel.
Quality and accuracy of management accounting papers		Management accounting papers provided have been accurate and produced to a high quality.
Quality of draft financial statements		A good draft set of financial statements were available from 14 th June, however it would be helpful if any figures i.e. collection fund, that are likely to change are highlighted.
Response to findings and recommendations		The audit team note that there have been recurring findings raised in both the prior year and current year audit, specifically in relation to journal process controls and care home expenditure.
Volume and magnitude of identified errors		There were a low volume and magnitude of identified errors.

Our audit explained

We tailor our audit to your business and your strategy



Significant risks

Dashboard

Risk	Material	Fraud risk	Approach to controls testing	Controls testing conclusion	Consistency of judgements with Deloitte's expectations	Comments	Page no.
Significant risks							
Completeness of accrued expenditure				Satisfactory		Work is ongoing	9
Management override of controls				Satisfactory		Work is ongoing	10

Controls approach adopted

-  Assess design & implementation
-  Test operating effectiveness of relevant controls
-  Involvement of IT specialists

Significant risks (continued)

Completeness of accrued expenditure

Risk identified Under UK auditing standards, there is a presumed risk of revenue recognition due to fraud. We have rebutted this risk in line with our approach in the prior year, and instead believe that a fraud risk lies with the completeness of accrued expenditure (as well as management override of controls as detailed on page 10).

In the current year, we have identified the completeness of expenditure risk as relating specifically to year end accruals.

There is an inherent fraud risk associated with the under-recording of expenditure in order for the Council to report a more favourable year-end position.

For North Yorkshire County Council, there is therefore an inherent risk that it may materially misstate its expenditure through the understatement of accruals in an attempt to report a more favourable year-end position.

Deloitte response and challenge Our work in this area included the following:

- We assessed the design and implementation of the controls in relation to recording the completeness of accruals; and
- We performed focused testing in relation to the completeness of accruals through testing a sample of post year end payments made. Due to the potential impact of COVID-19 on the Council's processes in this area, we extended this to 91 days to cover the period between April and June.

Conclusion A small number of testing items remain outstanding and from our work to date, we have identified one recommendation in our testing of completeness of accrued expenditure, see page 14 for details.

We have not identified any issues to date in relation to the key judgements made by management based on our work performed.

Significant audit risks (continued)

Management override of controls

Risk identified

In accordance with ISA 240 (UK), management override of controls is a significant risk due to fraud for all entities. This risk area includes the potential for management to use their judgement to influence the financial statements as well as the potential to override the Council's controls for specific transactions.

The key judgements in the financial statements include those which we have selected to be significant audit risks, (completeness of accrued expenditure) and any one off and unusual transactions where management could show bias. These are inherently the areas in which management has the potential to use their judgment to influence the financial statements.

Although management is responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Council, we planned our audit so that we had a reasonable expectation of detecting material misstatements to the Statement of Accounts.

Deloitte response and challenge

We have considered the overall sensitivity of judgements made in preparation of the Statement of Accounts, and note that:

- The Council's results for the first half of the year were projecting overspends in operational areas. This was closely monitored and whilst projecting overspends, the underlying reasons were well understood. Actions were taken to address the issues identified and the year-end position was an underspend; and
- Senior management's remuneration is not tied to particular financial results.

We have considered these factors and other potential sensitivities in evaluating the judgements made in the preparation of the financial statements.

Journals

- We have tested the design and implementation of controls in relation to journals.
- We have made inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries and other adjustments.
- We are using Spotlight data analytics tools to test a sample of journals, based upon identification of items of potential audit interest. Our analysis has covered all journals posted in the year.

Significant transactions

- We did not identify any significant transactions outside the normal course of business or any transactions where the business rationale was not clear.

Significant audit risks (continued)

Management override of controls

Deloitte response and challenge

Accounting estimates

- We have performed design and implementation testing of the controls over key accounting estimates and judgements.
- The key judgement in the financial statements are those selected as significant audit risks: completeness of accrued expenditure.
- We are reviewing accounting estimates for biases that could result in material misstatements due to fraud. We note that overall the changes to estimates in the period were balanced and did not indicate a bias to achieve a particular result.
- We tested accounting estimates and judgements, focusing on the areas of greatest judgement and value. Our procedures included comparing amounts recorded or inputs to estimates to relevant supporting information from third party sources.

Conclusion

Our work is ongoing but based on our work to date, we have not identified any issues in relation to management override.

We have raised one recommendation in relation to the journals control process, see page 14.

Covid-19 pandemic

Impact on reporting and our audit

Impact on annual report and financial statements	
Impact on property, plant and equipment	The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors issued a practice alert, as a result of which valuers identified a material valuation uncertainty at 31 March 2020 for most types of property valuation. This practice alert was withdrawn in September 2020. Valuation reports at March 2020 typically identified a need to consider potential impairments in future periods. Our work on property valuations included challenging whether the Council had appropriately considered the impact on the valuation (including any changes as a result of the pandemic and consequent service and organisational changes in the Council on the “modern equivalent asset” assumed in valuations).
Impact on pension fund investment measurement	As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic pension fund investments have been subject to volatility. At 31 March 2021, we noted that the Council’s share of pension fund assets had moved by £377m.
Narrative and other reporting issues	We have considered how the Council has reflected the impact of the pandemic in its reporting, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative Report - discussion of the impact on services, operations, performance, strategic direction, resources and financial sustainability. Ensuring that this reflected the significant financial challenge that the Council has experienced.• Accounts disclosures on the impact on judgements and estimation uncertainty• We have made a number of minor recommendations for improving disclosures.
Events after the reporting period	The Council will need to consider the events after the Reporting Period and whether these events will be adjusting or non-adjusting and make decisions on a transaction by transaction basis.

Value for money

Our work is ongoing and will be reported in our Auditor's Annual Report

Value for Money requirements

We are required to consider the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. Under the revised requirements of the Code of Audit Practice 2020 and related Auditor Guidance Note 03 ('AGN03'), we are required to:

- Perform work to understand the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources against each of the three reporting criteria (financial sustainability, governance, and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness);
 - Undertake a risk assessment to identify whether there are any risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements;
 - If any risks of significant weaknesses are identified, perform procedures to determine whether there is in fact a significant weakness in arrangements, and if so to make recommendations for improvement;
 - Issue a narrative commentary in the Auditor's Annual Report, setting out the work undertaken in respect of the reporting criteria and our findings, including any explanation needed in respect of judgements or local context for findings. If significant weaknesses are identified, the weaknesses and recommendations will be included in the reporting, together with follow-up of previous recommendations and whether they have been implemented. Where relevant, we may include reporting on any other matters arising we consider relevant to Value for Money arrangements, which might include emerging risks or issues arising; and
 - Where significant weaknesses are identified, report this by exception within our financial statement audit opinion.
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Status of our work

Our Value for Money work is ongoing, and will be reported in our Auditor's Annual Report, which has a publication deadline under the National Audit Office Auditor Guidance Note 3 of three months after the signing of the Audit Opinion.

Work performed to obtain an understanding of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

As part of our risk assessment, we have reviewed the summary of Value for Money arrangements prepared by the Council, including the supporting documentation provided on the arrangements, and will hold follow-up discussions on areas where additional information is required. In addition, we have:

- reviewed of the Council's draft Annual Governance Statement;
 - reviewed internal audit reports through the year and the Head of Internal Audit Opinion;
 - considered issues identified through our other audit and assurance work; and
 - considered the Council's financial performance and management throughout 2020/21.
-

Findings of our work to date

We have not identified to date any risks of significant weakness in arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

Our opinion will state that work is on-going.

Your control environment and findings

Control deficiencies and areas for management focus

Observation	Year first communicated, severity, component of internal control	Deloitte recommendation	Management response and remediation plan
<p>Care home expenditure The Council's standard approach in relation to care home expenditure is to make payments on a 4 weekly basis. At year end the period which spans the year end is accounted for in the financial year in which it started.</p>	<p>2019/20, Low priority Control environment</p>	<p>It is recommended that the relevant costs should be apportioned between years.</p>	<p>TBC</p>
<p>Journal process controls From our work on the design and implementation of the controls in place around the posting of journals, it has been noted that there is no review of journals performed prior to posting. In addition to this, there is also no limit in place on the value of journals an individual can post.</p>	<p>2018/19, Medium priority Control environment</p>	<p>We recommend that controls in place around the journal process are tightened to ensure a review takes place prior to posting.</p>	<p>TBC</p>

Other significant findings

Financial reporting findings

Below are the findings from our audit surrounding your financial reporting process.

Qualitative aspects of your accounting practices:

It was noted as part of the prior year audit, that there were a large number of judgements included within the critical judgements section of the accounts. Deloitte consider that a number of these judgements do not meet the requirements to be considered critical judgements and the current year disclosure should be updated.

Other matters relevant to financial reporting:

The consolidation process at NYCC is to consolidate material subsidiaries. Deloitte recommend that all subsidiaries, irrespective of size, should be consolidated into the Group accounts. Deloitte have obtained the client workings behind the subsidiaries that aren't consolidated and have confirmed that they are not material to the Group.

The Council should ensure as part of its consolidation process that it considers whether any adjustments are required to harmonise accounting policies across the group.

In the current year disclosure requirements have been updated relating to the presentation of the Dedicated Schools Grant cumulative deficit within reserves, with a new unusable reserve 'Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account' being created.

We will obtain written representations from the Accounting Officer and members on matters material to the financial statements when other sufficient appropriate audit evidence cannot reasonably be expected to exist. A copy of the draft representations letter will be circulated separately.

Our audit report

The form and content of our report

Here we discuss how the results of the audit impact on our audit report. An overview of our financial statement audit work will be included in our Auditor's Annual Report.



Our opinion on the financial statements

Based on the current status of our audit work, we envisage issuing an unmodified audit report.



Emphasis of matter and other matter paragraphs

There are no matters we judge to be of fundamental importance in the financial statements that we consider it necessary to draw attention to in an emphasis of matter paragraph.



Value for Money reporting by exception

Our opinion will note that our Value for Money work is ongoing and will be reported in our Auditor's Annual Report. We have no matters to date to report by exception in our financial statement audit opinion.



Irregularities and fraud

We will explain the extent to which we considered the audit to be capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud.

In doing so, we will describe the procedures we performed in understanding the legal and regulatory framework and assessing compliance with relevant laws and regulations. We will discuss the areas identified where fraud may occur and any identified key audit matters relating to fraud.

Your annual report

We are required to report by exception on any issues identified in respect of the Narrative Report or Annual Governance Statement.

	Requirement	Deloitte response
Narrative Report	<p>The Narrative Report is expected to address (as relevant to the Council):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organisational overview and external environment;• Governance;• Operational Model;• Risks and opportunities;• Strategy and resource allocation;• Performance;• Outlook; and• Basis of preparation	<p>We have assessed whether the Narrative Report has been prepared in accordance with CIPFA guidance.</p> <p>We have also read the Narrative Report for consistency with the annual accounts and our knowledge acquired during the course of performing the audit, and is not otherwise misleading.</p>
Annual Governance Statement	<p>The Annual Governance Statement reports that governance arrangements provide assurance, are adequate and are operating effectively.</p>	<p>We have assessed whether the information given in the Annual Governance Statement meets the disclosure requirements set out in CIPFA/SOLACE guidance, is misleading, or is inconsistent with other information from our audit. No issues were noted from our review.</p>

Purpose of our report and responsibility statement

Our report is designed to help you meet your governance duties

What we report

Our report is designed to help the Audit Committee and the Council discharge their governance duties. It also represents one way in which we fulfil our obligations under ISA (UK) 260 to communicate with you regarding your oversight of the financial reporting process and your governance requirements. Our report includes:

- Results of our work on key audit judgements and our observations on the quality of your Annual Report.
- Our internal control observations.
- Other insights we have identified from our audit.

The scope of our work

Our observations are developed in the context of our audit of the financial statements.

Use of this report

This report has been prepared for the Council, as a body, and we therefore accept responsibility to you alone for its contents. We accept no duty, responsibility or liability to any other parties, since this report has not been prepared, and is not intended, for any other purpose.

What we don't report

As you will be aware, our audit was not designed to identify all matters that may be relevant to the Audit Committee.

Also, there will be further information you need to discharge your governance responsibilities, such as matters reported on by management or by other specialist advisers.

Finally, our views on internal controls and business risk assessment should not be taken as comprehensive or as an opinion on effectiveness since they have been based solely on the audit procedures performed in the audit of the financial statements and the other procedures performed in fulfilling our audit plan.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss our report with you and receive your feedback.



Deloitte LLP

Newcastle upon Tyne | 10 September 2021

Appendices



Audit adjustments

Unadjusted misstatements and Disclosures

As noted on slide 3 of this report, our audit work is still ongoing in a number of areas. Based on our work to date, we have not identified any unadjusted misstatements.

	Debit/ (credit) income statement £m	Debit/ (credit) in net assets £m	Debit/ (credit) prior year retained earnings £m	Debit/ (credit) OCI/Equity £m	If applicable, control deficiency identified
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Misstatements identified in current year

Aggregation of misstatements individually < £xm

Total

Disclosure misstatements

The following uncorrected disclosure misstatements have been identified up to the date of this report which we request that you ask management to correct as required by ISAs (UK).

Disclosure	Summary of disclosure requirement	Quantitative or qualitative consideration
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Independence and fees

As part of our obligations under International Standards on Auditing (UK), we are required to report to you on the matters listed below:

Independence confirmation	We confirm the audit engagement team, and others in the firm as appropriate, Deloitte LLP and, where applicable, all Deloitte network firms are independent of the Council and our objectivity is not compromised.
Fees	Details of proposed fees for audit and non-audit services performed for the period have been presented separately on the following page.
Non-audit services	In our opinion there are no inconsistencies between the FRC's Ethical Standard and the company's policy for the supply of non-audit services or any apparent breach of that policy. We continue to review our independence and ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place including, but not limited to, the rotation of senior partners and professional staff and the involvement of additional partners and professional staff to carry out reviews of the work performed and to otherwise advise as necessary.
Relationships	We have no other relationships with the Council, its directors, senior managers and affiliates, and have not supplied any services to other known connected parties.

Independence and fees (continued)

The professional fees expected to be charged by Deloitte for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 are as follows:

	2020/21 Audit £	2019/20 Audit £
Code audit fee – Council*	72,757	72,757
Additional fee – Covid-19**	-	16,208
Additional fee – Objection**	-	10,818
Total audit	72,757	99,783
Teachers Pensions certification fees	TBC	4,000
Total assurance services	TBC	4,000
Total fees	72,757	103,783

* A variation to the fee scale has been proposed due to the changed requirements in relation to the Value for Money work, we estimate the cost to be between £15,000 and £25,000.

** Fees are still in the process of being approved by the PSAA.

Our approach to quality

AQR team report and findings

Executing high quality audits remains our number one priority. We are committed to our critical public interest role and continue to embed our culture of quality and excellence into all of our people. This includes using new technology and tools to continue to transform our audit approach.

In July 2021 the Financial Reporting Council (“FRC”) issued individual reports on each of the seven largest firms, including Deloitte, on Audit Quality Inspections providing a summary of the findings of its Audit Quality Review (“AQR”) team for the 2020/21 cycle of reviews.

We greatly value the FRC reviews of our audit engagements and firm wide quality control systems, a key aspect of evaluating our audit quality.

In that context, overall FRC inspection results, showing an improvement since last year from 76% to 79% of all inspections assessed as good or needing limited improvement, reflect the progress we are making. The overall profile of our ICAEW inspections and our internal inspection programme also show a similar overall improvement since last year.

The results for the inspections of FTSE 350 entities fell short of our overall scores, reflecting specific findings on those particular audits rather than issues pervasive across other audits. Our objective continues to be for all of our audits to be assessed as good or needing limited improvement and we know we still have work to do in order to meet this standard.

We agree with and accept the FRC’s findings on the individual inspections. The FRC has recognised improvements following the actions and programmes for previous years and we welcome the good practice points raised, including in respect of

impairment and revenue where individual findings continue to occur.

Overall, we are pleased that there have been no significant findings over our firm wide processes and controls over the last three inspection cycles in the areas subject to rotational review by the FRC. However, we are continually enhancing our processes and controls across our business and such changes will directly or indirectly affect audit quality.

All the AQR public reports are available on its website.

<https://www.frc.org.uk/auditors/audit-quality-review/audit-firm-specific-reports>

Our approach to quality

AQR team report and findings

The AQR's 2020/21 Audit Quality Inspection Report on Deloitte LLP

“We reviewed 19 individual audits this year and assessed 15 (79%) as requiring no more than limited improvements. Of the 11 FTSE 350 audits we reviewed this year, we assessed eight (73%) as achieving this standard”.

“Our key findings related primarily to the need to:

- Improve the evaluation and challenge of management’s key assumptions of impairment assessments of goodwill and other assets.
- Enhance the consistency of group audit teams’ oversight of component audit teams.
- Strengthen the effectiveness and consistency of the testing of revenue.”

“The firm has taken steps to address the key findings in our 2019/20 public report, with actions that included increasing the extent of consultations, and enhanced learning, coaching and support programmes.

We have identified improvements, for example, in the extent of challenge of management by audit teams in respect of the estimates used for model testing. This was identified as a key finding last year.

We also identified good practice in a number of areas of the audits we reviewed (including robust procedures relating to going concern and evidence to support the challenge of management in areas of key judgement) and in the firm-wide procedures (including establishing a centre of excellence focused on credit for banking audits to encourage the consistent application of the firm’s methodology and guidance).“

The 2019/20 audit of North Yorkshire County Council was selected for AQR review in 2021. See further information on page 27 regarding the findings raised and how these have been addressed as part of the 2020/21 audit.

Our approach to quality

AQR team report and findings

Improve the evaluation and challenge of management's key assumptions of impairment assessments of goodwill and other assets

How we have addressed this area as a firm

To address this finding, we have done, or plan, the following:

- We refreshed our Impairment Centre of Excellence ("COE") to establish clear partner leadership and introduced frequent communication touchpoints to share best practice, hot topics and technical updates.
- We performed a risk focused strategic allocation of impairment specialists for a selection of December 2020 audit engagements, taking into account industry knowledge and experience. Going forward we will seek to involve the EQCR partner to determine whether the allocated specialist should have industry knowledge or whether generalist knowledge would provide an enhanced independent challenge to an industry focused engagement team.
- We will update our impairment guidance notes and consultation document to include specific risk criteria which require further discussion with a panel of specialists, including, but not limited to, where the audit team develop their own model or where cashflow forecasts extend beyond a commonly used period.
- The launch of the Digital Blueprint project management tool will assist teams in prioritising their time across all areas of the audit.
- We will hold workshops with our partners and directors to bring to life the common causes that have led to FRC findings and to ensure greater consistency in expectations in respect of the expected depth of review.
- We have introduced a new coaching program to support the development of primary reviewing skills and to identify any reviewing skills gaps which need addressing.

- To respond to the poor quality and untimely preparation of information by the company for audit, we expect, where appropriate, to increase the communication with management and those charged with governance so that there are clearer expectations in respect of the quality of information prepared for audit.
- We have updated our impairment template memo to reflect the most recent inspection findings we will develop additional training materials on hot topics and areas of regulatory focus, for example, guidance to assist in the challenge of cash flow assumptions and cost reduction initiatives.
- We also developed a new template to support teams in auditing accounting estimates in response to the requirements of ISA (UK) 540 revised 'Auditing Accounting Estimates & Related Disclosures'.

How we addressed this area in our audit

- The 2019/20 audit of North Yorkshire County Council was subject to a review by the FRC. See the following slide for further detail on points raised in the review and how these have been addressed as part of the 2020/21 audit.

Audit Quality Team inspection report

Review of 2019/20 audit file

Summary

Audit quality remains our number one priority and we have a relentless commitment to it. It is our absolute priority and is a key driver of the transformation activities we have undertaken over successive years and in which we continue to significantly invest. We are steadfastly committed to delivering high quality audits that support the capital markets, our wide-ranging stakeholders and our public interest role. We greatly value the Financial Reporting Council (“FRC”) reviews of our audit engagements and firm wide quality control systems, a key aspect of evaluating our audit quality.

The FRC’s Audit Quality Team carried out an inspection of the audit file for the 2019/20 audit of the Council. The draft report on this review was issued on 13 August 2021. The assessment was as follows:

Area	Audit Quality Assessment
Financial Statements Audit	Improvements required
VFM Arrangements Conclusion	Limited improvements required

The key findings related to three areas, and we have set out below the area for improvement and the actions taken as part of the 2020/21 audit to address the points raised by the FRC. We are currently remediating the work on the 2019/20 audit and will report to you if any issues arise from this work.

Other Service Expenditure: The review team noted that the audit team did not establish an expectation for the substantive analytical procedure that was sufficiently reliable and therefore there was insufficient evidence that other service expenditure was free from material misstatement. In the current year audit, we have performed tests of details on the other services expenditure. This has involved testing a sample of other service expenditure transactions and agreeing these to supporting documentation.

Property Valuations: The review team highlighted that the audit team had performed insufficient procedures over assets not revalued in year to conclude that they were free from material misstatement. In particular, the audit team did not assess whether the sample revalued by management was representative. In the current year audit we have undertaken additional work to clearly evidence the Council’s approach and our challenge in relation to the sample selected.

Pensions: The review team noted that the audit team should have better evidenced its assessment of why an emphasis of matter was not required and that the audit team should have challenged management to consider sensitivity disclosures in this area.

Conclusion

We welcome the findings of the review team received in September 2021, and have addressed the recommendations within the audit work undertaken in 2020/21.

Our other responsibilities explained

Fraud responsibilities and representations



Responsibilities:

The primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with management and those charged with governance, including establishing and maintaining internal controls over the reliability of financial reporting, effectiveness and efficiency of operations and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. As auditors, we obtain reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error.

Required representations:

We have asked the Audit Committee to confirm in writing that you have disclosed to us the results of your own assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud and that you are not aware of any fraud or suspected fraud that affects the Council.

We have also asked the Audit Committee to confirm in writing their responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.



Audit work performed:

In our planning we identified the completeness of accrued expenditure and management override of controls as a significant audit risk.

During course of our audit, we have had discussions with management and those charged with governance, and no significant issues were raised that would require a change to our audit plan.

In addition, we have reviewed management's own documented procedures regarding fraud and error in the financial statements.

We have reviewed the paper prepared by management for the Audit Committee on the process for identifying, evaluating and managing the system of internal financial control.

We will explain in our audit report how we considered the audit capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud. In doing so, we will describe the procedures we performed in understanding the legal and regulatory framework and assessing compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

Value for Money deadline extension

Letter to the Audit Committee highlighting Value for Money deadline extension

Dear Audit Committee

The National Audit Office issued guidance to auditors on 16 April 2021 setting out a revised timetable for completion of work on arrangements to secure value for money. This revised timetable reflected the impact of the ongoing pandemic on preparers and auditors of accounts. That guidance, established that the Auditor's Annual Report should be published within three months of the signing of the Audit Opinion. Therefore we have not yet issued our Auditor's Annual Report. Under the 2020 Code of Audit Practice, we are required to provide this letter setting out the reasons for the Auditor's Annual Report not being issued by 30 September 2021.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Wright



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