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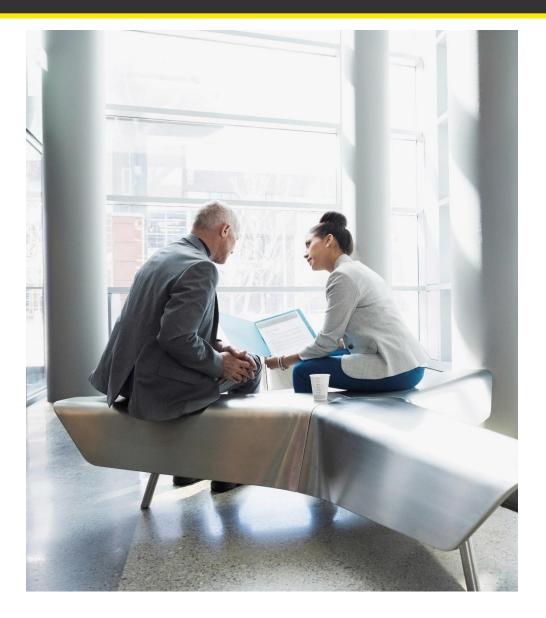
Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) have issued a 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies'. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website (www.psaa.co.uk).

This Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The 'Terms of Appointment (updated April 2018)' issued by PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Annual Audit Letter is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities / Terms and Conditions of Engagement. It is addressed to the Members of the audited body, and is prepared for their sole use. We, as appointed auditor, take no responsibility to any third party.

Our Complaints Procedure – If at any time you would like to discuss with us how our service to you could be improved, or if you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving, you may take the issue up with your usual partner or director contact. If you prefer an alternative route, please contact Hywel Ball, our Managing Partner, 1 More London Place, London SE1 2AF. We undertake to look into any complaint carefully and promptly and to do all we can to explain the position to you. Should you remain dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, you may of course take matters up with our professional institute. We can provide further information on how you may contact our professional institute.





Executive Summary

We are required to issue an annual audit letter to Cherwell District Council (the Council) following completion of our audit procedures for the year ended 31 March 2020. Covid-19 had an impact on a number of aspects of our 2019/20 audit. We set out these key impacts below.

Area of impact	Commentary
Impact on the delivery of the audit	
► Changes to reporting timescales	As a result of Covid-19, new regulations, the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 No. 404, have been published and came into force on 30 April 2020. This announced a change to publication date for final, audited accounts from 31 July to 30 November 2020 for all relevant authorities.
Impact on our risk assessment	
 Valuation of Property Plant and Equipment (PPE) and Investment Properties 	The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the body setting the standards for property valuations, issued guidance to valuers highlighting that the uncertain impact of Covid-19 on markets might cause a valuer to conclude that there is a material uncertainty. Caveats around this material uncertainty have been included in the year-end valuation reports produced by the Council's external valuer. We consider that the material uncertainties disclosed by the valuer gave rise to an additional risk relating to disclosures on the valuation of PPE and investment properties.
► Disclosures on Going Concern	Financial plans for 2020/21 and medium term financial plans need revision for Covid-19. We considered the unpredictability of the current environment gave rise to a risk that the Council would not appropriately disclose the key factors relating to going concern, underpinned by managements assessment with particular reference to Covid-19 and the Council's actual year end financial position and performance.
► Events after the balance sheet date	We identified an increased risk that further events after the balance sheet date concerning the current Covid-19 pandemic will need to be disclosed. The amount of detail required in the disclosure needed to reflect the specific circumstances of the Council.
Impact on the scope of our audit	
► Information Produced by the Entity (IPE)	We identified an increased risk around the completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of information produced by the entity due to the inability of the audit team to verify original documents or re-run reports on-site from the Council's systems. We undertook the following to address this risk:
	 Used the screen sharing function of Microsoft Teams to evidence re-running of reports used to generate the IPE we audited; and
	Agreed IPE to scanned documents or other system screenshots.
► Consultation requirements	Additional EY consultation requirements concerning the impact on auditor reports. The changes to audit risks, audit approach and auditor reporting requirements changed the level of work we needed to perform.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

The tables below set out the results and conclusions on the significant areas of the audit process.

Area of Work	Conclusion
Opinion on the Council's:	
► Financial statements	Unqualified – the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2020 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended.
► Consistency of other information published with the financial statements	Other information published with the financial statements was consistent with the Statement of Accounts.
► Concluding on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness	We concluded that the Council have proper arrangements to secure value for money in its use of resources.

Area of Work	Conclusion
Reports by exception:	
► Consistency of Governance Statement	The Governance Statement was consistent with our understanding of the Council.
► Public interest report	We had no matters to report in the public interest.
 Written recommendations to the Council, which should be copied to the Secretary of State 	We had no matters to report.
► Other actions taken in relation to our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014	We had no matters to report.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

Area of Work	Conclusion
Reporting to the National Audit Office (NAO) on our review of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return (WGA).	We had no matters to report.

As a result of the above we have also:

Area of Work	Conclusion
Issued a report to those charged with governance of the Council communicating significant findings resulting from our audit.	Our Audit Results Report was presented to the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee on 17 March 2021.
Issued a certificate that we have completed the audit in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice.	Our certificate was issued on 23 April 2021.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council's staff for their assistance during the course of our work.

Maria Grindley Associate Partner For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP



Purpose

Ref: EY-000092651-01

The Purpose of this Letter

The purpose of this annual audit letter is to communicate the key issues arising from our work and which we consider should be brought to the attention of the Council to Members and external stakeholders, including members of the public,.

We have already reported the detailed findings from our work in our 2019/20 Audit Results Report to the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee on 17 March 2021, representing those charged with governance. We do not repeat those detailed findings in this letter. The matters reported here are the most significant for the Council.

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Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Appointed Auditor

Our 2019/20 audit work was undertaken in accordance with the Audit Plan that we issued in May 2020 and the subsequent scope updates communicated through the draft Audit Results Report presented to committee on 18 November 2020. Our audit was conducted in accordance with the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK), and other guidance issued by the National Audit Office.

As auditors, we are responsible for:

- Expressing an opinion:
 - ▶ On the 2019/20 financial statements; and
 - ▶ On the consistency of other information published with the financial statements.
- ▶ Forming a conclusion on the arrangements the Council has to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- ► Reporting by exception:
 - If the annual governance statement is misleading or not consistent with our understanding of the Council;
 - ► Any significant matters that are in the public interest;
 - ▶ Any written recommendations to the Council, which should be copied to the Secretary of State; and
 - ▶ If we have discharged our duties and responsibilities as established by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Code of Audit Practice.

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO) on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £500m, so we did not perform any additional audit procedures on the return.

Responsibilities of the Council

Ref: FY-000092651-01

The Council is responsible for preparing and publishing its statement of accounts accompanied by an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). In the AGS, the Council reports publicly each year on how far it complies with its own code of governance, including how it has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in year, and any changes planned in the coming period.

The Council is also responsible for having proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

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Financial Statement Audit

Key Issues

The Council's Statement of Accounts is an important tool for the Council to show how it has used public money and how it can demonstrate its financial management and financial health.

We audited the Council's Statement of Accounts in line with the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK), and other guidance issued by the National Audit Office and issued an unqualified audit report on 23 April 2021.

Our detailed findings were reported to the 17 March 2020 Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee.

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows:

Significant Risk

Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure due to fraud or error

Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.

From our risk assessment, we have assessed that the risk manifest itself solely through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure to improve the financial position of the general fund.

Misstatements that occur in relation to the risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition could affect the income and expenditure accounts, so we focused on the judgement applied to these classifications.

We focused our substantive testing on the risk of incorrectly classifying revenue expenditure as capital additions, this would decrease the net expenditure from the general fund, and increase the value of non-current assets.

Conclusion

We sample tested additions to property, plant and equipment to ensure that they have been correctly classified as capital and included at the correct value in order to identify any revenue items that have been inappropriately capitalised.

We did not identify any issues with management's accounting policies or practices in relation to opting to finance expenditure from capital sources.

Capital expenditure in relation to Investment is not material, so we focused our testing on property, plant and equipment capital additions and also Revenue Expenditure Financed from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS) capital additions.

Our testing of capital additions did not identify any instances where expenditure had been inappropriately capitalised.

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows: (cont'd)

Significant Risk

Valuation of Property, Plant and Equipment ("PPE") and Investment Property ("IP")

In our audit plan, we identified a significant risk around the valuation of Castle Quay. During the year, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we extended the significant risk to consider all PPE and IP.

The value of PPE at £133.6 million and Investment Properties IP at £69.3 million, at 31 March 2020, represent significant balances in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges.

Management is required to make material judgements on inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances in the balance sheet. These judgments cover both assets that are revalued within the year and, the continuing material accuracy of those valued in prior periods.

The Council engaged an external expert valuer who applied a number of complex assumptions to these assets. As the Council's asset base is significant, and the outputs from the valuer are subject to estimation and there is a risk fixed assets may be materially misstated. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

Following Covid-19, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), has issued guidance to valuers highlighting that the uncertain impact of Covid-19 on markets might cause a valuer to conclude that there is a material uncertainty.

Conclusion

We confirmed that the Authority's valuers are members of RICS and registered valuers. We reviewed the instructions provided to the valuer against the requirements of the Code and IFRS and found no issues.

For a sample of assets we assessed whether the valuation basis was appropriate and whether the assumptions used were supportable and reperformed the valuers' calculations.

We challenged the information provided by the valuer as the management's expert.

We considered the impact of assets not revalued in year, and whether this could lead to a material misstatement of the closing asset valuation.

We updated our risk assessment in light of the impact of Covid-19 and the fact that the external valuer had highlighted a 'material uncertainty' in their valuation report. As a result we instructed our internal valuers to support us with our work in this area.

We asked our internal valuers to support us with a review of a range of assets across the portfolio including property, plant and equipment and investment properties.

We considered the impact of assets not revalued in year and the fact that assets valuations occur effective as at 1 April 2019. We challenged officers on the material correctness of valuations at that date and officers are considering possible indexation and the impact that this could have across the portfolio.

The following material amendments were made:

- Town Centre House was initially overvalued by £2.652m
- Car parks were initially overvalued by £3.56m
- Spaceball car park was reclassified from land & buildings to assets under construction

We concluded that the valuation of PPE and IP is materially correct as at 31 March 2020.

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows: (cont'd)

Inherent Risk

Ref: FY-000092651-01

Going Concern Disclosure

This auditing standard has been revised in response to enforcement cases and well-publicised corporate failures where the auditor's report failed to highlight concerns about the prospects of entities which collapsed shortly after.

The revised standard is effective for audits of financial statements for periods commencing on or after 15 December 2019, which for the Council will be the audit of the 2020/21 financial statements. The revised standard increases the work we are required to perform when assessing whether the Council is a going concern. It means UK auditors will follow significantly stronger requirements than those required by current international standards; and we have therefore judged it appropriate to bring this to the attention of the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee.

The CIPFA Guidance Notes for Practitioners 2019/20 accounts states:

'The concept of a going concern assumes that an authority's functions and services will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The provisions in the Code in respect of going concern reporting requirements reflect the economic and statutory environment in which local authorities operate. These provisions confirm that, as authorities cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription, they must prepare their financial statements on a going concern basis of accounting.'

'If an authority were in financial difficulty, the prospects are thus that alternative arrangements might be made by central government either for the continuation of the services it provides or for assistance with the recovery of a deficit over more than one financial year. As a result of this, it would not therefore be appropriate for local authority financial statements to be provided on anything other than a going concern basis.'

Conclusion

We:

- Assessed the adequacy of disclosures required in 2019/20, and the impact on our opinion.
- Obtained management's going concern assessment and review for any evidence of bias and consistency with the accounts;
- Reviewed the financial modelling and forecasts prepared by the Council. We considered key assumptions, stress testing applied to those assumptions and the risk to cashflow up to the date of 12 months after the signing date of the accounts and opinion;
- Ensured that an appropriate going concern disclosure has been made within the financial statements:
- Reviewed the Council's approach to identifying and disclosing events after the balance sheet date; and
- \bullet Considered the impact on our audit report and complied with EY consultation requirements.

Based on the procedures performed we were content that the Council will have a positive cash balance at least 12 months from the date the audit opinion is signed. In addition, we were also content that the assumptions used by management as part of their going concern assessment were prudent and realistic.

However, we identified some improvement points in the going concern and Covid-19 disclosures included in the draft financial statements. Management amended the financial statements to take into account the improvement points noted.

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows: (cont'd)

Other	Λ	~£ ^ .	

Pension Liability Valuation

Ref: FY-000092651-01

The Local Council Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Northamptonshire County Council.

The Council's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet. At 31 March 2020 this totalled £31.155 million.

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the designated actuary.

Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

Conclusion

We have performed the following procedures to address this risk:

- Liaised with the audit team of Oxfordshire Pension Fund, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to the Council.
- Assessed the work of the Pension Fund actuary (Hymans Robertson) including the assumptions they have used, by relying on the work of PwC, the consulting actuaries commissioned by the PSAA for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team.
- Reviewed and tested the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to the pension disclosures.

As highlighted above, the auditor of Oxfordshire Pension Fund provides assurances to the Cherwell District Council audit team on the information that is supplied to the actuary (Hyman Robertson) to allow them to complete their year end pension valuation.

Cherwell District Council

Our application of materiality

When establishing our overall audit strategy, we determined a magnitude of uncorrected misstatements that we judged would be material for the financial statements as a whole.

Item	Thresholds applied
Planning materiality	We determined planning materiality to be £1.6m (2018/19 £1.8m) which is 2% of gross expenditure on provision of services.
	We consider gross expenditure to be one of the principal considerations for stakeholders in assessing the financial performance of the Council.
Reporting threshold	We communicated to the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee that we would report to the Committee all audit differences in excess of £107k (2018/19 £122K).

We also identified the following areas where misstatement at a level lower than our overall materiality level might influence the reader. For these areas we developed an audit strategy specific to these areas. The areas identified and audit strategy applied include:

- ► Remuneration disclosures including any severance payments, exit packages and termination benefits: we agreed all disclosures back to source data and approved amounts.
- ► Related party transactions: we tested the completeness of related party disclosures and the accuracy of all disclosures by checking back to supporting evidence.

We evaluate any uncorrected misstatements against both the quantitative measures of materiality discussed above and in light of other relevant qualitative considerations.

Section 4 Value for Money

Value for Money

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as our value for money conclusion.

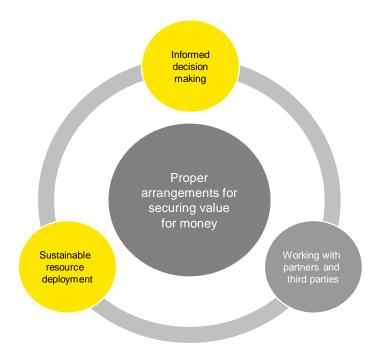
Proper arrangements are defined by statutory guidance issued by the National Audit Office. They comprise your arrangements to:

- ► Take informed decisions;
- ▶ Deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and
- ▶ Work with partners and other third parties.

On 16 April 2020 the National Audit Office published an update to auditor guidance in relation to the 2019/20 Value for Money assessment in the light of Covid-19. This clarified that in undertaking the 2019/20 Value for Money assessment auditors should consider Local Authorities' response to Covid-19 only as far as it relates to the 2019/20 financial year; only where clear evidence comes to the auditor's attention of a significant failure in arrangements as a result of Covid-19 during the financial year, would it be appropriate to recognise a significant risk in relation to the 2019/20 VFM arrangements conclusion.

At the time of planning, we identified no significant risks relevant to our value for money conclusion.

We performed the procedures outlined in our audit plan. We did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people,





Other Reporting Issues

Whole of Government Accounts

We are required to perform the procedures specified by the National Audit Office on the accuracy of the consolidation pack prepared by the Council for Whole of Government Accounts purposes.

The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £500m, so we were not required to perform any additional audit procedures on the consolidation pack.

Annual Governance Statement

We are required to consider the completeness of disclosures in the Council's annual governance statement, identify any inconsistencies with the other information of which we are aware from our work, and consider whether it is misleading.

We completed this work and did not identify any areas of concern.

Report in the Public Interest

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether, in the public interest, to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit in order for it to be considered by the Council or brought to the attention of the public.

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

Written Recommendations

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to designate any audit recommendation as one that requires the Council to consider it at a public meeting and to decide what action to take in response.

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a written recommendation.

Other Reporting Issues (cont'd)

Objections Received

We did not receive any objections to the 2019/20 financial statements from members of the public.

Other Powers and Duties

We identified no issues during our audit that required us to use our additional powers under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Independence

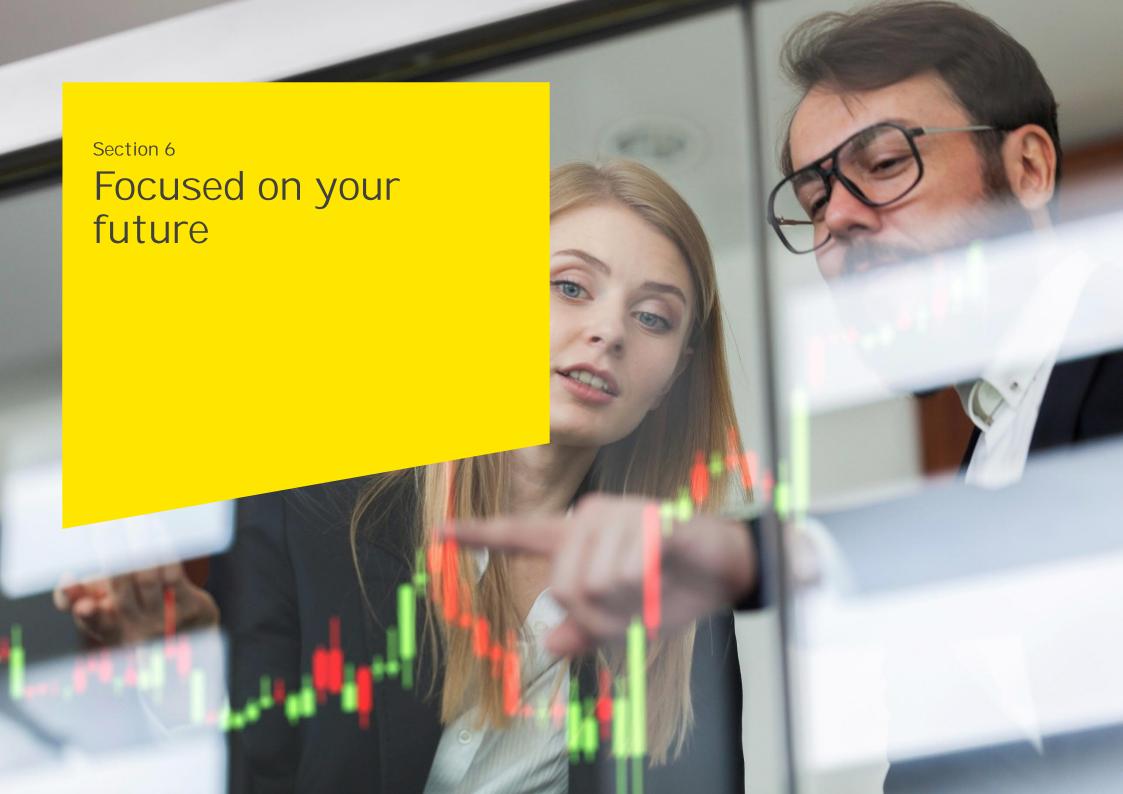
We communicated our assessment of independence in our Audit Results Report to the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee on 30 March 2021. In our professional judgement the firm is independent and the objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff has not been compromised within the meaning regulatory and professional requirements.

Control Themes and Observations

As part of our work, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control identified during our audit.

We have adopted a fully substantive audit approach and have therefore not tested the operation of controls.

Our audit did not identify any controls issues to bring to the attention of the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee.



Focused on your future

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom introduces the application of new accounting standards in future years. The impact on the Council is summarised in the table below.

Standard	Issue	Impact
IFRS 16 Leases	It was proposed that IFRS 16 (Leases) would be applicable for local authority accounts from the 2021/22 financial year, deferred a year due to the impact of Covid-19.	There are transitional arrangements within the standard and It is assumed this will be reflected in the 2021/22 Accounting Code of Practice for Local Authorities when published.
	However in response to the ongoing pandemic and its pressures on council finance teams, CIPFA announced that the implementation will be deferred until the 2022-23 financial year. CIPFA has indicated that the deferral is limited to one year only and that there is no intention to grant any further extensions	CIPFA have issued some limited provisional information which begins to clarify what the impact on local authority accounting will be. Whether any accounting statutory overrides will be introduced to mitigate any impact remains an outstanding issue.
	based on a lack of preparedness. Whilst the definition of a lease remains similar to the current leasing standard; IAS 17, for local authorities who lease a large number of assets the new standard will have a significant impact, with nearly all current leases being included on the balance sheet.	However, what is clear is that the Council will need to undertake a detailed exercise to identify all of its leases and capture the relevant information for them. The Council must therefore ensure that all lease arrangements are fully documented.

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Audit Fees

Our base fee for 2019/20 is in line with the scale fee set by PSAA / as agreed in our Engagement Letter and reported in our 24 March 2021 Audit Results Report.

	Final Fee 2019/20	Scale Fee 2019/20	Final Fee 2018/19
Description	£	£	£
Total Audit Fee - Code work (NB scale fee = planned fee for 2019/20)	40,138	40,138	40,138
Changes in work required to address professional and regulatory requirements and scope associated with risk (Note 1 on following page)	43,423		
Revised Proposed Scale Fee	83,561		
Area of group focus: group considerations	12,022		15,723
Additional specific one-off work required for Covid-19 considerations (see Note 2 on following page)	19,341		
Additional work required for significant risk on PPE valuation (see Note 3 on following page)	11,713		7,257
Costs incurred for slippage, prior year adjustments, quality and rescheduling issues	10,227		10,997
Cost of rescheduling the audit	4,684		
Total Audit Fee	141,548		74,115
Non Audit Services – Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim Certification (See Note 4 on following page)	29,070		21,500

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Audit Fees

Note 1

For 2019/20 the scale fee has been re-assessed to take into account a number of risk factors as outlined below:

- Procedures performed to address the risk profile of the Council £20,637
- Additional work to address increase in Regulatory standards £19,722
- Client readiness and IT support for Data Analytics £3,064

This additional fee has not been agreed but has been highlighted to management and is subject to review and approval by PSAA Ltd.

Note 2

We have quantified the additional work we have undertaken during 2019/20 as a result of Covid19, outlined below:

- Additional going concern considerations, including consultation processes £8,953
- Reassessment of materiality and risks £6,065
- Additional costs due to remote working £2,599
- VFM conclusion £1,724

This additional fee has not been agreed but has been highlighted to management and is subject to review and approval by PSAA Ltd..

Note 3

We have quantified the additional work undertaken for the significant risk on PPE valuation. This additional fee has not been agreed but has been highlighted to management and is subject to review and approval by PSAA Ltd..

Note 4

The fee for HB Subsidy is dependent on the extent of additional 40 plus testing workbooks required. Our fee includes a base fee of £4,590 plus fees varying from £1,020 to £3,060 for each 40 plus workbook required, depending on complexity. There were 9 sets of 40+ testing, totalling £24,480. The total fee is therefore £29,070.

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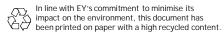
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