



Audit Committee Progress and Update Report for Rossendale Borough Council Year ended 31 March 2016 15 June 2016

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Introduction

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

Members of the Audit and Accounts Committee can find further useful material on our website www.grant-thornton.co.uk, where we have a section dedicated to our work in the public sector. Here you can download copies of our publications including:

- Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company;
<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company/>
- Knowing the Ropes – Audit Committee; Effectiveness Review;
www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/knowing-the-ropes-audit-committee-effectiveness-review-2015/
- Making devolution work: A practical guide for local leaders (October 2015);
www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/making-devolution-work/

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

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Progress on the 2014/15 Accounts

2014/15 work	Completed	Comments
<p>2014/15 Accounts audit and Value for Money Conclusion</p> <p>We have not yet issued an opinion on the 2014/15 accounts due to the issues arising in respect of the Council's Empty Homes Programme and associated HCA grant.</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>Much of the work on the Council's 2014-15 accounts is complete. However, we have yet to finalise our work in respect of the transactions relating to the Council's Empty Homes Programme and associated HCA grant.</p> <p>We are awaiting the conclusion of the HCA's work on the scheme which is currently in progress. Once the HCA have concluded and reported on their work, we will be able to complete the outstanding work.</p> <p>We have discussed the expected accounting entries with management and we will audit the revised 2014/15 accounting entries in July 2016.</p>

Progress at 15 June 2016

Progress against plan	Opinion and VfM conclusion	Outputs delivered
On Track	Plan to give by deadline of 30 September 2016	Fee letter, Audit Plan, Progress Reports, delivered to plan

2015/16 work	Completed	Comments
<p>Fee Letter</p> <p>We issued the 'planned fee letter for 2015/16' in April 2015.</p>	April 2015	We have also recently issued the fee letter for 2016/17, with no change to the fee proposed. This is reported to this meeting of the Audit Committee.
<p>Accounts Audit Plan</p> <p>We are required to issue a detailed accounts audit plan to the Council setting out our proposed approach in order to give an opinion on the Council's 2015-16 financial statements.</p> <p>We also inform you of any subsequent changes to our audit approach.</p>	March 2016	The plan was presented to the audit committee meeting on 15 March 2016.
<p>Interim accounts audit</p> <p>Our interim fieldwork visit includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating our review of the Council's control environment • updating our understanding of financial systems • review of Internal Audit reports on core financial systems • early work on emerging accounting issues • early substantive testing 	March 2016	An update on work completed is included in the accounts audit plan. There were no issues arising from our work that we need to bring to the attention of 'those charged with governance' (the Audit Committee).

Progress at 15 June 2016

2015/16 work	Completed	Comments
<p>Final accounts audit Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of the 2015-16 financial statements • Proposed opinion on the Council's accounts 	<p><i>Planned for July-August</i></p>	<p>The findings from our final accounts work will be reported to the Audit Committee on 27 September 2016.</p>
<p>Value for Money (VfM) conclusion The scope of our work has changed and is set out in the final guidance issued by the National Audit Office in November 2015. The Code requires auditors to satisfy themselves that, "the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources".</p> <p>The guidance confirmed the overall criterion as; "in all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people".</p> <p>The three sub criteria for assessment to be able to give a conclusion overall are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informed decision making • sustainable resource deployment • working with partners and other third parties 	<p><i>Field work in March – August, formal conclusion reported by 30 September 2016</i></p>	<p>We have set out the result of our risk assessment and the proposed focus of our work in the audit plan.</p> <p>The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings Report.</p> <p>We will include our conclusion as part of our report on your financial statements which we will give by 30 September 2016.</p>
<p>Other activities We provide a range of workshops, along with network events for members and management and publications to support to Council.</p>	<p>February 2016</p>	<p>We have provided a local workshop covering changes to accounting standards and the Code of Practice, and emerging issues and future developments, to support officers involved in the preparation of the Financial Statements.</p> <p>Further details of the publications that may be of interest to the Council are set out from page 8.</p>

Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company

Local government is evolving as it looks for ways to protect front-line services. These changes are picking up pace as more Councils introduce alternative delivery models to generate additional income and savings.

‘Better together’ is the next report in our series looking at alternative delivery models and focuses on the key areas to consider when deciding to set up a joint venture (JV), setting it up and making it successful.

JVs have been in use for many years in local government and remain a common means of delivering services differently. This report draws on our research across a range of JVs to provide inspiring ideas from those that have been a success and the lessons learnt from those that have encountered challenges.

Key findings from the report:

- JVs continue to be a viable option – Where they have been successful they have supported Councils to improve service delivery, reduce costs, bring investment and expertise and generate income
- There is reason to be cautious – Our research found a number of JVs between public and private bodies had mixed success in achieving outcomes for Councils
- There is a new breed of JVs between public sector bodies – These JVs can be more successful at working and staying together. There are an increasing number being set up between Councils and wholly-owned commercial subsidiaries that can provide both the commercialism required and the understanding of the public sector culture.

Our report, Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company, can be downloaded from our website:
<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company/>

Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally

CIPFA publication

Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally is a strategy for English local authorities that is the result of collaboration by local authorities and key stakeholders from across the counter fraud landscape.

This strategy is the result of an intensive period of research, surveys, face-to-face meetings and workshops. Local authorities have spoken openly about risks, barriers and what they feel is required to help them improve and continue the fight against fraud and to tackle corruption locally.

Local authorities face a significant fraud challenge. Fraud costs local authorities an estimated £2.1bn a year. In addition to the scale of losses, there are further challenges arising from changes in the wider public sector landscape including budget reductions, service remodelling and integration, and government policy changes. Local authorities will need to work with new agencies in a new national counter fraud landscape.

The strategy:

- calls upon local authorities to continue to tackle fraud with the dedication they have shown so far and to step up the fight against fraud in a challenging and rapidly changing environment
- illustrates the financial benefits that can accrue from fighting fraud more effectively
- calls upon central government to promote counter fraud activity in local authorities by ensuring the right further financial incentives are in place and helping them break down barriers to improvement
- updates and builds upon Fighting Fraud Locally 2011 in the light of developments such as The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy and the first UK Anti-Corruption Plan
- sets out a new strategic approach that is designed to feed into other areas of counter fraud and corruption work and support and strengthen the ability of the wider public sector to protect itself from the harm that fraud can cause.

The strategy can be downloaded from

<http://www.cipfa.org/services/counter-fraud-centre/fighting-fraud-and-corruption-locally>



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