

External audit plan - addendum

Year ending 31 March 2022

South Ribble Borough Council
27 September 2022



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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit planning process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or all weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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Introduction and headlines

Purpose

This document provides an addendum to our Audit Plan issued in May 2022 and gives an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of South Ribble Borough Council ('the Council') for those charged with governance.

Respective responsibilities

The National Audit Office ('the NAO') has issued a document entitled Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'). This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is expected from the audited body. Our respective responsibilities are also set out in the *agreed in the Terms of Appointment and Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), the body responsible for appointing us as auditor of the Council.* We draw your attention to both of these documents.

Scope of our audit

The scope of our audit is set in accordance with the Code and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK). We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the Council's financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance (the Governance committee); and we consider whether there are sufficient arrangements in place at the Council for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources. Value for money relates to ensuring that resources are used efficiently to maximise the outcomes that can be achieved.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or the Governance Committee of your responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our audit approach is based on a thorough understanding of the Council's business and is risk based.

Significant risks

Those risks requiring special audit consideration and procedures to address the likelihood of a material financial statement error have been identified as:

- Management override of controls
- Valuation of land and buildings
- Valuation of net pension fund liability

We will communicate significant findings on these areas as well as any other significant matters arising from the audit to you in our Audit Findings (ISA 260) Report.

Group Audit

The Council established a wholly-owned subsidiary, South Ribble Leisure Ltd in May 2021 and this will require consolidated accounts to be produced to report the group transactions and balances. The draft Statement of Accounts published 4 August 2022 do not include consolidated financial statements and we have requested management produce an updated version for audit.

Materiality

We have determined planning materiality to be £0.780m (PY £0.788m) for the Council, which equates to 1.9% of your prior year gross expenditure for the year. As part of our risk assessment, we have considered the impact of unadjusted prior period errors. We do not consider a reduction in performance materiality is required for 2021-22. We are obliged to report uncorrected omissions or misstatements other than those which are 'clearly trivial' to those charged with governance. Clearly trivial has been set at £0.039m (PY £0.039m).

Value for Money arrangements

Our risk assessment regarding your arrangements to secure value for money have identified the following risks of significant weakness:

- Deficiencies in the control environment

Audit logistics

Our audit of the final accounts will take place in July and August 2022. Our key deliverables are this Audit Plan, our Audit Findings Report and Auditor's Annual Report. Our audit approach is detailed in Appendix A.

Our fee for the audit will be £65,296 (PY: £105,791) for the Council, subject to the Council delivering a good set of financial statements and working papers.

We have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard (revised 2019) and we as a firm, and each covered person, confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements..

Group audit scope and risk assessment

In accordance with ISA (UK) 600, as group auditor we are required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the components and the consolidation process to express an opinion on whether the group financial statements are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.

The Council will need to complete an assessment of the group boundary for preparing consolidated financial statements however, we expect to perform audit procedures on the material transactions and balances within the subsidiary company.

Component	Individually Significant?	Level of response required under ISA (UK) 600	Risks identified	Planned audit approach
South Ribble Borough Council	Yes		Management override of controls Valuation of land and buildings Valuation of net pension fund liability	Full scope audit performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP
South Ribble Leisure Ltd	No		Management override of controls Valuation of net pension fund liability	Specific scope procedures on leisure income and expenditure to be performed by the audit team.

Audit scope

- Audit of the financial information of the component using component materiality
- Audit of one more classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures relating to significant risks of material misstatement of the group financial statements
- Review of component's financial information
- Specified audit procedures relating to significant risks of material misstatement of the group financial statements
- Analytical procedures at group level

Significant risks identified

Significant risks are defined by ISAs (UK) as risks that, in the judgement of the auditor, require special audit consideration. In identifying risks, audit teams consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood. Significant risks are those risks that have a higher risk of material misstatement.

Risk	Risk relates to	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions – rebutted	Group accounts and Council	<p>Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a rebuttable presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue. This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p> <p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at the Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including South Ribble Borough Council mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable 	As we do not consider this to be a significant risk for the Council we will not be undertaking any specific work in this area other than our normal audit procedures.
Management over-ride of controls	Group accounts and Council	<p>Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities. .</p> <p>We therefore identified management override of control, in particular journals, management estimates and transactions outside the course of business as a significant risk, which is one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.</p> <p>We note that there are previous examples, as highlighted by Internal Audit, where management may have over-ridden controls relating to procurement and the appointment of officers.</p> <p>We have also previously identified weak controls around authorisation of journal postings.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the design effectiveness of management controls over journals • analyse the journals listing and determine the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals • test unusual journals recorded during the year and after the draft accounts stage for appropriateness and corroboration • gain an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied made by management and consider their reasonableness with regard to corroborative evidence • evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions

Significant risks identified - continued

Risk	Risk relates to	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Valuation of the pension fund net liability	Group accounts and Council	<p>The Council's pension fund net liability, as reflected in its balance sheet as the net defined benefit liability, represents a significant estimate in the financial statements</p> <p>The pension fund net liability of £39,960m (2020-21) is considered a significant estimate due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions.</p> <p>We therefore identified valuation of the Council's pension fund net liability as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update our understanding of the processes and controls put in place by management to ensure that the Council's pension fund net liability is not materially misstated and evaluate the design of the associated controls; • evaluate the instructions issued by management to their management expert (an actuary) for this estimate and the scope of the actuary's work; • assess the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the Council's pension fund valuation; • assess the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Council to the actuary to estimate the liability; • test the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in the notes to the core financial statements with the actuarial report from the actuary; • undertake procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made by reviewing the report of the consulting actuary (as auditor's expert) and performing any additional procedures suggested within the report; and • obtain assurances from the auditor of Lancashire Pension Fund as to the controls surrounding the validity and accuracy of membership data; contributions data and benefits data sent to the actuary by the pension fund and the fund assets valuation in the pension fund financial statements.

Significant risks identified - continued

Risk	Risk relates to	Reason for risk identification	Key aspects of our proposed response to the risk
Valuation of land and buildings	Council only	<p>The Council revalues its land and buildings on a rolling five-yearly basis. This valuation of £28.383m (2020-21) represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of this estimate to changes in key assumptions.</p> <p>Additionally, management will need to ensure the carrying value in the Council financial statements is not materially different from the current value at the financial statements date, where a rolling programme is used.</p> <p>Investment Properties: All investment properties should be valued and reported at fair value under relevant accounting principles. Again, this valuation of £10.144m (2020-21) represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved compared to Council's materiality and the sensitivity of this estimate to changes in key assumptions.</p> <p>We therefore identified valuation of land and buildings, including investment properties, as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate, the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work • evaluate the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert • discuss with the valuer the basis on which the valuation was carried out • challenge the information and assumptions used by the valuer to assess completeness and consistency with our understanding • test revaluations made during the year to see if they had been input correctly into the Council's asset register • evaluating the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not materially different to current value at year end. • Review progress with the recommendations reported in the prior year Audit Findings Report



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