

Bracknell Forest Council

Governance and Audit Committee Progress Report

January 2016



Governance and Audit Committee
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Easthampstead House
Town Square
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG12 1AQ

15 January 2016

Audit Progress Report

We are pleased to attach our Audit Progress Report.

It sets out the work we have completed since our last report to the Committee. Its purpose is to provide the Committee with an overview of the progress that we have made with the work that we need to complete during the 2015/16 audit. This report is a key mechanism in ensuring that our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

Our audit is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you as well as understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully



Helen Thompson
Director
For and behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

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In April 2015 Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued ‘Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies 2015-16’. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website (www.psaa.co.uk)

The 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 from 1 April 2015’ 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 progress update is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities. It is addressed to the Governance and Audit Committee, and is prepared for the sole use of the audited body. 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 Steve Varley, 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..

2014/15 audit

Annual Audit Letter

The Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice requires auditors to prepare an annual audit letter and issue it to each audited body.

The purpose of preparing and issuing annual audit letters is to communicate to the audited body and key external stakeholders, including members of the public, the key issues arising from auditors' work, which auditors consider should be brought to the attention of the audited body.

Our annual audit letter for 2014/15 is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and is included in today's agenda.

Certification and grants report

Our Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2014/15 summarises the results of our work on Bracknell Forest Council's 2014-15 claims. This report is included on today's agenda.

2015/16 audit

Fee letter

We issued our 2015/16 fee letter to the Council in April 2015.

Audit team changes

At the last Governance and Audit Committee meeting we announced that 2014/15 was the last year of appointment for Helen Thompson, the engagement director for the audit. We have subsequently reconsidered the portfolio changes, and Helen will continue as the engagement director during 2015/16. This will complete the standard five year rotation period, rather than changing a year early.

We have also made a change at audit manager level with Malcolm Haines taking over responsibility from Rachel Brittain.

Financial Statements

We adopt a risk based approach to the audit and, as part of our ongoing continuous planning, we continue to meet key officers regularly to ensure the 2015/16 audit runs as smoothly as possible and identify any risks at the earliest opportunity.

Planning and interim visit

Our work to identify the Council's material income and expenditure systems and to walk through these systems commenced in January 2016. This planning visit will be followed by an interim audit in February 2015 when will plan our substantive testing strategy and, where possible, commence early testing in areas such as journals and housing benefits.

There are no matters arising from our initial planning meetings that we need to bring to your attention at this stage. We will update the Committee when the planning and early substantive testing has been completed.

Internal Audit

Internal Audit is a key part of the Council's internal control environment that we review during our assessment process. This process helps us to assess the level of risk of material errors occurring in the financial statements and informs the level of testing that we are required to complete in support of the audit opinion. We consider Internal Audit's progress with their annual audit plan and the results of their testing of financial systems and, where it is appropriate to do so, we will undertake procedures to enable us to place reliance upon this testing.

Post statements visit

We have agreed dates for our audit visit, which is planned to commence on Monday 4 July 2016, and we will have early discussions on the working papers required in support of the audit.

Our detailed audit plan, setting out the risks we have identified and the work we will undertake in response, will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 30 March 2016.

We will continue to use our computer-based analytics tools to enable us to capture whole populations of your financial data, in particular payroll and journal entries.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office, to the extent and in the form required by them, on your whole of government accounts return.

Local appointment of auditors

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has announced that it has decided not to extend the existing arrangements for external audit contracts beyond the end of 2017/18. From 2018/19 onwards, local authorities will be responsible for appointing their own auditors, and directly managing the resulting contract and the relationship.

Although the new approach to local audit does not come into play until 2018/19, bodies will need to start putting in place the mechanism required to deliver this. As part of the process, bodies will need to set up auditor panels to advise on the selection, appointment and removal of external auditors, and on maintaining an independent relationship with them. These will need to be in place by early 2017, with the procurement process taking place in spring 2017 and external auditors being appointed by December 2017.

Existing external audit arrangements will remain unchanged for the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 years.

Value for money

The NAO consulted on a draft Auditor Guidance Note (AGN) in respect of auditors' work on value for money (VFM) arrangements. The guidance has now been issued and sets out the proposed overall approach to work on VFM arrangements which apply to audits from 2015/16 onwards.

A copy of the final AGN, and the supporting information for local government bodies, can be viewed on the NAO website: <http://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>.

We are required to reach our statutory conclusion on arrangements to secure value for money based on the overall evaluation criterion, supported by sub-criteria as set out below.

The overall criterion for 2015/16 is:

- ▶ In all significant respects, you had proper arrangements to ensure you took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

"The overall criterion is supported by three sub-criteria, designed to help us structure our risk assessment". There is no requirement for us to conclude or report against the following sub-criteria:

- ▶ informed decision making;
- ▶ sustainable resource deployment; and
- ▶ working with partners and other third parties.

We will carry out our initial risk assessment in early 2016 and report the risks we have identified, and associated work we will carry out, to the Governance and Audit Committee in June 2016.

Other issues of interest

In addition to our formal reporting and deliverables we provide practical business insights and updates on regulatory matters through our Sector Briefings.

Timetable

We set out below a timetable showing the key stages of the audit, including the value for money work, and the deliverables we will provide to you through the 2015/16 Governance and Audit Committee cycle.

Audit phase	EY Timetable	Deliverable	Reported	Status
High level planning	Ongoing	Audit Fee Letter	April 2015	The fee letter for 2015/16 was reported to the Committee in April 2015
Risk assessment and setting of scope of audit	January 2016	Audit Plan	March 2016	In progress
Testing of routine processes and controls	January/February 2016	Audit Plan	March 2016	In progress
Year-end audit	July/August 2016	Audit results report to those charged with governance in September 2016. Audit report (including our opinion on the financial statements and a conclusion on your arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources) Whole of Government Accounts Submission to NAO based on their group audit instructions Audit Completion certificate	May 2016	Work is planned to start during July 2016. Governance and Audit Committee date to be confirmed.

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