

Report of the Treasurer

External Audit Plan (2023/24 Accounts)

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the Audit Plan from the Authority's External Auditor, Bishop Fleming, which sets out the work to be undertaken in 2024/25 in respect of the 2023/24 Audit.
-

Recommendation

The Treasurer recommends that the External Audit Plan 2024/25 (2023/24 Accounts (including proposed Audit Fee) be noted.

Introduction & Background

2. The External Auditor is required to inform the Authority of the work that will be undertaken during an annual audit and that this is submitted in the form of an Audit Plan.
3. The Audit Plan is based on the Bishop Fleming's risk-based approach to audit planning.
4. Bishop Fleming comply with the statutory requirements that govern their work in particular:
 - The National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice
 - International Standards on Auditing (ISA) (UK)
 - Financial Reporting Council (FRC)

Key Milestones and Deadlines

5. The Authority is required to prepare the accounting statements for 2023/24 by 31 July 2024, and is required to publish the accounts along with the Auditor's Opinion, by 30 November 2024.
6. The proposed timetable and planned outputs (including the approach to Value for Money (VFM)) are contained within the report which will be presented by Bishop Fleming.
7. Members will be aware of delays to the audit of the 2021/22 accounts, which have led to delays to the production of the 2022/23 Statements, and consequentially the delayed audit of those Accounts. Officers are working with Grant Thornton (as auditors of the 2022/23 accounts) and Bishop Fleming (as auditors for the 2023/24 accounts) to minimise the impact on production and audit of the 2023/24 Statements.

8. Members may also be aware that government has recently consulted on how to deal with the major backlog in local government audits generally and arrangements with this Authority's Accounts will be compliant with any revised Regulations that emerge.

Audit Fee

9. As approved by this Committee, the Authority re-let the Audit contract via the LGA Local Public Sector Audit Appointments (LPSAA) arrangements as part of the nationally managed contract. This was done through a tendering arrangement that sort to ensure the issues that the sector has experienced over the last three years are not repeated. As a consequence, there has been a significant increase in audit fees across the sector and these costs are reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Conclusion

10. The Audit Plan sets out the work that will be undertaken during the audit of the 2023/24 Accounts. The Plan is based on Bishop Fleming's risk-based approach to audit planning. However, the audit does not relieve the management or the Audit and Standards Committee, as those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	None
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	None
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None

Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	N/A

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – External Audit Plan