

The Audit Plan

Buckinghamshire County Council Pension Fund

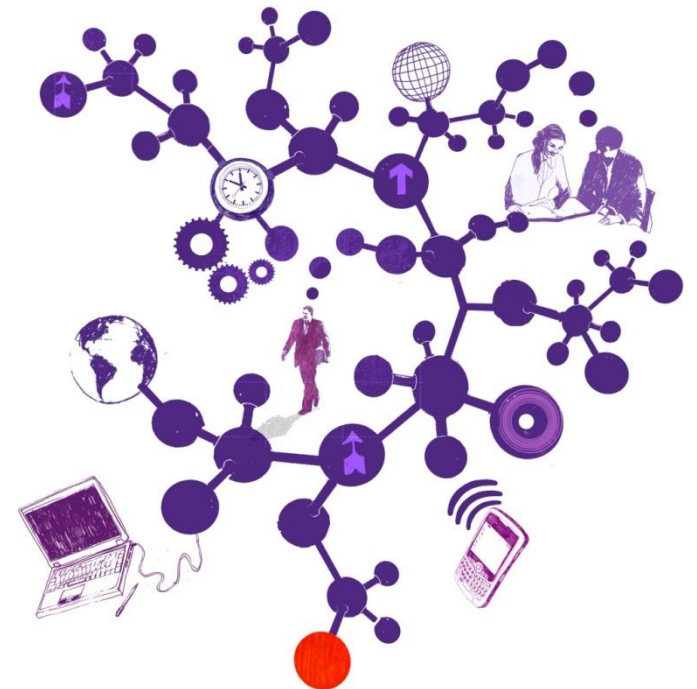
Year ended 31 March 2016

April 2016

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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 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 Pension Fund or any 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.

Buckinghamshire County Council Pension Fund
County Hall
Walton Street
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February 2016

Dear Members of the Regulatory and Audit Committee

Audit Plan for Buckinghamshire County Council Pension Fund for the year ending 31 March 2016

This Audit Plan sets out for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Buckinghamshire County Council Pension Fund, the Regulatory and Audit Committee), an overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260. This document is to help you understand the consequences of our work, discuss issues of risk and the concept of materiality with us, and identify any areas where you may request us to undertake additional procedures. It also helps us gain a better understanding of the Pension Fund and your environment. The contents of the Audit Plan have been discussed with management.

We are required to perform our audit in line with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2015.

Our responsibilities under the Code are to:

- give an opinion on the Fund's financial statements
- give an opinion on the Pension Fund Annual Report.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

Yours sincerely

Emily Hill

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Understanding your business

In planning our audit we need to understand the challenges and opportunities the Buckinghamshire County Pension Fund (the Fund) is facing. We set out a summary of our understanding below.

Challenges/opportunities

1. Pooling of Investments

- As part of the summer budget 2015 the government has invited LGPS administering authorities to submit proposals for investing their assets through pools of at least £25 billion, with the intention of reducing investment management costs and potentially improving returns.
- The government anticipates that this will improve both capacity and capability to invest in large scale infrastructure projects.
- Initial proposals have been submitted to DCLG by mid February, with final plans agreed by 15 July 2016.

2. Changes to the investment regulations

- In November 2015 DCLG published draft proposals in relation to the investment regulations governing LGPS funds.
- The proposals seek to remove some of the existing prescribed means of securing a diversified investment strategy and instead give funds greater responsibility to determine the balance of their investments and take account of risk.

3. Governance arrangements

- Local pension boards have been in place since April 2015, and were introduced to assist with compliance and effective governance and administration of the scheme.
- There remains a continued focus on the affordability, cost and management of the scheme, and as such it remains critical that appropriate governance arrangements are in place for the Fund.

4. Funding deficit pressure

- In December 2015, a report from the Centre for Policy Studies concluded that the Local Government is unsustainable in its current form.
- The LGPS collectively had a £47bn deficit as at the 31 March 2013 triennial valuation and is expected to increase following the new revaluation for 2016.
- Your Fund had an actuarial deficit of £1.6bn as at the most recent actuarial valuation.

5. Earlier closedown of accounts

- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require fund's to bring forward the approval of draft accounts and the audit of financial statements to the 31 May and 31 July respectively by the 2017/18 financial year.
- For 2015/16 you have moved the date for approval of the final version of the accounts by the Regulatory and Audit Committee forward from September to 28 July.



Our response

- We will continue to discuss with officers their plans for asset pooling and the implications that this will have on both the investment policy and governance arrangements of the Fund.
- We are able to provide support and challenge to your plans based on our knowledge of LGPS pooling plans in other regions.

- We will discuss with officers their plans to respond to these changes and consider the impact on the Fund's investment strategy and its risk management approach to investments.

- We will continue our on-going dialogue with officers around their governance arrangements, particularly in light of their proposals for pooling investments.
- We will continue to share emerging good practice with officers.

- We will discuss with you the implication of initiatives by DCLG to manage the increasing deficit position.

- We will work with you to identify areas of your accounts production where you can learn from good practice in others.
- We aim to complete all substantive work in our audit of your financial statements by 31 July 2016.
- We will present our Audit Findings Report to the 28 July meeting of the Regulatory and Audit Committee.

Developments and other requirements relevant to your audit

In planning our audit we also consider the impact of key developments in the sector and take account of national audit requirements as set out in the Code of Audit Practice and associated guidance.

Developments and other requirements

1. Financial Pressures

- Pension funds are increasingly disinvesting from investment assets to fund cash flow demands on benefit and leaver payments that are not covered by contributions and investment income.
- Pension fund investment strategies need to be able to respond to these demands as well as the changing nature of the investment markets.



2. Financial Reporting

- There are no significant changes to the Pension Fund financial reporting framework as set out in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting (the Code) for the year ending 31 March 2016, however the Pension Fund needs to ensure on going compliance with the Code.



3. LGPS 2014

- Funds have implemented the requirements of LGPS 2014 and moved to a career average scheme.
- This will continue to increase the complexity of the benefit calculations and the arrangements needed to ensure the correct payment of contributions.
- In addition, this places greater emphasis on the employer providing detailed information to the scheme administrator, while also requiring the scheme to have enhanced information systems in place to maintain and report on this data.



4. Accounting for Fund management costs

- There continues to be a spotlight on the costs of managing the LGPS, and in particular investment management costs.
- Last year CIPFA produced guidance aimed at improving the transparency of management cost data and suggested that funds should include in the notes to the accounts a breakdown of management costs across the areas of investment management expenses, administration expenses and oversight and governance costs.
- This guidance is currently being updated.



Our response

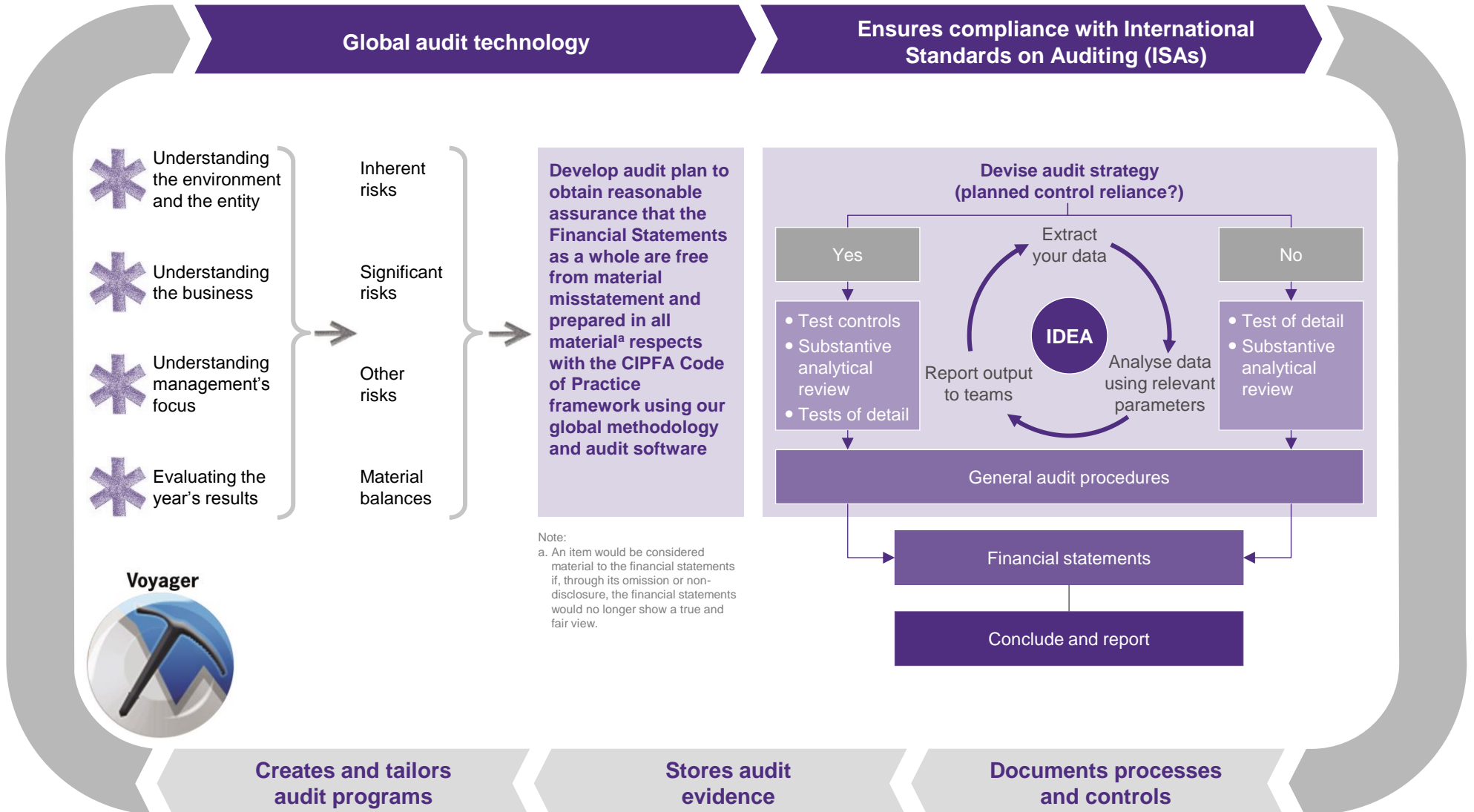
- We will monitor any changes to the Fund investment strategy through our regular meetings with management.
- We will consider the impact of changes on the nature of investments held by the Fund and adjust our testing strategy as appropriate.

- We will ensure that the Pension Fund financial statements comply with the requirements of the Code through our substantive testing.

- We will continue to review the arrangements that the Fund has in place for the quality of its' membership data.

- We will continue to discuss with officers their plans for increasing the level of transparency associated with the costs of managing the fund.

Our audit approach



Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit.

The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As is usual in public sector entities, we have determined materiality for the statements as a whole as a proportion of the gross revenue expenditure of the Council. For purposes of planning the audit we have determined overall materiality to be £22,058k (being 1% of net assets as per the 2014/15 net assets statement). We will consider whether this level is appropriate during the course of the audit and will advise you if we revise this.

Under ISA 450, auditors also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulation of such amounts would have a material effect on the financial statements. "Trivial" matters are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any criteria of size, nature or circumstances. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £1,102k.

ISA 320 also requires auditors to determine separate, lower, materiality levels where there are 'particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures for which misstatements of lesser amounts than materiality for the financial statements as a whole could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users'. We have identified no such items that warrant a lower materiality level to be set.

Significant risks identified

'Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty' (ISA 315).

In this section we outline the significant risks of material misstatement which we have identified. The first two risks are presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA(UK&I)). Further details are set out below:

Significant risk	Description	Substantive audit procedures
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions	<p>Under ISA(UK&I)240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>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 ISA(UK&I)240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Buckinghamshire County Pension Fund, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition relating to contribution and investment income 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 Buckinghamshire County Council Pension Fund who act as the administrators of the Fund, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.
Management over-ride of controls	<p>Under ISA(UK&I)240 the presumption that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessment of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management • Testing of journal entries • Review of unusual significant transactions.
Level 3 Investments – Valuation is incorrect	<p>Under ISA(UK&I)315 significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters.</p> <p>Level 3 investments by their very nature require a significant degree of judgement to reach an appropriate valuation at year end.</p>	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkthrough of expected controls on investments <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a sample of private equity investments, test valuations by obtaining and reviewing audited accounts at latest date for individual investments and agreeing these to the fund manager reports at that date. Reconciliation of those values to the values at 31st March with reference to known movements in the intervening period. • To review the nature and basis of estimated values.

Other risks identified

The auditor should evaluate the design and determine the implementation of the entity's controls, including relevant control activities, over those risks for which, in the auditor's judgment, it is not possible or practicable to reduce the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level to an acceptably low level with audit evidence obtained only from substantive procedures (ISA(UK&I)315).

In this section we outline the other risks of material misstatement which we have identified as a result of our planning.

Other risks	Description	Audit Approach
Investment purchases and sales	Investment activity not valid (Valuation gross)	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough of expected controls on investments <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test a sample of purchases and sales
Investment values – Level 2 investments	<p>Fair value measurements priced using inputs that are observable either directly or indirectly not correct (Valuation gross)</p> <p>Fair value measurements priced using inputs not based on observable market data not correct (Valuation gross)</p>	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough of expected controls on investments <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test a sample of level 2 investments to independent information from custodian/manager on units and on unit prices.
Contributions	Recorded contributions not correct (Occurrence)	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkthrough of expected controls on contributions <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls testing over occurrence, completeness and accuracy of contributions Trend analysis of scheme contributions across the year Rationalise contributions received with reference to changes in member body payrolls and numbers of contributing pensioners to ensure that any unexpected trends are satisfactorily explained.

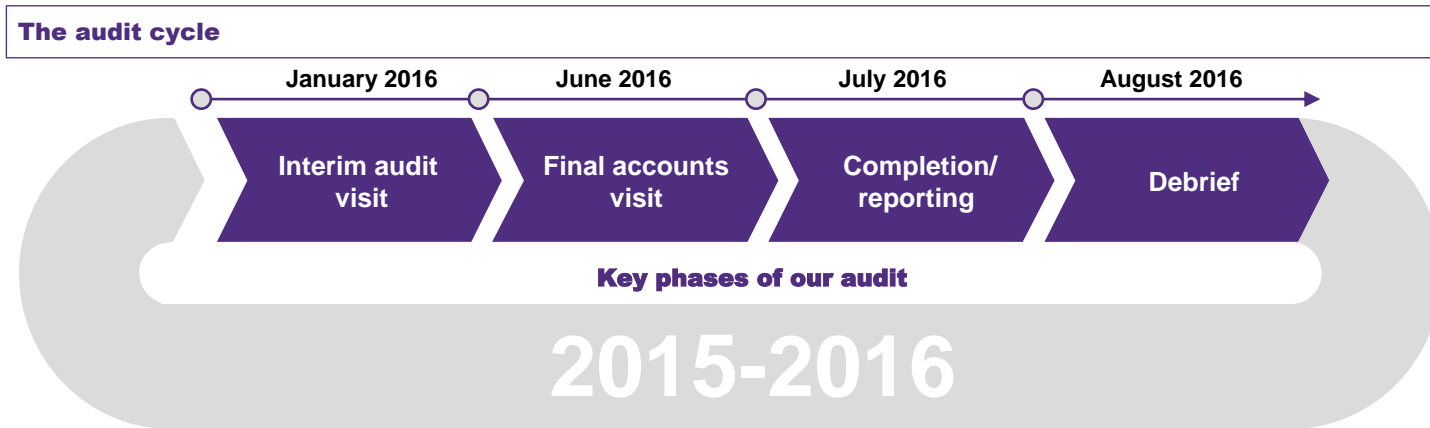
Other risks identified (continued)

Other risks	Description	Audit Approach
Benefits payable	Benefits improperly computed/claims liability understated (Completeness and Accuracy)	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkthrough of expected controls on benefits payable <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls testing over accuracy and occurrence of benefit payments • Test a sample of individual pensions in payment by reference to member files • Trend analysis of benefit payments across the year to assess the completeness of benefit payments • We will rationalise pensions paid with reference to changes in pensioner numbers and increases applied in the year to ensure that any unusual trends are satisfactorily explained.
Member Data	Member data not correct (Rights and Obligations)	<p>Work completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkthrough of expected controls on member data <p>Work planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls testing over annual/monthly reconciliations and verifications with individual members • Sample testing of changes to member data made during the year to source documentation

Results of interim audit work

	Work performed and findings	Conclusion
Internal audit	<p>We have completed a high level review of internal audit's overall arrangements. Our work to date has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p> <p>We also reviewed the work completed to date by internal audit work on the Fund's key financial systems. This review has not identified any significant weaknesses impacting on our responsibilities.</p>	<p>Our review of internal audit work to date has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
Walkthrough testing	<p>We have completed walkthrough tests of controls operating in areas where we consider that there is a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements.</p> <p>Our walkthrough of controls on investments identified one control failure on level 3 investments. We note there is an absence of control for agreeing level 3 Fund Manager valuations against the audited statements of the private equity fund. As these types of investments are not quoted, we would expect level 3 valuation provided by the Fund Manger valuations are independently validated.</p> <p>As at 31 March 2015, these types of investments represented approximately 52% of the Fund's value of investments.</p> <p>No other issues have been identified from our walk through testing that we would like to bring to your attention at this time.</p>	<p>As level 3 investments by their very nature require a significant degree of judgement in reaching an appropriate valuation at year end, we recommend officers (or the custodian) test these valuations by obtaining and reviewing audited accounts at latest date for individual investments and agreeing these to the fund manager reports at that date.</p> <p>We will undertake additional substantive testing at year on level 3 investments.</p>
Entity level controls	<p>We have obtained an understanding of the overall control environment relevant to the preparation of the financial statements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values • commitment to competence • participation by those charged with governance • management's philosophy and operating style • organisational structure • assignment of authority and responsibility • a selection of human resource policies and practices 	<p>Our work has identified no material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Fund's financial statements</p>

Key dates



Date	Activity
January 2016	Planning
27th April 2016	Presentation of Audit Plan to Regulatory and Audit Committee
23rd May 2016	Presentation of Audit Plan to Pension Fund Committee
20th June 2016	Audit of Pension Fund statements commences
Mid-July 2016	Audit findings clearance meeting with Pensions and Investments Manager and Service Director
28th July 2016	Report audit findings to those charged with governance (Regulatory and Audit Committee)
31st July 2016	Issue opinion on the Pension Fund statements

Fees and independence

Fees

	£
Total fees (excluding VAT)	25,033

Our fee assumptions include:

- Supporting schedules to all figures in the accounts are supplied by the agreed dates and in accordance with the agreed upon information request list
- The scope of the audit, the Fund, and its activities, have not changed significantly
- The Fund will make available management and accounting staff to help us locate information and to provide explanations

Fees for other services

	£
None	Nil

Fees for other services

Fees for other services reflect those agreed at the time of issuing our Audit Plan. Any changes will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter.

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Full details of all fees charged for audit and non-audit services will be included in our Audit Findings Report at the conclusion of the audit.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirement of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA(UK&I)) 260, as well as other ISA(UK&I)s, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while The Audit Findings Report will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to the Fund.

Respective responsibilities

This Audit Plan has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

We have been appointed as the Fund's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice issued by the NAO and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>).

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged. Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to the auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓



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