

Merton Council

General Purposes Committee

12 March 2015

Supplementary agenda

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(NB. Reason for Urgency – The Chair has agreed to the submission of both these late items in order to comply with the Committee's work programme.)

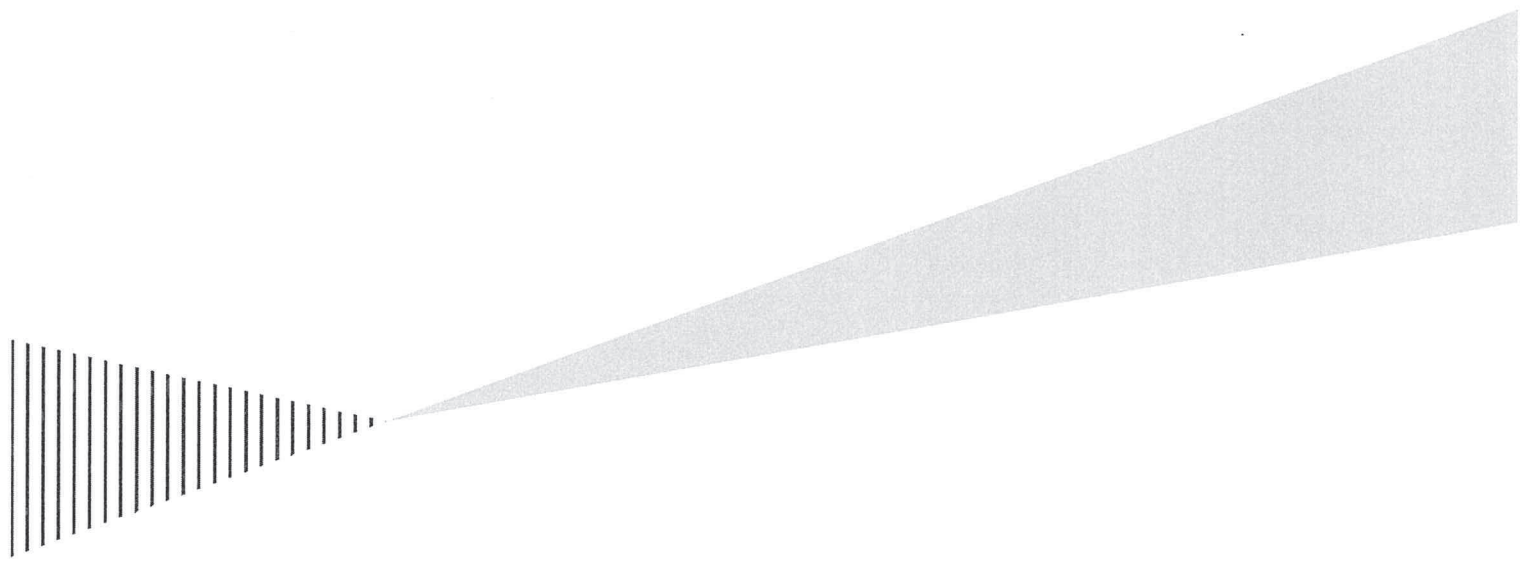
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Merton Council

Audit Progress Report to General Purposes Committee

March 2015

Ernst & Young LLP





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General Purposes Committee
Merton Council
Merton Council
Civic Centre
London Road
Merton
SM4 5DX

March 2015

Dear Committee members

Audit Progress Report

We are pleased to attach our Audit Progress Report.

The purpose of this report is to provide the General Purposes Committee with an overview of the stage reached in your 2013-14 and 2014-15 audits for the Council and the Pension Fund and ensure our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

Our audit will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Audit Commission Act 1998, the Code of Audit Practice, the Audit Commission Standing Guidance, auditing standards and other professional requirements.

This report updates the Committee on our work at the Council. Our work on your 2013-14 audits is complete and we include the audit planning report for the 2014--15 Council audit as separate agenda item to the Committee.

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

Paul King
Director
For and behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
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In March 2010 the Audit Commission issued a revised version of the 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' ('Statement of responsibilities'). It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the [Audit Commission's website](#).

The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the Audit Commission's 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 Standing Guidance serves as our terms of appointment as auditors appointed by the Audit Commission. The Standing Guidance sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the Code of Audit Practice 2010 (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Annual Audit Letter is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities. It is addressed to the Members of the audited body, and is prepared for their sole use. 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.

1. Work programme

1.1 2013-14 audit

We presented our 2013-14 annual audit letter to the November 2014 meeting of the Committee.

The only outstanding element of work to report to you is the certification of claims and returns report which is attached as a separate agenda item to this meeting of the Committee.

1.2 Other claims and certification work for 2013-14

The certification of the teachers' superannuation return no longer forms part of the work we are required to carry out as part of the arrangements with the Audit Commission. For the 2013-14 return, this work fell outside the Audit Commission grant certification regime and we carried out this work for the Council under a separate engagement letter and an agreed fee of £10,000. We completed the work before the extended deadline of 31 December 2014. Not all working papers were available at the start of our review and we have set out what our requirements will be in future. We did not make any amendments to the claim.

1.3 CHAS 2013 Ltd 2013-14 audit

The Council has established a wholly-owned company (CHAS 2013 Ltd) to carry out health and safety pre-qualification assessments for contractors in the construction industry. We carried out this audit under a separate audit engagement. We completed the audit under Companies Act requirements and gave our audit report on 21 January 2015. Our audit identified some material changes to the accounts, principally on the opening and closing balances. The basis for preparation of the accounts changed during the course of the audit to implementation of FRS102 and this contributed to the delays in completion of the audit.

We will discuss with your Finance team responsible for preparation of the CHAS 2013 Ltd financial statements the learning we can take from the audit process and the most effective timing and approach to the audit in future years. This includes whether to carry out the audit in tandem with the audits of the Council and the Pension Fund or after these as the CHAS 2013 Ltd audit has a later submission deadline.

1.4 2014-15 audit

We presented the fee letters for our 2014-15 audits of the Council and the Pension Fund to the 25 June 2014 General Purposes Committee meeting.

We have largely completed the planning and interim work including the walkthroughs of your main financial systems. This work has informed our audit planning reports.

The audit planning report for the Council is attached as a separate agenda item. The audit planning report for the Pension Fund will need to be reviewed by the Pension Fund Advisory Committee later this month and will therefore be presented to the General Purposes Committee in June.

1.5 Letters to management and those charged with governance

We include in appendices 2 to 3 letters to management and those charged with governance that we request each year. These cover arrangements around fraud and error, laws and regulations and going concern. In previous years we have sought a joint response covering the Council and the Pension Fund; this year we seek separate responses for each.

1.6 Audit process review and further improvements for 2014-15

We reported in the last progress report the main points from the 2013-14 Council and Pension Fund audits where further improvements can be made for 2014-15.

As part of this process – and to help with supporting the transition to the issuing of an earlier audit report by the end of July 2018 for the 2017-18 audit - the date of the September 2015 General Purposes Committee has been brought forward to 16 September 2015.

We will continue to work with the Finance team to carry out early work on ensuring we have the necessary 'mapping' to support our work. The Finance team will also collect payroll information quarterly to prevent delays at the year end. This will also support providing the added value from analysis of your financial data. We have shared with the Finance team the output from this analysis for the 2013-14 audit.

We have also discussed the proposed treatment in the Council's 2014-15 financial statements for CHAS 2013 Ltd. The current proposal is to apply the same approach as in 2013-14 with the Council presenting single entity accounts (on the grounds that, from a financial perspective, CHAS is not material to the Council) rather than full group accounts.

1.7 Audit fee for 2015-16

We will bring the audit fee letter for the Council to the June General Purposes Committee. The 2015-16 fees will feature a further 25% reduction over the 2014-15 scale fee.

2. Timetable

General Purposes Committee timeline

We have set out below a timetable showing the key stages of the audit, including the value for money work and the whole of government accounts, and the deliverables we have agreed to provide to you through the 2014-15 General Purposes Committee cycle.

Audit phase	Timetable	General Purposes Committee timetable	Deliverables
High level planning:	December 2014 - January 2015		Audit Fee letter (presented to 25 June 2015 General Purposes Committee)
Risk assessment and setting of scopes	December-January	12 March 2015 Committee	Council Audit Plan (presented to 12 March 2015 General Purposes Committee) Pension Fund Audit Plan (to come to June 2015 General Purposes Committee) Audit Progress Report
Testing of routine processes and controls	January-February	26 June 2015 Committee	Audit Progress Report
Year-end audit	July – September	16 September 2015 Committee	Report to those charged with governance Audit report (including our opinion on the financial statements and a conclusion as to whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources).
			Audit completion certificate
	November	4 November 2015 Committee	Annual Audit Letter

We will provide formal reports to the General Purposes Committee throughout our audit process as outlined below. Where required, we will issue an Interim Report, summarising the findings from our audit at that stage. From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the General Purposes Committee and we will discuss them with the General Purposes Committee Chair as appropriate.

Following the conclusion of our audit we will prepare an Annual Audit Letter in order to communicate to the Council and external stakeholders, including members of the public, the key issues arising from our work.

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

Appendix 2: Letter to management – Merton Council and Merton Pension Fund

Caroline Holland
London Borough of Merton
Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

25 February 2015

Ref: MLB-MAN 15

Direct line: 01189281556

Email: pking1@uk.ey.com

Dear Caroline

Understanding your management processes and arrangements

Auditing standards (ISA 240) require us to formally update our understanding of your management processes and arrangements annually. Therefore, we are writing to ask that you please provide a response to the following questions.

1. What are the management processes in relation to:
 - ▶ undertaking an assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud or error (including the nature, extent and frequency of these assessments);
 - ▶ identifying and responding to risks of fraud in the Council, including any specific risks of fraud which management have identified or that have been brought to its attention, or classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosure for which a risk of fraud is likely to exist;
 - ▶ communicating to employees its views on business practice and ethical behaviour (for example by updating, communicating and monitoring against the Authority's code of conduct);
 - ▶ encouraging employees to report their concerns about fraud; and
 - ▶ communicating to the General Purposes Committee (i.e. those charged with governance) the processes for identifying and responding to fraud or error?
2. What are Management's views about whether there are areas within the organisation that are at risk of fraud?
3. Does Management have knowledge of any actual or suspected or alleged instances of fraud?
4. Is Management satisfied that internal controls to prevent and detect fraud, including segregation of duties, exist and work effectively?
5. Are there any deficiencies in internal control?
6. Are you aware of any instances where controls have been overridden?
7. Is there any organisational or Management pressure to meet financial or operating targets?

8. Are there any particular areas of the accounts that are more susceptible to false entries or omissions or other forms of manipulation? Are Management aware of any such manipulation having occurred?
9. How does Management gain assurance that all relevant laws and regulations have been complied with? Have there been any instances of non-compliance during 2014-15?
10. Are there any actual or potential litigation or claims that would affect the financial statements?
11. How does Management satisfy itself that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements?

Please would you provide a separate response for the Council and a separate response for the Pension Fund by email or letter, either on behalf of Management or from yourself in your capacity as s151 officer. If possible, please could we receive your response by 20 April 2015 to ensure that your response covers the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Please contact me if you wish to discuss anything in relation to this request.

Yours sincerely

Paul King
Director
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
United Kingdom

Appendix 3: Letter to those charged with governance – Merton Council and Merton Pension Fund

Cllr Peter McCabe
Chair, General Purposes Committee
London Borough of Merton
Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

25 February 2015

Ref: MLB TCWG 15

Direct line: 01189281556

Email: pking1@uk.ey.com

Dear Cllr McCabe

Understanding how the Audit Committee gains assurance from management

Auditing standards require us to formally update our understanding of your oversight processes and arrangements annually. Therefore, I am writing to ask that you please provide a response to the following questions.

1. How does the General Purposes Committee, as 'those charged with governance' at the Council, exercise oversight of management's processes in relation to:
 - ▶ undertaking an assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud or error (including the nature, extent and frequency of these assessments);
 - ▶ identifying and responding to risks of fraud in the Council, including any specific risks of fraud which management have identified or that have been brought to its attention, or classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosure for which a risk of fraud is likely to exist;
 - ▶ communicating to employees its view on business practice and ethical behaviour (for example by updating, communicating and monitoring against the Council's code of conduct);
 - ▶ encouraging employees to report their concerns about fraud; and
 - ▶ communicating to you the processes for identifying and responding to fraud or error?
2. How does the General Purposes Committee oversee management processes for identifying and responding to the risk of fraud and possible breaches of internal control?
3. Is the Committee aware of any:
 - ▶ breaches of, or deficiencies in, internal control; and
 - ▶ actual, suspected or alleged frauds during 2014-15?
4. Is the Committee aware of any organisational or management pressure to meet financial or operating targets?

5. How does the General Purposes Committee gain assurance that all relevant laws and regulations have been complied with? Are you aware of any instances of non-compliance during 2014-15?
6. Is the General Purposes Committee aware of any actual or potential litigation or claims that would affect the financial statements?
7. How does the General Purposes Committee satisfy itself that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements?

Please would you provide a separate response for the Council and a separate response for the Pension Fund by email or letter on behalf of the General Purposes Committee. If possible, please could we receive your response by 20 April 2015 to ensure that the response covers the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015?

Yours faithfully

Paul King
Director
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
United Kingdom

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Ernst & Young LLP

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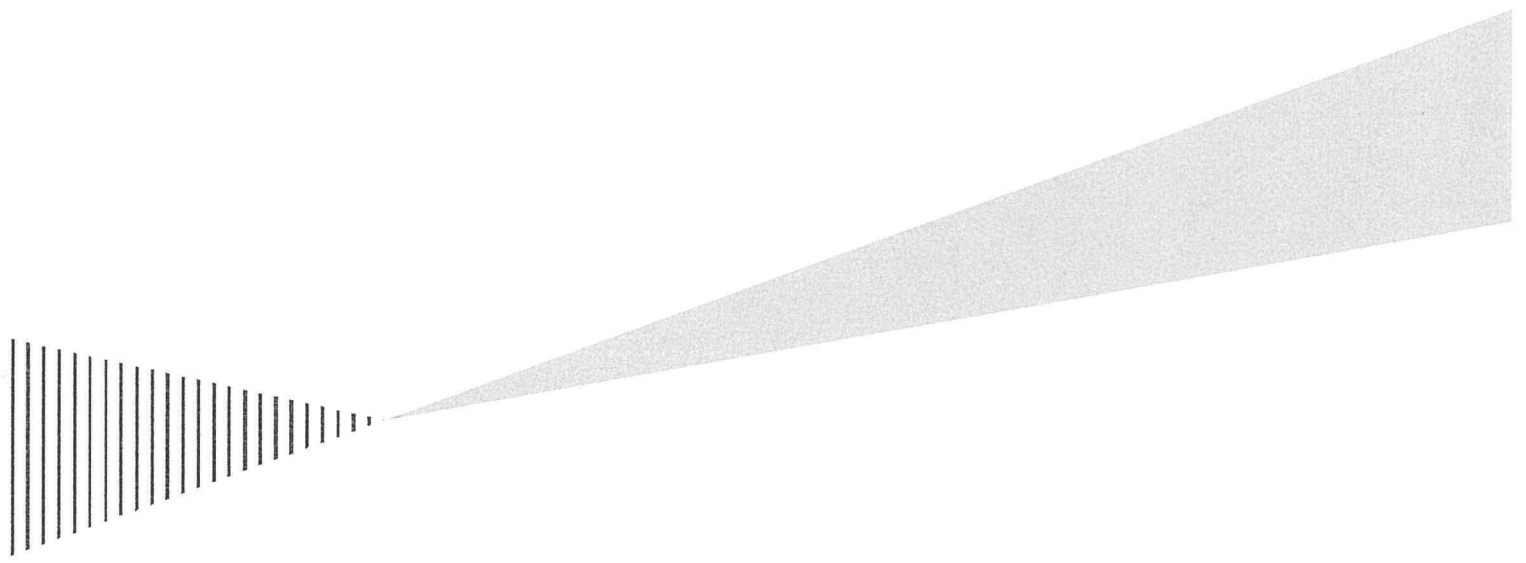
Merton Council

Year ending 31 March 2015

Audit Plan

March 2015

Ernst & Young LLP



Building a better
working world



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General Purposes Committee
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4 March 2015

Dear Committee Members

Audit Plan

We are pleased to attach our Audit Plan which sets out how we intend to carry out our responsibilities as auditor. Its purpose is to provide the General Purposes Committee with a basis to review our proposed audit approach and scope for the 2014/15 audit in accordance with the requirements of the Audit Commission Act 1998, the Code of Audit Practice, Standing Guidance, auditing standards and other professional requirements. It is also to ensure that our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

This plan summarises our initial assessment of the key risks driving the development of an effective audit for the Council, and outlines our planned audit strategy in response to those risks.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this plan with you on 12 March 2015 and to understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

Paul King
Director
For and behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
Enc

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The Standing Guidance serves as our terms of appointment as auditors appointed by the Audit Commission. The Standing Guidance sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the Code of Audit Practice 2010 (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Annual Plan is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities. It is addressed to the 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.

1. Overview

Context for the audit

This Audit Plan covers the work that we plan to perform to provide you with:

- ▶ Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of Merton Council give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2015 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- ▶ A statutory conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO), to the extent and in the form required by them, on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- ▶ Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- ▶ Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- ▶ The quality of systems and processes;
- ▶ Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and
- ▶ Management's views on all of the above.

By considering these inputs, our audit is focused on the areas that matter and our feedback is more likely to be relevant to the Council. Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

We have held monthly planning meetings with the Director of Corporate Services and the Finance Team since December 2014 in which we discussed the issues facing the Council and affecting the 2014/15 financial statements and we understand that the only significant change is in relation to the accounting for non-current school assets held by a third party. There are no other significant changes.

In parts three and four of this plan we provide more detail on the above areas and we outline our plans to address them. Our proposed audit process and strategy are summarised below and set out in more detail in section five.

We will provide an update to the General Purposes Committee on the results of our work in these areas in our report to those charged with governance scheduled for delivery in September 2015.

Our process and strategy

Financial statement audit

We consider materiality in terms of the possible impact of an error or omission on the financial statements and set an overall planning materiality level. We then set a tolerable error to reduce the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceeds planning materiality to an appropriately low level. We also assess each disclosure and consider qualitative issues affecting materiality as well as quantitative issues.

To the fullest extent permissible by auditing standards, we will seek to rely on the work of internal audit wherever possible.

Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Our approach to the value for money (VFM) conclusion for Merton Council for 2014/15 is based on criteria specified by the Audit Commission relating to whether there are proper arrangements in place within the Council for:

- ▶ Securing financial resilience
- ▶ Challenging how the Council secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We adopt an integrated audit approach, so our work on the financial statement audit feeds into our consideration of the arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Further detail is included in section 4 of this Audit Plan.

2. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) closes the Audit Commission and repeals the Audit Commission Act 1998.

The 2014 Act requires the Comptroller and Auditor General to prepare a Code of Audit Practice. This must be laid before Parliament and approved before 1 April 2015.

Although this new Code will apply from 1 April 2015, transitional provisions within the 2014 Act provide for the Audit Commission's 2010 Code to continue to apply to audit work in respect of the 2014/15 financial year. This plan is therefore prepared on the basis of the continued application of the 2010 Code of Audit Practice throughout the 2014/15 audit.

3. Financial statement risks

We outline below our assessment of the financial statement risks facing the Council, identified through our knowledge of the Council's operations and discussion with those charged with governance and officers.

At our meeting, we will seek to validate these with you.

Significant risks (including fraud risks)	Our audit approach
Accounting for schools	
<p>There is a developing national position on how councils are required to account in their financial statements for the assets of schools held by a third party (voluntary-aided, voluntary-controlled and foundation schools).. The amounts associated with the treatment of these non-current assets will be material for the Council's financial statements.</p>	<p>Our approach will focus on ensuring that the Council has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ made an assessment on an individual basis for each school, taking into account local circumstances and the relevant accounting standards; ▶ adequately documented and evidenced their judgements in support of the accounting treatment adopted; and ▶ made appropriate disclosures of the judgments and accounting policies applied to schools' assets.
Risk of management override	
<p>As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.</p>	<p>Our approach will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements ▶ Reviewing accounting estimates for evidence of management bias, and ▶ Evaluating the business rationale for significant unusual transactions
Other financial statement risks	
Changes in the Council's Finance team	
<p>We are aware of staff changes within the Finance Team and the potential impact this may have on the capacity of the team responsible for the production of the financial statements and associated working papers.</p>	<p>Our approach will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Maintaining close links with the Finance team in the closedown and preparation stages of the production of the draft financial statements; ▶ Assessing preparedness for the production of the statements against key deadlines; and ▶ Ensuring clear communication and understanding of our requirements for the audit of your financial statements.

Respective responsibilities in relation to fraud and error

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that management has the primary responsibility to prevent and detect fraud. It is important that management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, has a culture of ethical behaviour and a strong control environment that both deters and prevents fraud.

Our responsibility is to plan and perform audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free of material misstatements whether caused by error or fraud. As auditors, we approach each engagement with a questioning

mind that accepts the possibility that a material misstatement due to fraud could occur, and design the appropriate procedures to consider such risk.

Based on the requirements of auditing standards our approach will focus on:

- ▶ Identifying fraud risks during the planning stages;
- ▶ Enquiry of management about risks of fraud and the controls to address those risks;
- ▶ Understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud;
- ▶ Consideration of the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud;
- ▶ Determining an appropriate strategy to address any identified risks of fraud; and
- ▶ Performing mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks.

We will consider the results of the National Fraud Initiative and may refer to it in our reporting to you.

4. Economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Our approach to the value for money (VFM) conclusion for Merton Council for 2014/15 is based on criteria specified by the Audit Commission relating to whether there are proper arrangements in place at the Council for securing:

1. Financial resilience, and
2. Economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The Audit Commission VFM guidance for 2014/15 requires that auditors consider and assess the significant risks of giving a wrong conclusion and carry out as much work as is appropriate to enable them to give a safe conclusion on arrangements to secure VFM.

Our assessment of what is a significant risk is a matter of professional judgement, and is based on consideration of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the subject matter in question.

For those significant risks identified by our risk assessment that are relevant to our VFM conclusion, where these risks will not be addressed by our financial statements audit work or work undertaken by the Council, Audit Commission or other review agency, we consider the need to undertake local VFM work.

We have not identified any significant risks associated with our VFM conclusion.

Other risks	Impacts arrangements for securing	Our audit approach
In-year and longer-term financial planning		
<p>The Council is currently forecasting as of 31 January 2015 a year end deficit for 2014/15 of £4.2million. The Council has reported underspends in previous years. This indicates there are financial pressures that need addressing in the increasingly difficult financial climate.</p>	<p>Financial resilience Economy, efficiency and effectiveness</p>	<p>Our approach will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The action being taken by the Council to address the shortfall and build the findings into its future planning and service delivery ▶ Review of the Council's longer-term financial planning and the approach to addressing the implications of any resultant budget gap

We will keep our risk assessment under review throughout our audit and communicate to the General Purposes Committee any revisions to the specific risks identified here and any additional local risk-based work we may need to undertake as a result.

5. Our audit process and strategy

5.1 Objective and scope of our audit

Under the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the 'Code') our principal objectives are to review and report on, the Council's:

- ▶ Financial statements
- ▶ Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources to the extent required by the relevant legislation and the requirements of the Code.

We issue a two-part audit report covering both of these objectives.

i Financial statement audit

Our objective is to form an opinion on the financial statements under International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We will also review and report to the NAO on the Whole of Government Accounts return to the extent and in the form they require.

ii Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness

The Code sets out our responsibility to satisfy ourselves that the Council has proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. In arriving at our conclusion, we will rely as far as possible on the reported results of the work of other statutory inspectorates on corporate or service performance.

In examining the Council's corporate performance management and financial management arrangements, we consider the following criteria and areas of focus specified by the Audit Commission:

- ▶ Arrangements for securing financial resilience – whether the Council has robust systems and processes to manage financial risks and opportunities effectively, and to secure a stable financial position that enables it to continue to operate for the foreseeable future.
- ▶ Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness – whether the Council is prioritising its resources within tighter budgets, for example by achieving cost reductions and by improving efficiency and productivity.

5.2 Audit process overview

Processes

Our initial assessment of the key processes across the Council has identified the following where we will seek to walkthrough and ensure our understanding of key controls, both manual and IT:

- ▶ accounts receivable;
- ▶ accounts payable;
- ▶ bank/cash;
- ▶ business rates;
- ▶ council tax;

Our audit process and strategy

- ▶ housing benefit;
- ▶ payroll;
- ▶ pensions;
- ▶ property, plant and equipment;
- ▶ Education (SIMS);
- ▶ Care First - Social Services;
- ▶ financial statements close process.

We intend to take a substantive audit approach in performing our audit work.

Analytics

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

- ▶ Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be subject to more traditional substantive audit tests
- ▶ Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than random sampling techniques.

We will report the findings from our process and analytics work, including any significant weaknesses or inefficiencies identified and recommendations for improvement, to management and the General Purposes Committee.

Internal audit

As in prior years, we will review internal audit plans and the results of their work. We will reflect the findings from these reports, together with reports from any other work completed in the year, in our detailed audit plan, where we raise issues that could have an impact on the year-end financial statements

Use of experts

We will use specialist EY resource as necessary to help us to form a view on judgments made in the financial statements.

Mandatory procedures required by auditing standards

As well as the financial statement risks outlined in section three, we must perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards, the Code and other regulations. We outline below the procedures we will undertake during the course of our audit.

Procedures required by standards

- ▶ Addressing the risk of fraud and error;
- ▶ Significant disclosures included in the financial statements;
- ▶ Entity-wide controls;
- ▶ Reading other information contained in the financial statements and reporting whether it is inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements; and
- ▶ Auditor independence.

Procedures required by the Code

- ▶ Reviewing, and reporting on as appropriate, other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement;
- ▶ Reviewing and reporting on the Whole of Government Accounts return, in line with the instructions issued by the NAO;
- ▶ Reviewing and examining, where appropriate, evidence relevant to the Council's corporate performance management and financial management arrangements, and its reporting on these arrangements.

5.3 Materiality

For the purposes of determining whether the financial statements are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation requires professional judgement and so takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implied in the definition. We have determined that overall materiality, for the financial statements of the Council, is £10,407,900 based on 2% of gross revenue expenditure.

We will communicate uncorrected audit misstatements greater than £520,000 to you.

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all the circumstances that might ultimately influence our judgement. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the financial statements, including the total effect of any audit misstatements, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

5.4 Fees

The Audit Commission has published a scale fee for all authorities. This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Audit Commission Act in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice 2010. The indicative fee scale for the audit of the Council is £191,330. The indicative fee for the certification of claims and returns is £37,760.

5.5 Your audit team

The engagement team is led by Paul King, who has significant experience of auditing the Council. Paul is supported by Michael Yeats who is responsible for the day-to-day direction of audit work and is the key point of contact for the Finance team.

5.6 Timetable of communication, deliverables and insights

We have set out below a timetable showing the key stages of the audit, including the VFM work and the Whole of Government Accounts. The timetable includes the deliverables we have agreed to provide to the Council through the General Purposes Committee's cycle in 2014/15. These dates are determined to ensure our alignment with the Audit Commission's rolling calendar of deadlines.

From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the General Purposes Committee and we will discuss them with the Committee Chair as appropriate.

Following the conclusion of our audit we will prepare an Annual Audit Letter to communicate the key issues arising from our work to the Council and external stakeholders, including members of the public.

Our audit process and strategy

Audit phase	Timetable	Audit Committee timetable	Deliverables
High level planning	November - December 2014	November 2014	Audit Fee letter (sent 29 April 2014) Progress Report
Risk assessment and setting of scopes	January – February 2015	March 2015	Audit Plan
Testing routine processes and controls	January – February 2015	June 2015	Progress Report
Year-end audit	June – August 2015	September 2015	Audit Results Report
Completion of audit	September 2015	September 2015	Report to those charged with governance via the Audit Results Report Audit report (including our opinion on the financial statements and overall value for money conclusion). Audit completion certificate Reporting to the NAO on the Whole of Government Accounts return.
Conclusion of reporting	October 2015 End November 2015	November 2015 March 2016	Annual Audit Letter Certification and claims report

In addition to the above formal reporting and deliverables we will seek to provide practical business insights and updates on regulatory matters.

6. Independence

6.1 Introduction

The APB Ethical Standards and ISA (UK and Ireland) 260 'Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance', requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear on our independence and objectivity. The Ethical Standards, as revised in December 2010, require that we do this formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications	
Planning stage	Final stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by EY including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us; ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality Review; ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards; ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that bear on our objectivity and independence, the threats to our independence that these create, any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed; ▶ Details of non-audit services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto; ▶ Written confirmation that we are independent; ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between APB Ethical Standards, the Audit Commission's Standing Guidance and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy; and ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

During the course of the audit we must also communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of our safeguards, for example when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We also provide information on any contingent fee arrangements, the amounts of any future contracted services, and details of any written proposal to provide non-audit services;

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period are disclosed, analysed in appropriate categories.

6.2 Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including any principal threats. However we have adopted the safeguards below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective.

Self-interest threats

A self-interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in your entity. Examples include where we have an investment in your entity; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with the Council.

At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake permissible non-audit services, and we will comply with the policies that the Council has approved and that are in compliance with the Audit Commission's Standing Guidance.

At the time of writing, the current ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees is approximately 19:1 (excluding certification of claims and returns). No additional safeguards are required.

A self-interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to the Council. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, is in this position, in compliance with Ethical Standard 4.

There are no other self-interest threats at the date of this report.

Self-review threats

Self-review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no other self-review threats at the date of this report.

Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of your entity. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service where management is required to make judgements or decisions based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.

Overall Assessment

Overall we consider that the adopted safeguards appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified, and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Paul King, the audit engagement Director and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

6.3 Other required communications

EY has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report, which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this report is for the year ended 27 June 2014 and can be found here:

<http://www.ey.com/UK/en/About-us/EY-UK-Transparency-Report-2014>

Appendix A Fees

A breakdown of our agreed fee is shown below.

	Planned Fee 2014/15 £	Out-turn 2013/14 £	Published fee 2013/14 £	Explanation
Opinion Audit and VFM Conclusion	191,330	209,800	188,730	Difference between 2013/14 published fee and outturn due to: Extra work due to delays in receipt of, and multiple iterations of, analytics data Additional fee in relation to NNDR work as agreed by Audit Commission Investigation and reporting in response to the whistleblowing allegations raised on use of contractors
Total Audit Fee – Code work	191,330	209,800	188,730	
Certification of claims and returns ¹	37,760	54,989	46,989	Difference between 2013/14 published fee and outturn due to: Additional work from increased testing of housing benefit claim and completion of additional workbooks
Other billable work	10,000	0	0	Work in 2014/15 is for certification of 2013/14 Teachers' Pensions return
Total audit fee	239,090	264,789	235,719	

All fees exclude VAT.

The agreed fee presented above is based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ We can rely on the work of internal audit as planned;
- ▶ The Audit Commission making no significant changes to the use of resources criteria on which our conclusion will be based;
- ▶ Our accounts opinion and use of resources conclusion being unqualified;

¹ Our fee for the certification of grant claims is based on the indicative scale fee set by the Audit Commission. The original indicative fee of £54,500 for certification and claims work in 2013/14 was subsequently adjusted by the Audit Commission for a 12% reduction for removal of council tax benefit work.

Fees

- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Council; and
- ▶ The Council has an effective control environment.

If any of the above assumptions prove to be unfounded, we will seek a variation to the agreed fee. This will be discussed with the Council in advance.

Fees for the auditor's consideration of correspondence from the public and formal objections will be charged in addition to the scale fee.

Appendix B UK required communications with those charged with governance

There are certain communications that we must provide to the General Purposes Committee. These are detailed here:

Required communication	Reference
<p>Planning and audit approach Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit including any limitations.</p>	▶ Audit Plan
<p>Significant findings from the audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>Misstatements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ In writing, corrected misstatements that are significant 	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>Fraud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the General Purposes Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ A discussion of any other matters related to fraud 	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>Related parties Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>External confirmations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures 	▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>Consideration of laws and regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Audit findings regarding non-compliance where the non-compliance is material and believed to be intentional. This communication is subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off ▶ Enquiry of the General Purposes Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Committee may be aware of 	▶ Report to those charged with governance

Required communication	Reference
<p>Independence</p> <p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's objectivity and independence</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement director's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Audit Plan ▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>Going concern</p> <p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Report to those charged with governance
<p>Fee Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakdown of fee information at the agreement of the initial audit plan ▶ Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Audit Plan ▶ Report to those charged with governance ▶ Annual Audit Letter if considered necessary
<p>Certification work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Summary of certification work undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Annual Report to those charged with governance summarising grant certification, and Annual Audit Letter if considered necessary

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