

Audit and Inspection Plan	
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Audit and Inspection Plan

Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Audit 2007/08

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Introduction

1 This plan has been developed by the Relationship Manager and the Appointed Auditor, KPMG LLP. It sets out the audit and inspection work that it is proposed to undertake for the 2007/08 financial year. The plan is based on the Audit Commission's risk-based approach to audit planning and the requirements of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). It reflects:

- audit and inspection work specified by the Audit Commission for 2007/08;
- current national risks relevant to your local circumstances; and
- your local risks and improvement priorities.

2 Your Relationship Manager will continue to ensure integration and co-ordination with the work of other inspectorates as appropriate.

3 The audit planning process for 2007/08, including the risk assessment is an ongoing process and will continue as the year progresses, and the information and fees in this plan will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

Responsibilities

4 We comply with the statutory requirements governing our audit and inspection work, in particular:

- the Audit Commission Act 1998;
- the Local Government Act 1999 (best value inspection and audit); and
- the Code of Audit Practice.

5 The Code of Audit Practice (the Code) defines auditors' responsibilities in relation to:

- the financial statements (including the statement on internal control (SIC)); and
- the audited body's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

6 The Audit Commission's Statement of responsibilities of auditors and of audited bodies sets out the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Council. The Audit Commission has issued a copy of the Statement to every audited body.

7 The Statement summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body begin and end, and our audit work is undertaken in the context of these responsibilities.

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CPA and Inspection

8 The Council Commission's CPA and inspection activity is underpinned by the principle of targeting our work where it will have the greatest effect, based upon assessments of risk and performance.

9 The Council's CPA category is therefore a key driver in the Commission's inspection planning process. For CPA 2006, the Council was categorised as four stars.

10 We have applied the principles set out in the CPA framework, *CPA – the Harder Test*, recognising the key strengths and areas for improvement in the Council's performance.

11 Strengths in the Council's performance include:

- There is clear commitment with partners to deliver services that improve quality of life for all and in particular those in deprived communities.
- There are excellent services to help vulnerable people live independently.
- Benefits services continue to improve, job creation is effective and targeted on the right communities.
- Street cleanliness is improving and complements town centre developments.
- Reductions in crime while slowing are still on target to meet long-term goals.
- The Council is addressing areas for improvement including consistently raising performance in libraries and leisure services, and achieving further improvement in educational attainment.
- The Council's capacity to improve remains strong and is capable of accelerating improvement substantially in these areas.
- Work continues to improve customer access and deliver more services locally where appropriate.
- The Council achieves good value for money, with generally high quality services at low comparable cost. This is further supported by an improved approach to workforce planning.

12 Areas for improvement in the Council's performance include:

- Sickness absence levels generally and vacancy levels in adult services need continued attention to ensure they do not threaten further improvement.

13 On the basis of our planning process we have identified where our inspection activity will be focused for 2007/08 as follows.

Table 1 Summary of inspection activity

Inspection activity	Reason/impact
Relationship Manager (RM) role	To act as the Commission's primary point of contact with the Council and the interface at the local level between the Commission and the other inspectorates, government offices and other key stakeholders.
Direction of travel (DoT) assessment	An annual assessment, carried out by the RM, of how well the Council is securing continuous improvement. The DoT label will be reported in the CPA scorecard alongside the CPA category. The DoT assessment summary will be published on the Commission's website.
Corporate assessment	We will carry out a corporate assessment in line with the processes set out in CPA - the Harder Test. Our approach will be a combined corporate assessment and Joint Area Review which will include an inspection of services for children and young people.

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Audit and Inspection Plan | Other information

Work under the Code of Audit Practice carried out by the Appointed Auditor

Financial statements

14 We will carry out our audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB).

15 We will issue an opinion on whether the financial statements present fairly, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2007, the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2008 and its income and expenditure for the year.

16 We are also required to review whether the Statement on Internal Control (SIC) has been presented in accordance with relevant requirements, and to report if it does not meet these requirements or if it is misleading or inconsistent with our knowledge of the Council.

Use of resources

Value for money conclusion

17 The Code requires us to issue a conclusion on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the value for money conclusion. In arriving at our conclusion we consider a standard set of criteria issued by the Audit Commission.

18 In meeting this responsibility, we will review evidence that is relevant to the Council's corporate performance management and financial management arrangements. Where relevant work has been undertaken by other regulators we will normally place reliance on their reported results to inform our work. Our assessment will be undertaken over a 12 month period and will consider both the existence and operational effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements to deliver economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

19 We will also follow up our work from previous years to assess progress in implementing agreed recommendations.

Use of resources assessment

20 The Audit Commission has specified that auditors will complete a use of resources assessment for 2007/08. The assessment focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and improve services.

21 The work required to arrive at the use of resources assessment is fully aligned with that required to arrive at the auditor's value for money conclusion.

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22 We will arrive at a score of 1 to 4, based on underlying key lines of enquiry, for each of the following themes:

Theme	Description
Financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• preparation of financial statements• external reporting
Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• medium-term financial strategy• budget monitoring• asset management
Financial standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• managing spending within available resources
Internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• risk management• system of internal control• probity and propriety
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• achieving value for money• managing and improving value for money

23 We will report details of the scores and judgements made to the Council. The scores will be accompanied, where appropriate, by recommendations of what the Council needs to do to improve its services.

24 The auditor's scores are reported to the Commission and are used as the basis for its overall use of resources judgement for the purposes of CPA.

Data quality

25 The Audit Commission has specified that auditors will be required to undertake audit work in relation to data quality. This is based on a three-stage approach covering:

- Stage 1 - management arrangements;
- Stage 2 - completeness check; and
- Stage 3 - risk-based data quality spot checks of a sample of performance indicators.

26 The work at stage 1 will link to our review of the Council's arrangements to secure data quality as required for our value for money conclusion and, together with the results of stage 2, will inform the risk assessment for the detailed spot check work to be undertaken at stage 3. The results of the work at stage 3 will inform the Commission's CPA assessment.

27 Our fee estimate reflects an assessment of risk in relation to the Council's performance indicators. This risk assessment may change depending on our assessment of your overall management arrangements at stage 1 and we will update our plan accordingly, including any impact on the fee.

Best Value Performance Plan

28 We are required to carry out an audit of your best value performance plan (BVPP) and report on whether it has been prepared and published in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance.

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Assessing risks

29 Our commitment to targeting our work where it will have the greatest effect, based upon assessments of risk and performance. This means planning our audit work to address areas of risk relevant to our audit responsibilities and reflecting this in the audit fees. It also means making sure that our work is co-ordinated with the work of other regulators, and that our work helps you to improve.

30 Our risk assessment process starts with the identification of the significant financial and operational risks applying at the Council with reference to:

- our cumulative knowledge of the Council;
- planning guidance issued by the Audit Commission;
- the specific results of previous and ongoing audit work;
- interviews with Council officers;
- liaison with internal audit; and
- the results of other review agencies' work where relevant.

31 We have not included a risk assessment for our audit of the financial statements as many of the specific risks may not become apparent until after we have completed our 2006/07 audit. We will review our risk assessment after the Council has completed its 2006/07 financial statements. At this stage we are planning for the changes to the financial statements as a result of the Statement of Recommended Practice 2007 presents a risk that is likely to impact on our audit of the financial statements.

32 For each of the significant risks identified in relation to our use of resources work, we consider the arrangements put in place by the Council to mitigate the risk, and plan our work accordingly.

33 Our initial risk assessment for use of resources work is provided in Appendix 1. This will be updated through our continuous planning process as the year progresses. The key risks emerging from that initial risk assessment and our responses to those risks are identified below.

34 In 2005/06, the Council established an Audit Committee, and this has contributed to the Council's strong Use of Resources score in 2006/07. In order to further strengthen its Use of Resources score, the Council needs to demonstrate that the Audit Committee is operating effectively and is providing the appropriate level of challenge to the Authority. We will review the operation of the Audit Committee thus far, and will provide the Council with a position statement of progress made against the maximum Use of Resources criteria in relation to the Audit Committee.

35 In 2006/07, we reviewed the Bolton Local Area Agreement (LAA) arrangements. We used the Audit Commission's risk diagnostic tool to review the LAA arrangements covering governance, financial and performance issues. In 2007/08, we will undertake a detailed review of LAA arrangements, building on the findings of the diagnostic tool. We plan to undertake this as a cross-cutting piece

of work in conjunction with Bolton PCT.

36 The Authority is required to produce a Statement on Internal Control (SIC) on an annual basis. There is a process in place to drive the production of the SIC and to ensure buy-in from individual Service Areas. The Council also operates a risk register which is designed to capture and enable the monitoring and control of risks facing the Council. We will review the linkages between the SIC and the risk register to assess the extent to which these two systems interlink. We will also review the extent to which these, and any other sources of assurance, work to ensure that a full assurance framework is in place and is embedded in the Council's business processes.

37 The Council adopted a new Code of Members' Conduct in May 2007. In addition, the 2007 local elections have resulted in political changes, and as such it is important that adequate processes are in place to ensure that all members are aware of the requirements of the Code and that they are complying with it. In 2007/08 we will undertake a review of the Council's arrangements for ensuring that the requirements of the Code are communicated effectively to members and that appropriate systems are in place to monitor and ensure compliance.

38 In 2006/07 the Audit Commission undertook a cross cutting piece of work in Greater Manchester on integrated social needs transport. This review is continuing into 2007/08 to review the effectiveness of social needs transport arrangements across Greater Manchester in delivering services that deliver economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

39 High crime levels and fear of crime remain important resident priorities. Despite recent falls, Greater Manchester is unlikely to meet challenging long-term crime reduction targets. There is a risk that current arrangements are not maximising joint working, use of resources or performance management arrangements. The Audit Commission undertook a cross cutting piece of work in this area in 2006/07. During this audit year and 2008/09 we will review the effectiveness of partnership working across Greater Manchester in relation to reducing crime and improving community safety. In particular we will examine the effectiveness of arrangements in specific tracer areas.

40 A recent review of health inequalities highlighted significant continuing challenges across Greater Manchester. On-going risks remain around targeting of resources, failure to meet PSA targets, and partnership working. Ineffectual joint working may lead to progress at different speeds with inconsistent collaborative action. In 2007/08 and 2008/09 we will continue to focus on reviewing the effectiveness of partnership working across Greater Manchester in relation to health inequalities. This includes follow-up of previous work at both local and pan-Manchester levels and an assessment of progress using agreed tracers.

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Audit and Inspection Plan Other information 3

Work specified by the Audit Commission

Whole of government accounts (WGA)

41 We will again be required to review and report on your WGA consolidation pack in accordance with the approach agreed with HM Treasury and the National Audit Office which is proportionate to risk. In 2005/06, the Council struggled to provide the WGA for audit by agreed deadlines, resulting in the audit deadline being not being achieved. There were also a number of errors in the draft WGA that required amendment. The Council needs to ensure that adequate arrangements are in place so that the 2007/08 WGA are submitted for audit within agreed timeframes and that they are fairly stated.

National Fraud Initiative (NFI)

42 The Council participates in the NFI which is the Audit Commission's computerised data matching exercise designed to detect fraud perpetrated on public bodies. This work will be carried out by an individual appointed to assist in the audit of the Council's accounts (in accordance with section 3(9) of the Audit Commission Act 1998). In the Council's case this is led by the Internal Audit function. The Appointed Auditor will consider how the Council responds to the outcome of the NFI.

Voluntary improvement work

43 We have not identified any Voluntary improvement work at this stage but should we identify anything which we believe will be of use to you we will address this with you before reporting our findings to the Audit Committee.

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Certification of grant claims and returns

44 Thresholds for certification of claims and returns have increased from 1st April 2007, and we will certify the Council's claims and returns on the following basis:

- claims below £100,000 will not be subject to certification (previously £50,000);
- claims between £100,000 and £500,000 will be subject to a reduced, light-touch certification (previously between £50,000 and £100,000); and
- claims over £500,000 will be subject to a certification approach relevant to the auditor's assessment of the control environment and management preparation of claims (previously £100,000). A robust control environment would lead to a reduced certification approach for these claims.

Elector Challenge

45 The Audit Commission Act 1998 gives electors certain rights. These are:

- the right to inspect the accounts;
- the right to ask the auditor questions about the accounts; and
- the right to object to the accounts.

46 As a result of these rights, in particular the right to object to the accounts, we may need to undertake additional work to form our decision on the elector's objection. The additional work could range from a small piece of work where we interview an officer and review evidence to form our decision, to a more detailed piece of work, where we have to interview a range of officers, review significant amounts of evidence and seek legal representations on the issues raised.

47 In making our decision on objections raised by electors, we can take the following actions:

- issue a public interest report, which the Council has to consider and respond to. Further to this there are also publicity requirements that councils must fulfil if they receive a public interest report;
- issue an advisory notice. The effect of an advisory notice is that it is not lawful for the council or any officer to do what is set out in the advisory notice until,
 - the council has considered the consequence of doing it;
 - the council or officer has given the auditor the required notice in writing; and
 - that notice period has expired.
- make a statutory recommendation, which the council must consider within one month of receiving it at a meeting of the council; and
- make an application to court that an item of account is contrary to law, which if successful could result in an order for the accounts to be rectified and an order for costs to be paid.

48 The costs incurred in responding to questions or objections raised by electors is not part of the fee referred to in paragraph 49. This work will be charged on a grade related basis in accordance with the Audit Commission's fee scales.

49 In previous years we have dealt with a small number of elector issues at the Council.

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The audit and inspection fee

50 Details of the structure of scale fees are set out in the Audit Commission's work programme and fee scales 2007/08. Scale fees are based on a number of variables, including the type, size and location of the audited body.

51 The total indicative fee for audit and inspection work included in this audit and inspection plan for 2007/08 is £393,875 which compares with the planned fee of £252,000 for 2006/07. The primary reason for the increase is the corporate assessment planned for this year.

52 Further details are provided in Appendix 2 which includes a breakdown of the fee; the assumptions made when determining the audit fee, for example, the timeliness and quality of draft accounts presented for audit and the supporting working papers; and the process for agreeing any changes to the fee. The fee includes all work identified in this plan unless specifically excluded.

53 In addition we estimate that we will charge approximately £100,000 for the certification of claims and returns.

54 As indicated in paragraphs 2 and 33, the audit planning process will continue as the year progresses and it is likely that there will be some changes to our planned work and hence to the indicative fee quoted in paragraph 48 above. Any changes to the fee will be agreed with you.

Other information

The audit and inspection team

55 The key members of the audit and inspection team for the 2007/08 audit are shown in the table below.

Table 2

Name	Contact details	Responsibilities
James Foster Relationship Manager	j-foster@audit-commission.gov.uk 01204 877 300	The primary point of contact with the authority and the interface at the local level between the Commission and the other inspectorates, government offices and other key stakeholders.
Kevin Wharton Appointed Auditor (KPMG LLP)	kevin.wharton@kpmg.co.uk 0161 246 4633	Responsible for the overall delivery of the audit including signing the opinion and conclusion, and liaison with the Chief Executive.
Rashpal Khangura Manager (KPMG LLP)	rashpal.khangura@kpmg.co.uk 0113 231 3054	Overall responsibility for the management of the client relationship and for the overall delivery of the audit
Richard Lee Assistant Audit Manager (KPMG LLP)	richard.lee@kpmg.co.uk 0161 246 4314	Overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the accounts audit and will liaise with the Chief Accountant, Policy Accountants and other lead accountants.

Independence and objectivity

56 We are not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the Appointed Auditor and the audit staff, which we are required by auditing and ethical standards to communicate to you.

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57 We comply with the ethical standards of the AIC and with the Commission's requirements in respect of independence and objectivity as set out in Appendix 3.

Quality of service

58 We are committed to providing you with a high quality service. If you are in any way dissatisfied, or would like to discuss how we can improve our service, please contact the Appointed Auditor in the first instance.

59 If we are unable to satisfy your concerns, you have the right to make a formal complaint to the Audit Commission. The complaints procedure is set out in the leaflet *Something to Complain About* which is available from the Commission's website or on request.

Planned outputs

60 Our reports will be discussed and agreed with the appropriate officers before being issued to the Audit Committee.

Table 3

Planned output	Indicative date
Interim audit memorandum	May 2008
Opinion on the financial statements and value for money conclusion	September 2008
Use of resources report	TBC following issue of Auditor Guidance by the Audit Commission
Corporate assessment	January 2008
Annual audit and inspection letter	TBC
BVPP report	December 2007

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Appendix 1 – Initial risk assessment – use of resources

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor's responsibilities
In 2005/06, the Council established an Audit Committee, and this has contributed to the Council's strong Use of Resources score in 2006/07. In order to further strengthen its Use of Resources score, the Council needs to demonstrate that the Audit Committee is operating effectively and is providing the appropriate level of challenge to the Authority.	Terms of reference are in place for the Audit Committee, and a Use of Resources action plan has been established to identify areas where the key lines of enquiry were not fully met in 2006/07.	Yes	We will review the operation of the Audit Committee thus far, and will provide the Council with a position statement of progress made against the maximum Use of Resources criteria in relation to the Audit Committee	KLOE 4.2 The council has arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control
In 2006/07, we reviewed the Local Area Agreement (LAA) arrangements. We used the Audit Commission's risk	The Council has agreed a Local Area Agreement.	Yes	We will undertake a detailed review of LAA arrangements, building on the findings of the diagnostic tool. We plan to undertake a cross-cutting	KLOE 4.2 - The Council has arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control.

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor's responsibilities
diagnostic tool to review the LAA arrangements covering governance, financial and performance issues.			piece of work in conjunction with Bolton PCT.	
There is a risk that the Council does not take advantage of linkages between the risk register and the SIC process, resulting in significant risks that either are not disclosed in the SIC or have not been recorded in the risk register. As a result, risks may not be subject to adequate monitoring and control, increasing the level of risk to the strategic objectives.	SIC process in place	Yes	We will review the linkages between the SIC and the risk register to assess the extent to which these two systems interlink. We will also review the extent to which these, and any other sources of assurance, work to ensure that a full assurance framework is in place and is embedded in the Council's business processes.	KLOE 4.2 - The Council has arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control.
The Council adopted a new Code of Members' Conduct in	A Code of Members Conduct has been adopted. A Standards Board is	Yes	We will undertake a review of the Council's arrangements for ensuring	KLOE 4.3 - The council has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of

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Significant risks identified	Mitigating actions by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor's responsibilities
May 2007. In addition, the 2007 local elections have resulted in political changes, and as such it is important that adequate processes are in place to ensure that all members are aware of the requirements of the Code and that they are complying with it.	in place to monitor compliance.		that the requirements of the Code are communicated effectively to members and that appropriate systems are in place to monitor and ensure compliance.	its business
The risk that social needs transport arrangements are not configured and managed to deliver services that deliver economic, efficient and effective use of resources.	None	Yes	Cross cutting work will continue in 2007/08 to review the effectiveness of social needs transport arrangements across Greater Manchester.	KLOE 5.1 - The Council currently achieves good value for money.
High crime levels and fear of crime remain important resident priorities. Despite recent falls Greater Manchester is unlikely	Established partnership working and performance management arrangements include the local	Yes	During this audit year and 2008/09 we will review the effectiveness of partnership working across Greater Manchester in relation to reducing crime	KLOE 5.1 - The Council currently achieves good value for money.

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor's responsibilities
to meet challenging long-term crime reduction targets. There is a risk that current arrangements are not maximising joint working, use of resources or performance management arrangements.	area agreement and crime and disorder partnership. However, these are primarily focused on local areas rather than cross-Greater Manchester.		and improving community safety. In particular we will examine the effectiveness of arrangements in specific tracer areas	
A recent review of health inequalities highlighted significant continuing challenges across Greater Manchester. On-going risks remain around targeting of resources, failure to meet PSA targets, and partnership working.	Progress is being made through better collaborative working and a shared vision led through the health leadership group. However more remains to be done to reduce inequalities and achieve significant change.	Yes	Ineffectual joint working may lead to progress at different speeds with inconsistent collaborative action. In 2007/08 and 2008/09 we will continue to focus on reviewing the effectiveness of partnership working across Greater Manchester in relation to health inequalities. This includes follow-up of previous work at both local and pan-Manchester levels and an assessment of progress using agreed tracers.	KLOE 5.1 - The Council currently achieves good value for money.

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Appendix 2 – Audit and inspection fee

61 Table 4 provides details of the planned audit and inspection fee for 2007/08 with a comparison to the planned fee for 2006/07.

Table 4

Audit area	Planned fee 2007/08 £	Planned fee 2006/07 £
Audit		
Financial statements (including Whole of Government accounts)	170,000	175,000
Use of resources (including BVPP)	83,000	50,000
Data quality	12,000	18,000
NFI	3,000	n/a
Total audit fee	268,000 **	243,000 **
Inspection		
Relationship management	11,060	*
Direction of Travel	11,060	*
Corporate assessment	103,755	n/a
Total inspection fee	125,875	19,000
Total audit and inspection fee	393,875	262,000
Certification of claims and returns	100,000	100,000

* Comparative information is not available for 2006/07 due to the changed fee structure.

** Please supplementary paper analysing the fee.

62 The Audit Commission scale audit fee for Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council is £298,641. The fee proposed for 2007/08 is -10.3 per cent compared to the scale fee and is within the normal level of variation specified by the Commission. The audit element of the fee has increased by £25,000 (10.3%) in comparison to 2006/07 largely due an increase in the contribution to cross-cutting work. In 2007/08, this work will focus on Community Safety and Health Inequalities, as directed by the Audit Commission.

63 The inspection element of the fee has increased primarily because the Council will be receiving a Corporate Assessment during 2007/08.

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64 The Audit Commission has the power to fine the fee above or below the scale fee where it considers that substantially more or less work is required than envisaged by the scale fee. The Audit Commission may, therefore, adjust the scale fee to reflect the actual work that needs to be carried out to meet the auditor's statutory responsibilities, on the basis of the auditor's assessment of risk and complexity at a particular body.

65 It is a matter for the auditor to determine the work necessary to complete the audit and, subject to approval by the Audit Commission, to seek to agree an appropriate variation to the scale fee with the Council. The Audit Commission expects normally to vary the scale fee by no more than 30 per cent (upwards or downwards). This fee then becomes payable.

66 The fee (plus VAT) will be charged in four equal instalments from November 2007 to August 2008.

Assumptions

67 In setting the fee, we have assumed that:

- the level of risk in relation to the audit of the financial statements is not significantly different from that identified for 2006/07;
- you will inform us of significant developments impacting on our audit;
- internal audit meets the appropriate professional standards;
- internal audit undertakes appropriate work on all systems that provide material figures in the financial statements sufficient that we can place reliance for the purposes of our audit;
- good quality working papers and records will be provided to support the financial statements by an agreed date;
- requested information will be provided within agreed timescales;
- prompt responses will be provided to draft reports; and
- additional work will not be required to address questions or objections raised by local government electors.

68 Where these assumptions are not met, we will be required to undertake additional work which is likely to result in an increased audit fee. The fee for the audit of the financial statements will be re-visited when we issue the audit opinion for the 2006/07 financial statements.

69 Changes to the plan will be agreed with you. These may be required if:

- new residual audit risks emerge;
- additional work is required of us by the Audit Commission or other regulators; and
- additional work is required as a result of changes in legislation, professional standards or as a result of changes in financial reporting.

Process for agreeing any changes in audit fees

70 If we need to make any significant amendments to the audit fee during the course of this plan, we will firstly discuss this with the Director of Corporate Resources & Deputy Chief Executive. We will then prepare a report outlining the reasons why the fee needs to change for discussion with the Audit Committee.

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Appendix 3 – Independence and objectivity

71 Those appointed by the Audit Commission are required to comply with the Commission's Code of Audit Practice and Standing Guidance for Auditors, which defines the terms of my appointment. When auditing the financial statements auditors are also required to comply with auditing standards and ethical standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB).

72 The main requirements of the Code of Audit Practice, Standing Guidance for Auditors and the standards are summarised below.

73 International Standard on Auditing (UK and Ireland) 260 (Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance) requires that the appointed auditor:

- discloses in writing all relationships that may bear on the auditor's objectivity and independence, the related safeguards put in place to protect against these threats and the total amount of fee that the auditor has charged the client; and
- confirms in writing that the APB's ethical standards are complied with and that, in the auditor's professional judgement, they are independent and their objectivity is not compromised.

74 The standard defines 'those charged with governance' as 'those persons entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of an entity'. In your case, the appropriate addressee of communications from the auditor to those charged with governance is the audit committee. The auditor reserves the right, however, to communicate directly with the authority on matters which are considered to be of sufficient importance.

75 The Commission's Code of Audit Practice has an overriding general requirement that appointed auditors carry out their work independently and objectively, and ensure that they do not act in any way that might give rise to, or could reasonably be perceived to give rise to, a conflict of interest. In particular, appointed auditors and their staff should avoid entering into any official, professional or personal relationships which may, or could reasonably be perceived to, cause them inappropriately or unjustifiably to limit the scope, extent or rigour of their work or impair the objectivity of their judgement.

76 The Standing Guidance for Auditors includes a number of specific rules. The key rules relevant to this audit appointment are as follows:

- Appointed auditors should not perform additional work for an audited body (ie work over and above the minimum required to meet their statutory responsibilities) if it would compromise their independence or might give rise to a reasonable perception that their independence could be compromised. Where the audited body invites the auditor to carry out risk-based work in a particular area that cannot otherwise be justified as necessary to support the auditor's opinion and conclusions, it should be clearly differentiated within the audit plan as being 'additional work' and charged for separately from the normal audit fee;
- auditors should not accept engagements that involve commenting on the performance of other auditors appointed by the Commission on Commission work without first consulting the Commission;
- the Appointed Auditor responsible for the audit should, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, be changed at least once every five years;
- the Appointed Auditor and senior members of the audit team are prevented from taking part in political activity on behalf of a political party, or special interest group, whose activities relate directly to the functions of local government or NHS bodies in general, or to a particular local government or NHS body; and
- the Appointed Auditor and members of the audit team must abide by the Commission's policy on gifts, hospitality and entertainment.