

City of Doncaster Council Audit Progress Report

6 November 2023



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1. Introduction

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This paper provides the Audit Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

Members of the Audit Committee can find further useful material on our website, where we have a section dedicated to our work in the public sector. Here you can download copies of our publications <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/services/public-sector-services/>

If you would like further information on any items in this briefing, or would like to register with Grant Thornton to receive regular email updates on issues that are of interest to you, please contact either Gareth or Perminder.

2. Progress as at 6 November 2023

Financial Statements Audit

As the Redmond Review set out in 2020, and from our presentations and training sessions to Audit Committee Members over the past 18 months, the public sector external audit market is under significant pressure for a variety of reasons. These challenges have culminated in the timeliness of issuing audit opinions across the local authority sector.

Given this situation, we have previously highlighted to you that we would not be in a position to complete the 2022-23 accounts audit by the national statutory date of 30 September 2023 (only five local authority audits met this deadline in the whole of England).

We have instead planned to complete our sign off of the 2022-23 accounts audit for late November 2023 which is a more realistic and achievable date and one which we have continued to previously report to you. We believe we remain on track to deliver to this date for the 2022-23 accounts audit.

We wish to note that this proposed timetable is in no way a reflection of the capability or capacity of the finance team or the wider Council, it is entirely as a result of the level of public sector audit work to be delivered by our teams across our NHS and local authority client base.

Value for Money

The National Audit Office (NAO) issued Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03) in relation to Auditors' Work on Value for Money (VFM) Arrangements for 22-23 audits.

As noted alongside, the ongoing delays in local audit continue to significantly impact audited bodies and the financial reporting and auditing process and may therefore affect the timing of when the work on VFM arrangements set out in AGN03 is performed and reported.

The guidance states that the auditor should perform the procedures required as part of their work on VFM arrangements under AGN3 and issue their Auditor's Annual Report when their work is complete.

The Auditor's Annual Report should be issued no more than three months after the date of the opinion on the financial statements for all local government bodies.

As previously discussed with the Audit Committee, we anticipate issuing our Auditor's Annual Report by the end of December 2023, and will present our findings to the Audit Committee meeting in the new year. This proposed timeline ensures we meet the NAO timetable.

Progress at 6 November 2023 (cont.)

Other areas

Meetings

We continue to meet with senior officers including the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director of Finance as part of our regular liaison meetings and continue to be in discussions with finance staff regarding emerging developments and to ensure the audit process is smooth and effective. Our last meeting with the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director of Finance was on 26 September 2023.

Events

We provide a range of workshops, along with network events and publications to support the Council. Your officers attended our Financial Reporting Workshop earlier in the year, which helps ensure that members of your Finance Team are up to date with the latest financial reporting requirements for local authority accounts.

Audit Deliverables

2022-23 Deliverables

Planned Date

Status

Audit Plan

We are required to issue a detailed audit plan to the Audit Committee setting out our proposed approach in order to give an opinion on the Authority's 2022/23 financial statements and to issue a commentary on the Authority's value for money arrangements in the Auditor's Annual Report.

April 2023

Completed
Issued on 19 April 2023

Audit Findings (ISA260) Report

The Audit Findings Report will be reported to the November Audit Committee.

November 2023

On-track
To be presented to the
Audit Committee on
23 November 2023

Auditors Report

This is the opinion on your 2022-23 financial statements.

November 2023

On-track
We expect to issue by
30 November 2023

Auditor's Annual Report

This report communicates the key outputs of the audit, including our commentary on the Authority's value for money arrangements.

December 2023

Not yet due



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