

New Forest District Council

Annual Audit Letter for the year ended 31 March 2016

October 2016

Ernst & Young LLP



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In April 2015 Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued ‘Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies 2015-16’. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website (www.psaa.co.uk)

The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between 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 ‘Terms of Appointment from 1 April 2015’ issued by PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (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.

A hand with white nail polish is writing on a document with a blue pen. In the background, there is a calculator, a laptop, and a white mug. A yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

We are required to issue an annual audit letter to New Forest District Council (the Council) following completion of our audit procedures for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Below are the results and conclusions on the significant areas of the audit process.

Area of Work	Conclusion
Opinion on the Council's: ▶ Financial statements	Unqualified - the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2016 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended.
▶ Consistency of other information published with the financial statements	Other information published with the financial statements was consistent with the Annual Accounts.
Concluding on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness	We concluded that you have put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources.

Area of Work	Conclusion
Reports by exception:	
▶ Consistency of Governance Statement	The Annual Governance Statement was consistent with our understanding of the Council.
▶ Public interest report	We had no matters to report in the public interest.
▶ Written recommendations to the Council, which should be copied to the Secretary of State	We had no matters to report.
▶ Other actions taken in relation to our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014	We had no matters to report.

Area of Work	Conclusion
Reporting to the National Audit Office (NAO) on our review of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return (WGA).	The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £350 million. Therefore, we did not perform any audit procedures on the consolidation pack.

As a result of the above we have also:

Area of Work	Conclusion
Issued a report to those charged with governance of the Council communicating significant findings resulting from our audit.	Our Audit Results Report was issued on 23 September 2016.
Issued a certificate that we have completed the audit in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice.	Our certificate was issued on 27 September 2016.

In January 2017, we will also issue a report to those charged with governance of the Council summarising the grant certification work we have undertaken.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council's staff for their assistance during the course of our work.

Helen Thompson
Executive Director
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Purpose



Purpose

The Purpose of this Letter

The purpose of this annual audit letter is to communicate to Members and external stakeholders, including members of the public, the key issues arising from our work, which we consider should be brought to the attention of the Council.

We have already reported the detailed findings from our audit work in our 2015/16 Audit Results Report to the Audit Committee on 23 September 2017, representing those charged with governance. We do not repeat those detailed findings in this letter. The matters reported here are the most significant for the Council.



Responsibilities

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Appointed Auditor

Our 2015/16 audit work has been undertaken in accordance with the Audit Plan that we issued on 18 March 2016 and is conducted in accordance with the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland), and other guidance issued by the National Audit Office.

As auditors we are responsible for:

- ▶ expressing an opinion:
 - ▶ on the 2015/16 financial statements; and
 - ▶ on the consistency of other information published with the financial statements.
- ▶ forming a conclusion on the arrangements the Council has to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- ▶ reporting by exception:
 - ▶ if the Annual Governance Statement is misleading or not consistent with our understanding of the Council;
 - ▶ any significant matters that are in the public interest;
 - ▶ any written recommendations to the Council, which should be copied to the Secretary of State; and
 - ▶ if we have discharged our duties and responsibilities as established by thy Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Code of Audit Practice.

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO) on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £350 million. Therefore we did not perform any audit procedures on the return.

Responsibilities of the Council

The Council is responsible for preparing and publishing its statement of accounts accompanied by an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). In the AGS, the Council reports publicly each year on how far it complies with its own code of governance, including how it has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in year, and any changes planned in the coming period.

The Council is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Financial Statement Audit



Financial Statement Audit

Key Issues

The Council's Statement of Accounts is an important tool for the Council to show how it has used public money and how it can demonstrate its financial management and financial health.

We audited the Council's Statement of Accounts in line with the National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland), and other guidance issued by the National Audit Office and issued an unqualified audit report on 28 September 2016.

Our detailed findings were reported to the 23 September 2016 Audit Committee.

The key issue identified as part of our audit was as follows:

Significant Risk	Conclusion
<p>Management override of controls</p> <p>A risk present on all audits is that 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.</p> <p>Auditing standards require us to respond to this risk by testing the appropriateness of journals, testing accounting estimates for possible management bias and obtaining an understanding of the business rationale for any significant unusual transactions.</p>	<p>We obtained a full list of journals posted to the general ledger during the year, and analysed these journals using criteria we set to identify any unusual journal types or amounts. We then tested a sample of journals that met our criteria and tested these to supporting documentation.</p> <p>Our review of accounting estimates has found that estimates are reasonable, and there was no indication of bias in the calculation of the estimates.</p> <p>We have not identified any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override from the work we completed.</p> <p>We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied.</p> <p>We did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the Council's normal course of business.</p>

A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a stack of coins. The coins are stacked vertically, with some showing their edges and others showing their faces. The lighting is warm, highlighting the metallic texture and the ridges on the edges. A bright yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text "Value for Money".

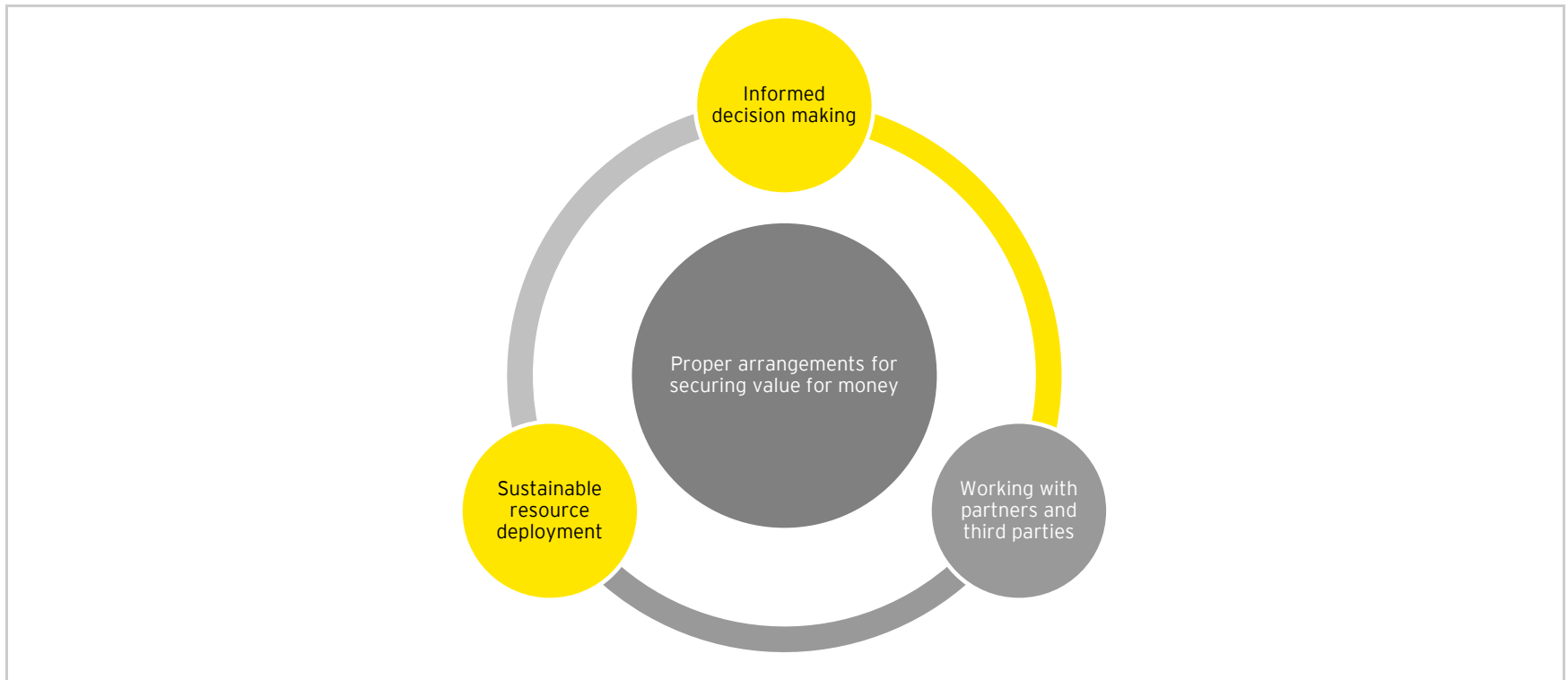
Value for Money

Value for Money

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. This is known as our value for money conclusion.

Proper arrangements are defined by statutory guidance issued by the National Audit Office. They comprise your arrangements to:

- take informed decisions;
- deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and
- work with partners and other third parties.



We identified a significant risk in relation to the Council's arrangements to "ensure it deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people" as reported in our audit plan. We performed the procedures outlined in our audit plan and the results were reported in our Audit Results Report which we presented to the Audit Committee on 23 September 2016. We did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements.

We therefore concluded that the Council put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in its use of resources.



Other Reporting Issues

Other Reporting Issues

Whole of Government Accounts

We performed the procedures required by the National Audit Office on the accuracy of the consolidation pack prepared by the Council for Whole of Government Accounts purposes.

The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £350 million. Therefore we did not perform any audit procedures on the consolidation pack.

Annual Governance Statement

We are required to consider the completeness of disclosures in the Council's annual governance statement, identify any inconsistencies with the other information of which we are aware from our work, and consider whether it is misleading.

We did not identify any issues to report.

Report in the Public Interest

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether, in the public interest, to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit in order for it to be considered by the Council or brought to the attention of the public.

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

Written Recommendations

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to designate any audit recommendation as one that requires the Council to consider it at a public meeting and to decide what action to take in response.

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a written recommendation.

Objections Received

We did not receive any objections to the 2015/16 financial statements from member of the public.

Other Powers and Duties

We identified no issues during our audit that required us to use our additional powers under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Independence

We communicated our assessment of independence in our Audit Results Report to the Audit Committee on 23 September 2016. In our professional judgement the firm is independent and the objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff has not been compromised within the meaning regulatory and professional requirements.

Control Themes and Observations

As part of our work, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control identified during our audit. We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in the financial statements and which the Council does not know about.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding binoculars to their eyes. The person's face is partially visible in the background, looking through the lenses. A bright yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text "Focused on your future".

Focused on your
future

Focused on your future

Area	Issue	Impact
Faster close	<p>From the 2017/18 financial year, the deadline for preparing the Council's financial statements will move to 31 May from 30 June. In addition, the deadline for completing the statutory audit will move to 31 July from 30 September.</p>	<p>The faster closedown timetable requires the Council to adjust its timetable for preparing the accounts, as well as the budget setting process and the timing of committee meetings.</p> <p>It requires upfront planning to identify areas of the accounts that can be prepared earlier, before the 31 March, and there will be a need to establish robust basis for estimations across a wider number of entries in the financial statements.</p> <p>For the 2016/17 audit, we are working with officers to bring our work forward to support the transition ahead of the new deadlines in 2017/18.</p>
Appointment of auditors	<p>The current audit contracts expire on the completion of the 2017/18 audit. The expiry of contracts also marks the end of the current mandatory regime for auditor appointments.</p> <p>After this, the Council can exercise choice about whether it decides to opt in to the authorised national scheme, or whether to make other arrangements to appoint its own auditors.</p> <p>In July 2016, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government specified Public Sector Audit Appointments limited (PSAA) as an appointing person under regulation 3 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015.</p> <p>PSAA will be able to appoint an auditor to relevant authorities that choose to opt into its national collective scheme.</p>	<p>Appointment of auditors for the 2018/19 financial year is required by 31 December 2017.</p> <p>The Council should consider whether it intends to opt into the appointed person scheme to appoint its auditors from 2018/19 or if the Council should make its own arrangements following the legislative requirements.</p>

Appendix A

Audit Fees



Appendix A Audit Fees

Our fee for 2015/16 is in line with the fee reported in our Annual Results Report.

Description	Final Fee 2015/16 £	Planned Fee 2015/16 £	Scale Fee 2015/16 £	Final Fee 2014/15 £
Total Audit Fee - Code work	55,482	55,482	55,482	55,482
Total Audit Fee - Certification of claims and returns	5,492*	5,492	5,492	5,492

We confirm we have not undertaken any non-audit work outside of the PSAA's requirements.

* Our work to certify the Housing Benefit claim is ongoing and we will report any additional fee due to any additional work required to quantify errors in the claim in our certification report.

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ED None

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