

# New Forest District Council

Annual Audit Letter for the year  
ended 31 March 2018

August 2018

The EY logo consists of the letters 'EY' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A yellow triangle is positioned above the 'Y', pointing downwards towards the letters.

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# Contents

01

Executive  
Summary



03

Financial Statement  
Audit



05

Other Reporting  
Issues



07

Audit Fees



02

Purpose and  
Responsibilities



04

Value for  
Money



06

Focused on your  
future



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) have issued a 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies'. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website ([www.psa.co.uk](http://www.psa.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 (updated 23 February 2017)' 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.



# 01 Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

We are required to issue an annual audit letter to the New Forest District Council (the Council) following completion of our audit procedures for the year ended 31 March 2018. Below are the results and conclusions on the significant areas of the audit process.

| Area of Work   | Conclusion  |
|--|---|
| <b>Opinion on the Council's:</b>   | Unqualified - the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2018 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended |
| ▶ Financial statements   |   |
| ▶ Consistency of other information published with the financial statements                         | Other information published with the financial statements was consistent with the Annual Accounts   |
| <b>Concluding on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness</b> | We concluded that you have put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources  |

| Area of Work  | Conclusion  |
|---|---|
| <b>Reports by exception:</b>  |   |
| ▶ Consistency of Governance Statement   | The 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   |
|---|--|
| <b>Reporting to the National Audit Office (NAO) on our review of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return (WGA).</b> | We had no matters to report. The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £350mn. Therefore, we did not perform any audit procedures on the consolidation pack. |



## Executive Summary (cont'd)

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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 16 July 2018. |
| 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 July 2018.          |

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

Kevin Suter  
Associate Partner  
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP



02

## Purpose and Responsibilities

# Purpose and Responsibilities

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## 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 2017/18 Audit Results Report to the 27 July 2018 Audit Committee, 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 of the Appointed Auditor

Our 2017/18 audit work has been undertaken in accordance with the Audit Plan that we issued on 8 March 2018 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 2017/18 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 the 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 you Whole of Government Accounts return. The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £500mn. 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. 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.



03

## Financial Statement Audit



# Financial Statement Audit

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## 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 27 July 2018. Our detailed findings were reported to the 27 July 2018 Audit Committee.

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows:

| Significant Risk  | Conclusion  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Misstatements due to fraud or error</b></p> <p>The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.</p> <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>We performed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ tested the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements;</li><li>▪ reviewed accounting estimates for evidence of management bias in how they had been arrived at, e.g. understating assumptions about accruals; and</li><li>▪ evaluated the business rationale for significant unusual transactions, e.g. individual material items, anomalies in accounting treatment, transactions put through the ledger at unusual times.</li></ul> <p>We did not identify any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override.</p> <p>We did not identify 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> |

# Financial Statement Audit (cont'd)

The key issues identified as part of our audit were as follows: (cont'd)

| Significant Risk   | Conclusion   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition</b></p> <p>Auditing standards also required us to presume that there is a risk that revenue and expenditure may be misstated due to improper recognition or manipulation.</p> <p>Having assessed the key income and expenditure streams of the Council, we judged that there was material opportunity and incentive for the incorrect classification of revenue spend as capital expenditure.</p> | <p>We performed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documented our understanding of the controls relevant to this significant risk and confirmed they have been appropriately designed.</li> <li>Obtained breakdown of capital additions in the year and reviewed the descriptions to identify any items that could be revenue in nature.</li> <li>Amended our sample sizes when testing additions and REFCUS to reflect the existence of this risk. Agreed samples to source documentation to ensure the capital/revenue split was reasonable.</li> <li>Designed journal procedures to identify and review adjustment manual journals that moved amounts from revenue codes to capital codes.</li> </ul> <p>Our testing did not identify any material misstatements from revenue and expenditure recognition.</p> <p>Capital additions and REFCUS were appropriately classified.</p> <p>Overall our audit work did not identify any material issues or unusual transactions to indicate any misreporting of the Council's financial position.</p> |

| Other Key Findings                      | Conclusion  |
|---|---|
| Property, Plant and Equipment valuation | <p>The Authority had not valued its PPE as at the balance sheet date, so we undertook procedures to ensure it was still materially correctly stated.</p> <p>Our work performed has not identified any risks of material misstatement, the fair value of Property, Plant and Equipment are recorded correctly in the balance sheet.</p>  |
| Valuation of Council Dwellings          | <p>Our work performed over the valuation of Council Dwellings has not identified any material misstatements.</p> <p>In term of the revised method of HRA depreciation, we have challenged the methodology and the assumptions made by management, along with performing benchmarking against other authorities. This resulted in a corrected misstatement that we reported to the Audit Committee on 27 July 2018.</p>          |
| Pension Liability                       | <p>In order to produce their report the pension actuary takes data from earlier in the year, and estimates the value of the pension assets and liabilities as at the year-end.</p> <p>Our testing identified that the value of the Pension Fund as at 31 March 2018 differed from the actuaries estimate, however NFDC's share of that variance was only £799,000, and as not material to the accounts remained unadjusted.</p> |
| Restatement of the CIES and EFA         | <p>During the year, the Portfolios have changed within the Council. This change will require a full retrospective restatement of impacted statements.</p> <p>We have not identified any misstatements through our work performed on the restatement of the CIES and EFA.</p>  |

## Financial Statement Audit (cont'd)

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### Our application of materiality

When establishing our overall audit strategy, we determined a magnitude of uncorrected misstatements that we judged would be material for the financial statements as a whole.

| Item                 | Thresholds applied  |
|----------------------|---|
| Planning materiality | We determined planning materiality to be £2.143mn (2017: £2.051mn), which is 2% of gross expenditure reported in the accounts.<br>We consider gross expenditure to be one of the principal considerations for stakeholders in assessing the financial performance of the Council. |
| Reporting threshold  | We agreed with the Audit Committee that we would report to the Committee all audit differences in excess of £107k (2017: £103k)   |

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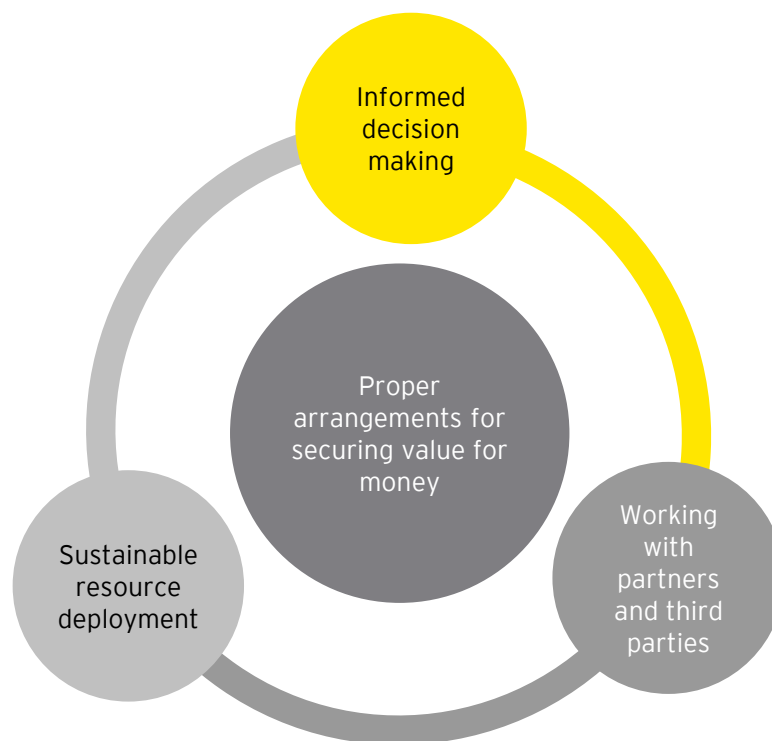


# 04 Value for Money

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 did not identify any significant risks in relation to these criteria. We have performed the procedures outlined in our audit plan. We did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

We therefore issued an unqualified value for money conclusion on 27 July 2018.



05

## Other Reporting Issues



## Other Reporting Issues

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### Whole of Government Accounts

The Council is below the specified audit threshold of £500mn. 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 completed this work and did not identify any areas of concern.

### 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.



## Other Reporting Issues (cont'd)

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### Objections Received

We did not receive any objections to the 2017/18 financial statements from members 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 27 July 2018. 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 adopted a fully substantive approach and have therefore not tested the operation of controls.

Our audit did not identify any controls issues to bring to the attention of the Audit Committee.





07

Focused on your future



## Focused on your future

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom introduces the application of new accounting standards in future years. The impact on the Council is summarised in the table below.

| Standard   | Issue   | Impact   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>IFRS 9 Financial Instruments</b>                  | <p>Applicable for local authority accounts from the 2018/19 financial year and will change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How financial assets are classified and measured;</li> <li>▶ How the impairment of financial assets are calculated; and</li> <li>▶ The disclosure requirements for financial assets.</li> </ul> <p>There are transitional arrangements within the standard and the 2018/19 Accounting Code of Practice for Local Authorities has now been issued, providing guidance on the application of IFRS 9. In advance of the Guidance Notes being issued, CIPFA have issued some provisional information providing detail on the impact on local authority accounting of IFRS 9, however the key outstanding issue is whether any accounting statutory overrides will be introduced to mitigate any impact.</p>  | <p>Although the Code has now been issued, providing guidance on the application of the standard, along with other provisional information issued by CIPFA on the approach to adopting IFRS 9, until the Guidance Notes are issued and any statutory overrides are confirmed there remains some uncertainty. However, what is clear is that the Council will have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reclassify existing financial instrument assets</li> <li>▶ Re-measure and recalculate potential impairments of those assets; and</li> <li>▶ Prepare additional disclosure notes for material items.</li> </ul> |
| <b>IFRS 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers</b> | <p>Applicable for local authority accounts from the 2018/19 financial year. This new standard deals with accounting for all contracts with customers except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Leases;</li> <li>▶ Financial instruments;</li> <li>▶ Insurance contracts; and</li> <li>▶ For local authorities; Council Tax and NDR income.</li> </ul> <p>The key requirements of the standard cover the identification of performance obligations under customer contracts and the linking of income to the meeting of those performance obligations.</p> <p>Now that the 2018/19 Accounting Code of Practice for Local Authorities has been issued it is becoming clear what the impact on local authority accounting will be. As the vast majority of revenue streams of Local Authorities fall outside the scope of IFRS 15, the impact of this standard is likely to be limited.</p> | <p>As with IFRS 9, some provisional information on the approach to adopting IFRS 15 has been issued by CIPFA in advance of the Guidance Notes. Now that the Code has been issued, initial views have been confirmed; that due to the revenue streams of Local Authorities the impact of this standard is likely to be limited.</p> <p>The standard is far more likely to impact on Local Authority Trading Companies who will have material revenue streams arising from contracts with customers.</p>   |



## Focused on your future (cont'd)

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| Standard              | Issue   | Impact  |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>IFRS 16 Leases</b> | <p>It is currently proposed that IFRS 16 will be applicable for local authority accounts from the 2019/20 financial year.</p> <p>Whilst the definition of a lease remains similar to the current leasing standard; IAS 17, for local authorities who lease a large number of assets the new standard will have a significant impact, with nearly all current leases being included on the balance sheet.</p> <p>There are transitional arrangements within the standard and although the 2019/20 Accounting Code of Practice for Local Authorities has yet to be issued, CIPFA have issued some limited provisional information which begins to clarify what the impact on local authority accounting will be. Whether any accounting statutory overrides will be introduced to mitigate any impact remains an outstanding issue.</p> | <p>Until the 2019/20 Accounting Code is issued and any statutory overrides are confirmed there remains some uncertainty in this area.</p> <p>However, what is clear is that the Council will need to undertake a detailed exercise to identify all of its leases and capture the relevant information for them. The Council must therefore ensure that all lease arrangements are fully documented.</p> |

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# 08 Audit Fees

## Audit Fees

Our fee for 2017/18 is in line with the scale fee set by the PSAA and reported in our Audit Plan.

| Description   | Final Fee 2017/18<br>£ | Planned Fee 2017/18<br>£ | Scale Fee 2017/18<br>£ | Final Fee 2016/17<br>£ |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Total Audit Fee - Council                             | 56,461                 | 55,482                   | 55,482                 | 56,462                 |
| Total Audit Fee - Certification of claims and returns | TBC                    | 5,492                    | 5,492                  | 4,253                  |

The final fee is above plan by £979, due to the additional work undertaken on the restated CIES and EFA. This is still subject to PSAA approval.

The work on certification of claims and returns is not completed, we will communicate the final fee in our grant certification report.

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

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