



# The Audit Plan for Maidstone Borough Council

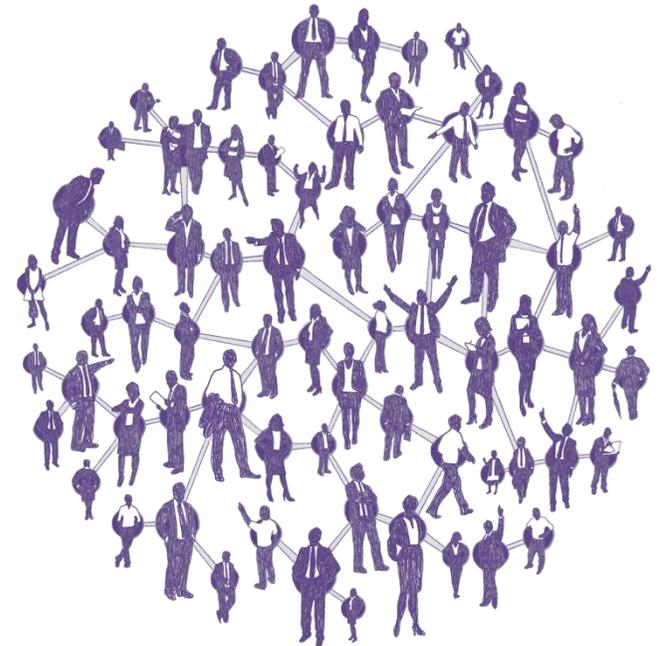
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**Year ended 31 March 2017**

20 March 2017

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20 March 2017

Dear Members of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

### **Audit Plan for Maidstone Borough Council for the year ending 31 March 2017**

This Audit Plan sets out for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Maidstone Borough Council, the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee), an overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260. This document is to help you understand the consequences of our work, discuss issues of risk and the concept of materiality with us, and identify any areas where you may request us to undertake additional procedures. It also helps us gain a better understanding of the Council and your environment. The contents of the Plan have been discussed with management.

We are required to perform our audit in line with Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2015. Our responsibilities under the Code are to:

- give an opinion on the Council's financial statements
- satisfy ourselves the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view.

The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit planning process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change. In particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or all weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

We look forward to working with you during the course of the audit.

Yours sincerely

Darren Wells

Engagement Lead

#### **Chartered Accountants**

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# Understanding your business and key developments

## Developments

### Devolution and Partnership Working

Whilst Brexit has put some of the Kent devolution discussions on hold, the Council is continuing to develop its relationships with the other districts in North Kent, including some who haven't been the Council's traditional partners in joint working. Areas where joint working can be further advanced are currently being worked through as part of longer term plans to help ensure financial sustainability for the Council and across the whole of Kent as well.

### Demand for Temporary Housing

The demand for temporary housing within the Borough is coming under continued pressure, with the level of homelessness continuing to rise during the year. The pressure on suitable accommodation is not helped by other councils purchasing properties within the Borough to house their own homeless people, which then impacts on the accommodation available to house local homeless people. The Council has started to purchase its own properties to provide some of this accommodation with other schemes in the pipeline to provide a sustainable solution to this problem.

## Key challenges

### Autumn Statement and Spring Budget

The Chancellor detailed plans in the Autumn Statement to increase funding for Housing and Infrastructure, and further extend devolved powers to Local Authorities. Increases in the funding for adult social care were also announced in the Spring Budget.

The Council has a good track record of achieving financial targets, but recognises this is going to be even more challenging going forward.

### Identifying Savings and Income Generation

The Council has been able to identify sufficient savings and income generation opportunities to deliver a balanced budget for 2017/18 and 2018/19, but further savings are still needed for 2019/20 onwards. The Council will need to monitor these schemes closely to ensure they deliver the savings and benefits anticipated, and identify alternative schemes if needed.

## Key performance indicators

Measure	Value	Trend v Budget
Revenue Outturn (at M9)	£19.7m	£288k
Savings plans	£4m	£0.6m
Capital Programme	£9.52m	£1.80m

## Financial reporting changes

### CIPFA Code of Practice 2016/17 (the Code)

Changes to the Code in 2016/17 reflect aims of the 'Telling the Story' project, to streamline the financial statements to be more in line with internal organisational reporting and improve accessibility to the reader of the financial statements.

The changes affect the presentation of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the Movement in Reserves Statements, segmental reporting disclosures and a new Expenditure and Funding Analysis note has been introduced. The Code also requires these amendments to be reflected in the 2015/16 comparatives by way of a prior period adjustment.

### Earlier closedown

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require councils to bring forward the approval and audit of financial statements to 31 July by the 2017/18 financial year. 2016/17 is the last year for the Council to make sure it has its processes ready to make this a reality in 2017/18.

### Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework

CIPFA/Solace have issued a new Framework which applies to Annual Governance Statements from 2016/17 onwards. We will ensure that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place as part of our review at year end.

## Our response

- We aim to complete all our substantive audit work of your financial statements by the end of July 2017
- As part of our opinion on your financial statements, we will consider whether your financial statements accurately reflect the financial reporting changes in the 2016/17 Code
- We will review how the Council is working with partners as part of our work in reaching our Value for Money (VfM) conclusion. We will also consider your arrangements for managing and reporting your financial resources as part of this VfM Work
- We will keep you informed of changes to the financial reporting requirements for 2016/17 through on-going discussions and invitations to our technical update workshops.

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# Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit. The concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law. An item does not necessarily have to be large to be considered to have a material effect on the financial statements. An item may be considered to be material by nature, for example, when greater precision is required (e.g. senior manager salaries and allowances).

We determine planning materiality (materiality for the financial statements as a whole determined at the planning stage of the audit) in order to estimate the tolerable level of misstatement in the financial statements, assist in establishing the scope of our audit engagement and audit tests, calculate sample sizes and assist in evaluating the effect of known and likely misstatements in the financial statements.

We have determined planning materiality based upon professional judgement in the context of our knowledge of the Council. In line with previous years, we have calculated financial statements materiality based on a proportion of the gross revenue expenditure of the Council. For purposes of planning the audit we have determined overall materiality to be £1,787k (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure). In the previous year, we determined materiality to be £1,794k (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure). Our assessment of materiality is kept under review throughout the audit process and we will advise you if we revise this during the audit.

Under ISA 450, auditors also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulation of such amounts would have a material effect on the financial statements. "Trivial" matters are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any criteria of size, nature or circumstances. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £89k.

ISA 320 also requires auditors to determine separate, lower, materiality levels where there are 'particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures for which misstatements of lesser amounts than materiality for the financial statements as a whole could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users'. For the Council we have determined that cash warrants a lower level of materiality due to its sensitive nature and have set materiality for this area at £500k.

Misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements; Judgments about materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances, and are affected by the size or nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both; and Judgments about matters that are material to users of the financial statements are based on a consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group. The possible effect of misstatements on specific individual users, whose needs may vary widely, is not considered. (ISA (UK and Ireland) 320)

# Significant risks identified

An audit is focused on risks. Significant risks are defined by ISAs (UK and Ireland) as risks that, in the judgment of the auditor, require special audit consideration. In identifying risks, audit teams consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood. Significant risks are those risks that have a higher risk of material misstatement.

Significant risk	Description	Audit procedures
<b>The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions</b>	<p>Under ISA (UK and Ireland) 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue streams may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Maidstone Borough Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition</li> <li>• opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited</li> <li>• The culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Maidstone Borough Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable</li> </ul> <p>Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for Maidstone Borough Council.</p>
<b>Management over-ride of controls</b>	<p>Under ISA (UK and Ireland) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p><b>Work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management</li> <li>• Review of journal entry process and selection of unusual journal entries for testing back to supporting documentation</li> <li>• Review of unusual significant transactions</li> </ul>
<b>The expenditure cycle includes fraudulent transactions</b>	<p>Practice Note 10 suggests that the risk of material misstatement due to fraudulent financial reporting that may arise from the manipulation of expenditure recognition needs to be considered.</p>	<p>We have considered this risk and do not consider it to require additional audit procedures because, based on your 2015/16 actual expenditure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 58% relates to housing benefit expenditure, on which we perform detailed testing both for the purpose of our Accounts opinion, and our certification of the Council's housing benefit subsidy claim, which takes place later in the year.</li> <li>• The other main areas of expenditure are covered by the risks raised in respect of Operating Expenditure and Employee Remuneration, which can be seen on the following page of the Plan.</li> </ul>

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, due to either size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty." (ISA (UK and Ireland) 315) . In making the review of unusual significant transactions "the auditor shall treat identified significant related party transactions outside the entity's normal course of business as giving rise to significant risks." (ISA (UK and Ireland) 550)

# Other risks identified

Reasonably possible risks (RPRs) are, in the auditor's judgment, other risk areas which the auditor has identified as an area where the likelihood of material misstatement cannot be reduced to remote, without the need for gaining an understanding of the associated control environment, along with the performance of an appropriate level of substantive work. The risk of misstatement for an RPR or other risk is lower than that for a significant risk, and they are not considered to be areas that are highly judgmental, or unusual in relation to the day to day activities of the business.

Reasonably possible risks	Description of risk	Audit procedures
Operating expenses	Year end creditors and accruals are understated or not recorded in the correct period.	<p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have performed a walkthrough of the Council's operating expenses system to update our understanding of the controls in place</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform substantive testing of operating expenditure across the year</li> <li>Testing of creditor payments, including accruals, for completeness, classification and occurrence.</li> <li>Review of control account reconciliations</li> <li>Cut-off testing of expenditure incurred either side of year end</li> <li>Review the allocation of apportioning expenses in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) in line with the changes made as part of the CIPFA Telling the Story presentation changes.</li> </ul>
Employee remuneration (Payroll)	Employee remuneration accruals are understated	<p><b>Work completed to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have performed a walkthrough of the Council's payroll system to update our understanding of the controls in place</li> </ul> <p><b>Further work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the reconciliation between the payroll system and the general ledger at year end.</li> <li>Undertake substantive testing of employee remuneration expenses across the year</li> <li>Perform a trend analysis of employee remuneration expenses across the year and undertake follow up procedures on any unexpected movements or variances identified.</li> </ul>

## Other risks identified (continued)

Reasonably possible risks	Description of risk	Audit procedures
Valuation of the pension fund net liability	The Council's pension fund net liability that is reflected in its balance sheet represents a significant estimate in the financial statements.	<p><b>Work planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will identify the controls put in place by management to ensure that the pension fund liability is not materially misstated. We will also assess whether these controls were implemented as expected and whether they are sufficient to mitigate the risk of material misstatement.</li> <li>• Review the competence, expertise and objectivity of the actuary who carried out your pension fund valuation. We will also gain an understanding of the basis on which your valuation is carried out.</li> <li>• Undertake procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made.</li> <li>• Review the consistency of the pension fund net liability and disclosures in the notes to the financial statements with the actuarial report from your actuary.</li> <li>• We will also write to the auditor of the Kent Superannuation Fund to gain assurance over the data provided to the Actuary by the Fund on behalf of the Council to enable them to come up with a reasonable estimate for inclusion within the Council's Accounts.</li> </ul>

"In respect of some risks, the auditor may judge that it is not possible or practicable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence only from substantive procedures. Such risks may relate to the inaccurate or incomplete recording of routine and significant classes of transactions or account balances, the characteristics of which often permit highly automated processing with little or no manual intervention. In such cases, the entity's controls over such risks are relevant to the audit and the auditor shall obtain an understanding of them." (ISA (UK and Ireland) 315)

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# Other risks identified (continued)

## Going concern

As auditors, we are required to “obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence about the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern assumption in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and to conclude whether there is a material uncertainty about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern” (ISA (UK and Ireland) 570). We will review the management's assessment of the going concern assumption and the disclosures in the financial statements.

## Other material balances and transactions

Under International Standards on Auditing, "irrespective of the assessed risks of material misstatement, the auditor shall design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transactions, account balance and disclosure". All other material balances and transaction streams will therefore be audited. However, the procedures will not be as extensive as the procedures adopted for the risks identified in the previous sections but will include:

- Heritage assets
- Cash and cash equivalents
- Trade and other receivables
- Borrowings and other liabilities (long and short term)
- Provisions
- Useable and unusable reserves
- Movement in Reserves Statement and associated notes
- Statement of cash flows and associated notes
- Financing and investment income and expenditure
- Taxation and non-specific grants
- New note disclosures
- Officers' remuneration note
- Leases note
- Related party transactions note
- Capital expenditure and capital financing note
- Financial instruments note
- Collection Fund and associated notes
- Funds held on trust note

# Value for Money

## Background

The Code requires us to consider 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 (VfM) conclusion.

The National Audit Office (NAO) issued its guidance for auditors on value for money work for 2016/17 in November 2016. The guidance states that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has proper arrangements in place.

The guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

*In all significant respects, the audited body takes properly informed decisions and deploys resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.*

This is supported by three sub-criteria as set out opposite:

Sub-criteria	Detail
Informed decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting in the public interest, through demonstrating and applying the principles and values of sound governance</li> <li>Understanding and using appropriate cost and performance information (including, where relevant, information from regulatory/monitoring bodies) to support informed decision making and performance management</li> <li>Reliable and timely financial reporting that supports the delivery of strategic priorities</li> <li>Managing risks effectively and maintaining a sound system of internal control</li> </ul>
Sustainable resource deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and maintain statutory functions</li> <li>Managing and utilising assets effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities</li> <li>Planning, organising and developing the workforce effectively to deliver strategic priorities.</li> </ul>
Working with partners and other third parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with third parties effectively to deliver strategic priorities</li> <li>Commissioning services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities</li> <li>Procuring supplies and services effectively to support the delivery of strategic priorities.</li> </ul>

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# Value for Money (continued)

## **Risk assessment**

We have carried out an initial risk assessment based on the NAO's auditor's guidance note (AGN03). In our initial risk assessment, we considered:

- our cumulative knowledge of the Council, including work performed in previous years in respect of the VfM conclusion and the opinion on the financial statements.
- the findings of other inspectorates and review agencies.
- any illustrative significant risks identified and communicated by the NAO in its Supporting Information.
- any other evidence which we consider necessary to conclude on your arrangements.

We have identified one significant risk which we are required to communicate to you. This is set out overleaf.

## **Reporting**

The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and in the Annual Audit Letter.

We will include our conclusion in our auditor's report on your financial statements which we will give by the end of September 2017.

## Value for money (continued)

We set out below the significant risks we have identified as a result of our initial risk assessment and the work we propose to address these risks.

Significant risk	Link to sub-criteria	Work proposed to address
<p><b>Financial position</b> On its current trajectory, the Council is behind on its planned in-year General Fund position, largely due to the costs of providing temporary housing to those who have been made homeless. However an action plan has been put in place to manage this overspend during the course of 2016-17 to return the position to balance by year end.</p> <p>The longer term picture also looks challenging due to the likely continuation of pressures on temporary accommodation, the cessation of the Revenue Support Grant, along with changes to other areas such as Business Rates Retention. The Council will need to manage its financial position and savings targets closely during the medium term period to avoid a negative impact on the long term financial stability of the Council.</p>	<p><b>Sustainable resource deployment</b> This links to your arrangements for planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and maintain statutory functions.</p>	<p>We propose to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the progress against the 2017-18 financial plan up to the completion of our audit; and</li> <li>• obtain an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, including progress on identifying the savings required in coming years, including discussions with Management on progress to date.</li> </ul>

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# Other audit responsibilities

In addition to our responsibilities under the Code of Practice in relation to your financial statements and arrangements for economy, efficiency and effectiveness we have a number of other audit responsibilities, as follows:

- We will undertake work to satisfy ourselves that the disclosures made in your Annual Governance Statement are in line with CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and consistent with our knowledge of the Council.
- We will read your Narrative Statement and check that it is consistent with the financial statements on which we give an opinion and that the disclosures included in it are in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice.
- We will carry out work on your consolidation schedules for the Whole of Government Accounts process in accordance with NAO instructions to auditors.
- We consider our other duties under the Act and the Code, as and when required, including:
  - We will give electors the opportunity to raise questions about your financial statements and consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the financial statements;
  - issue of a report in the public interest; and
  - making a written recommendation to the Council, copied to the Secretary of State
- We certify completion of our audit.

# Results of interim audit work

The findings of our interim audit work, and the impact of our findings on the accounts audit approach, are summarised in the table below:

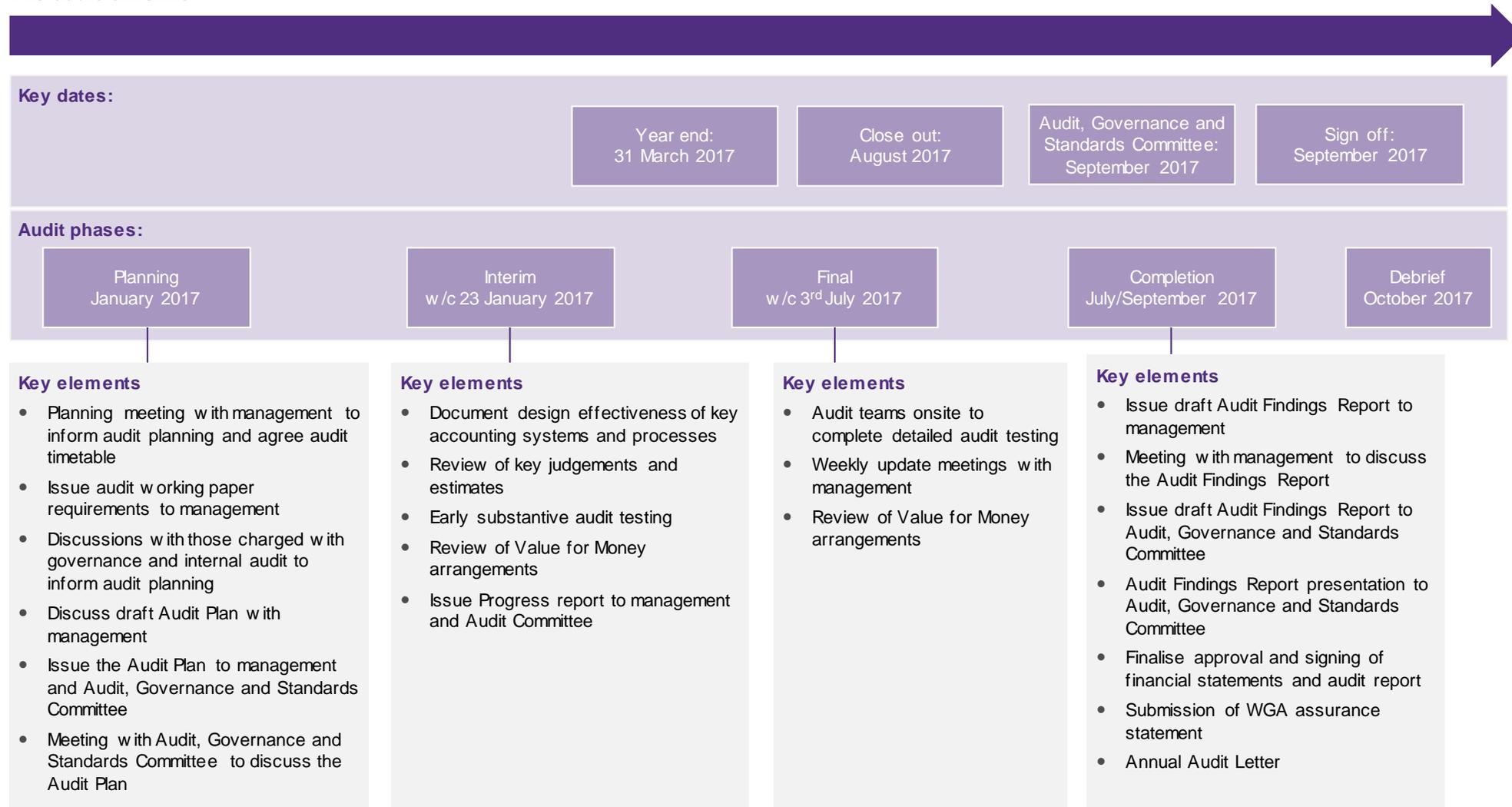
	<b>Work performed</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>Internal audit</b>	<p>We have completed a high level review of internal audit's overall arrangements. Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p> <p>We have also reviewed internal audit's work on the Council's key financial systems to date.</p>	<p>Overall, we have concluded that the internal audit service provides an independent and satisfactory service to the Council and that internal audit work contributes to an effective internal control environment.</p> <p>Our review of internal audit work to date has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach. We will update this review during the course of our audit to identify if any risks arise from reports issued later in the year.</p>
<b>Entity level controls</b>	<p>We have obtained an understanding of the overall control environment relevant to the preparation of the financial statements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values</li> <li>• Commitment to competence</li> <li>• Participation by those charged with governance</li> <li>• Management's philosophy and operating style</li> <li>• Organisational structure</li> <li>• Assignment of authority and responsibility</li> <li>• Human resource policies and practices</li> </ul>	<p>Our work has identified no material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's financial statements</p>
<b>Review of information technology controls</b>	<p>We performed a high level review of the general IT (information technology) control environment, as part of the overall review of the internal controls system.</p> <p>IT controls were observed to have been implemented in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work has identified no material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's financial statements</p>

## Results of interim audit work (continued)

	<b>Work performed</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>Walkthrough testing</b>	<p>We have completed walkthrough tests of the Council's controls operating in areas where we consider there is a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements. These areas are operating expenditure and employee remuneration.</p> <p>Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. Internal controls have been implemented by the Council in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work to date has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p> <p>We will undertake our walkthrough of the controls in place around the actuarial valuation of the pension fund liability at year end once the processes around these have taken place. Should any issues be identified then we will report this within the Audit Findings Report, which we will issue in September following the completion of our final accounts visit.</p>
<b>Journal entry controls</b>	<p>We have reviewed the Council's journal entry policies and procedures as part of determining our journal entry testing strategy and have not identified any material weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Council's control environment or financial statements.</p>	<p>Our work to date has not identified any weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p> <p>We will also be undertaking detailed testing on journal transactions recorded during the financial year, by extracting 'unusual' entries for further review. Again should any issues be identified from this work then we will report this within our Audit Findings Report, mentioned above.</p>

## The audit cycle

### The audit timeline



# Audit Fees

## Fees

	£
Council audit	50,475
Grant Certification	10,433
<b>Total audit fees (excluding VAT)</b>	<b>60,908</b>

## Our fee assumptions include:

- Supporting schedules to all figures in the accounts are supplied by the agreed dates and in accordance with the agreed upon information request list
- The scope of the audit, and the Council and its activities, have not changed significantly
- The Council will make available management and accounting staff to help us locate information and to provide explanations
- The accounts presented for audit are materially accurate, supporting working papers and evidence agree to the accounts, and all audit queries are resolved promptly.

## Grant certification

- Our fees for grant certification cover only housing benefit subsidy certification, which falls under the remit of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited
- Fees in respect of other grant work, such as reasonable assurance reports, are shown under 'Fees for other services'.

## Fees for other services

Fees for other services detailed on the following page, reflect those agreed at the time of issuing our Audit Plan. Any changes will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter.

## What is included within our fees

- A reliable and risk-focused audit appropriate for your business
- Feed back on your systems and processes, and identifying potential risks, opportunities and savings
- Invitations to events hosted by Grant Thornton in your sector, as well as the wider finance community
- Regular sector updates
- Constructive feedback on your people, your processes and your business plan
- Ad-hoc telephone calls and queries
- Technical briefings and updates
- Regular contact to discuss strategy and other important areas
- A review of accounting policies for appropriateness and consistency
- Annual technical updates for members of your finance team
- Regular Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Progress Reports

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# Independence and non-audit services

Ethical Standards and ISA (UK and Ireland) 260 require us to give you timely disclosure of matters relating to our independence. We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

For the purposes of our audit we have made enquiries of all Grant Thornton UK LLP teams providing services to Maidstone Borough Council, and can confirm that no audit related or non-audit services have been identified for the Council for 2016/17.

# Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standard on Auditing (UK and Ireland) (ISA) 260, as well as other ISAs (UK and Ireland) prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while The Audit Findings will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to the Council.

## Respective responsibilities

As auditor we are responsible for performing the audit in accordance with ISAs (UK and Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance.

This plan has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

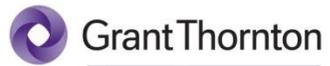
We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Council's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged. Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to the auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern	✓	✓



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