

Agenda Item No: 12
Report To: **Audit Committee**
Date: **30th June 2016**
Report Title: **Fee Letter 2016/17**
Report Author: Cover – Ben Lockwood
Main Report - Grant Thornton



Summary: Attached to this cover is copy of the Audit Fee Letter 2016/17, this outlines the proposed fee from our External Auditor. The scale of these fees is set by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) and the scope of the Audit is determined by the National Audit Office (NAO).
The fee is in line with the budget and reflects the reduction that was secured when the Audit contracts were last tendered.
The Letter also includes an outline audit timetable.

Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: N/A

Recommendations: **The committee is asked to**
i. **note the report**

Policy Overview: The current audit contracts secured a significant reduction in the audit fees charged for local authority audits and with the abolition of the Audit Commission the management of these contracts has transferred to PSAA and the NAO.
Member will recall that the last committee received a report on the process for retendering the audit provision.

Financial Implications: The proposed fee is within the budgetary framework

Contact: Ben Lockwood
Ben.lockwood@ashford.gov.uk
Tel 01233 330540

Ben Lockwood
Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent TN23 1PL

Grant Thornton UK LLP
Grant Thornton House
Melton Street
London NW1 2EP

T +44 (0)20 7383 5100

www.grant-thornton.co.uk

21 April 2016

Dear Ben

Planned audit fee for 2016/17

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 provides for the introduction of a new framework for local public audit. Under these provisions, the Audit Commission closed in March 2015 and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government delegated some statutory functions from the Audit Commission Act 1998 to Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) on a transitional basis.

PSAA will oversee the Commission's audit contracts for local government bodies until they end in 2018, following the announcement by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that it will extend transitional arrangements until 2017/18. PSAA's responsibilities include setting fees, appointing auditors and monitoring the quality of auditors' work. Further information on PSAA and its responsibilities are available on the [PSAA website](#).

Scale fee

PSAA prescribes that 'scale fees are based on the expectation that audited bodies are able to provide the auditor with complete and materially accurate financial statements, with supporting working papers, within agreed timescales'.

There are no planned changes to the overall work programme for local government audited bodies for 2016/17, bar the adoption of new measurement requirements for the Highways Network Asset.

PSAA have proposed that 2016/17 scale audit fees are set at the same level as the scale fees applicable for 2015/16. The Council's scale fee for 2016/17 has been set by PSAA at £60,311.

The audit planning process for 2016/17, including the risk assessment, will continue as the year progresses and fees will be reviewed and updated as necessary as our work progresses.

Scope of the audit fee

Under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office (NAO) is responsible for publishing the statutory Code of Audit Practice and guidance for auditors from April 2015. Audits of the accounts for 2016/17 will be undertaken under this Code, on the basis of the work programme and scale fees set out on the [PSAA website](#). Further information on the NAO Code and guidance is available on the [NAO website](#).

The scale fee covers:

- our audit of your financial statements
- our work to reach a conclusion on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources (the value for money conclusion)
- our work on your whole of government accounts return (if applicable).

PSAA will agree fees for considering objections from the point at which auditors accept an objection as valid, or any special investigations, as a variation to the scale fee.

Value for Money conclusion

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 NAO issued its guidance for auditors on value for money work in November 2015. The guidance states that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has put proper arrangements in place.

The NAO 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.

Certification of grant claims and returns [if applicable]

The Council's indicative grant certification fee has been set by PSAA at £10,650. This fee covers the cost of certifying the housing benefit subsidy claim only and is based on final 2014/15 certification fees.

The indicative fee for certification work is based on the expectation that you provide the auditor with complete and materially accurate claims and returns, with supporting working papers, within agreed timeframes.

Assurance engagements for other schemes will be subject to separate arrangements and fees agreed between the grant-paying body, the Council and ourselves.

Billing schedule

Fees will be billed as follows:

Main Audit fee	£
September 2016	15,077.75
December 2016	15,077.75
March 2017	15,077.75
June 2017	15,077.75
Total	60,311

Grant Certification	
March 2017	10,650

Outline audit timetable

We will undertake our audit planning and interim audit procedures in October 2016 to March 2017. Upon completion of this phase of our work we will issue a detailed audit plan setting out our findings and details of our audit approach. Our final accounts audit and work on the VfM conclusion will be completed in July 2017 and work on the whole of government accounts return in August 2017.

Phase of work	Timing	Outputs	Comments
Audit planning and interim audit	October 2016 – March 2017	Audit plan	The plan summarises the findings of our audit planning and our approach to the audit of the Council's accounts and VfM.
Final accounts audit	June 2017	Audit Findings (Report to those charged with governance)	This report sets out the findings of our accounts audit and VfM work for the consideration of those charged with governance.
VfM conclusion	June 2017	Audit Findings (Report to those charged with governance)	As above
Whole of government accounts	August 2017	Review on the WGA return	This work will be completed on receipt of the return.
Annual audit letter	August 2017	Annual audit letter to the Council	The letter will summarise the findings of all aspects of our work.
Grant certification	December 2017	Grant certification report	A report summarising the findings of our grant certification work

Our team

The key members of the audit team for 2016/17 are:

	Name	Phone Number	E-mail
Engagement Lead	Elizabeth Olive	0207 728 3329	elizabeth.l.olive@uk.gt.com
Engagement Manager	Lisa Robertson	020 7728 3341	lisa.e.robertson@uk.gt.com
In Charge Auditor	Neil Robertson	020 7388 3378	neil.a.robertson@uk.gt.com

Additional work

The scale fee excludes any work requested by the Council that we may agree to undertake outside of our Code audit. Each additional piece of work will be separately agreed and a detailed project specification and fee agreed with the Council.

Quality assurance

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 me in the first instance. Alternatively you may wish to contact Paul Dossett, our Public Sector Assurance regional lead partner, via paul.dossett@uk.gt.com@uk.gt.com.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Olive
Engagement Lead
For Grant Thornton UK LLP