



2016 Audit Plan

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Audit year: 2015-16

Issued: May 2016

Document reference: 318A2016

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2016 Audit Plan

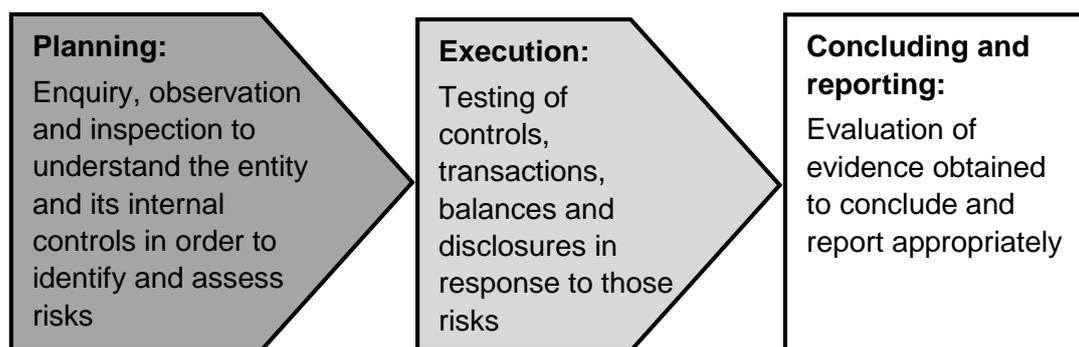
Summary

1. As your external auditor, my objective is to carry out an audit which discharges my statutory duties as Auditor General and fulfils my obligations under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), the Local Government Act 1999, and the Code of Audit Practice, namely to:
 - examine and certify whether your financial statements are ‘true and fair’;
 - assess whether you have made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources;
 - audit and assess whether you have discharged duties and met requirements of the Measure; and
 - undertake studies to enable me to make recommendations for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness or for improving financial or other management arrangements.
2. The purpose of this plan is to set out my proposed work, when it will be undertaken, how much it will cost and who will undertake it. There have been no limitations imposed on me in planning the scope of this audit. My responsibilities, along with those of management and those charged with governance, are set out in [Appendix 1](#).

Financial audit

3. It is my responsibility to issue a certificate and report on the financial statements which includes an opinion on their ‘truth and fairness’. I also consider whether or not North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and report by exception if the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with requirements. [Appendix 1](#) sets out my responsibilities in full. I am also responsible for the audit of the Authority’s Fire Fighters’ Pension Fund.
4. The audit work I undertake to fulfil my responsibilities responds to my assessment of risks. This understanding allows me to develop an audit approach which focuses on addressing specific risks whilst providing assurance for the financial statements as a whole. My audit approach consists of three phases as set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1: My audit approach



5. The risks of material misstatement and other audit issues are set out in [Exhibit 2](#), along with the work I intend to undertake to address them.

Exhibit 2: Financial audit risks

Financial audit risk	Proposed audit response
Land and buildings will be subject to a full revaluation on 31 March 2016. There is a risk that land and buildings transactions and balances may not be accurately recorded.	My audit team will review the revaluation exercise to ensure all transactions and balances are materially accurate.
The accounting treatment for property, plant and equipment is complex, increasing the risk of error or omission in the financial statements.	My audit team will review the accounting and disclosure of property, plant and equipment to ensure they are in line with the relevant IFRS requirements. In particular, we will review the accounting treatment of the jointly procured Ambulance and Fire Services Resource Centre in Wrexham.
The Authority participates in defined benefit pension schemes for both uniformed and non-uniformed employees. The accounting treatment for these schemes is complex, increasing the risk of error or omission in the financial statements.	My audit team will review the accounting and disclosure of the pension schemes to ensure they are in line with the relevant IFRS requirements.
The risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is viewed as a significant risk [ISA 240.31-33].	My audit team will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements; • review accounting estimates for biases; and • evaluate the rationale for any significant transactions outside the normal course of business.
There is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud in revenue recognition and as such is treated as a significant risk [ISA 240.26-27].	My audit team will consider the Authority's income streams and assess whether there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud related to revenue recognition. Where such risks exist, specific testing will be undertaken.
We have identified a number of disclosures as being material by nature; these include the disclosure of related parties and the remuneration note.	We will design detailed testing to obtain the required assurance that disclosures identified as material by nature have not been misstated.

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6. I do not seek to obtain absolute assurance on the truth and fairness of the financial statements and related notes, but adopt a concept of materiality. My aim is to identify material misstatements, that is, those that might result in a reader of the accounts being misled. The levels at which I judge such misstatements to be material will be reported to the Authority prior to completion of the audit.
 7. For reporting purposes, I will treat any misstatements below a 'trivial' level (the lower of five per cent of materiality or £100,000) as not requiring consideration by those charged with governance and therefore I will not report them.
 8. My fees are based on the following assumptions:
 - information provided to support the financial statements is timely, to the quality expected and has been subject to quality assurance review;
 - all appropriate officials will be available during the audit; and
 - you have all the necessary controls and checks in place to enable the Responsible Financial Officer to provide all the assurances that I require in the Letter of Representation addressed to me.

Performance audit

9. I am required by the Measure to carry out an improvement assessment for each improvement authority every year, to determine whether the authority is likely to comply with requirements to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. I must also carry out audits of whether the authority has discharged its duties under the Measure. My improvement assessment work, combined with my work on financial matters, also discharges my responsibility to satisfy myself that the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
10. In January this year, the Minister for Public Services advised me of the cessation of the grant that subsidised my Authority performance audit work under the Measure.
11. However for 2016-17, the Measure will still be in place, and I will still need to examine whether authorities will meet their duty to make arrangements for continuous improvement. The challenge for me in these uncertain times is to balance my existing, new and proposed statutory duties with the need to continue to undertake meaningful, risk-based and proportionate audits and assessments. In 2016-17, I will restrict my audit work to providing assurance that the Authority has carried out its statutory planning and reporting requirements, and monitoring governance and management arrangements to satisfy myself that the Authority has the necessary arrangements in place to deliver improvements.

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- 12.** In addition to my programme of audit and assessment work under the Measure, I undertake a programme of local government studies as required under sections 41 and 42 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. In 2016-17, this work will include:
- A study to address the dependency and demand for public services through the development of effective prevention approaches. In the last few years, councils in Wales have developed a model of public service delivery based on a deficit approach – focusing on problems, needs and deficiencies of individuals and communities, designing services to fill the gaps and fix the problems, leading to individuals and communities becoming both disempowered and dependent. This review will consider how councils are reducing demand for services, focusing on alternative methods of delivery, will consider the impact of decisions specifically within deprived communities. We will discuss with the Authority the focus of the study for fire authorities.
 - A study to evaluate strategic commissioning: the sharper focus on outcomes is leading to the re-orientation of public services around a commissioning model. The majority of service provider relationships are borne out of a desire to cut costs and improve service delivery; however, the opposite can (and often does) occur. Many local authorities underestimate the complexities involved in establishing a strong service provider partnership from the outset. Again, we will discuss with the Authority the specific focus of this study.
- 13.** In spring 2016 I will be engaging in a consultation with public service bodies on how I can best discharge my various duties, whilst striking the most appropriate balance and adding value by:
- providing assurance on the governance and stewardship of public money and assets;
 - offering insight on the extent to which resources are used wisely in meeting people's needs; and
 - identifying and promoting ways by which the provision of public services may be improved.
- 14.** The components of my performance audit work are shown in **Exhibit 3** and have been designed in order to help deliver the high-level objectives set out in our 2013-2016 corporate strategy (www.audit.wales/publication/wales-audit-office-corporate-strategy-2013-2016).

Exhibit 3: Components of my performance audit work



Fee, audit team and timetable

Fee

15. The Wales Audit Office does not generate profits on fees. Legislation requires that the fees charged may not exceed the full cost of exercising the function to which the fee relates. The fee rates are set at a level to recover that full cost. My fee rates have been held static for 2016 and my audit teams will continue to look for efficiencies in their audits and welcome working with you constructively on this. Your estimated fees for 2016, together with last year's actual fees, are set out in [Exhibit 4](#).

Exhibit 4: Audit fee

Audit area	Proposed fee (£) ¹	Actual fee last year (£)
Financial audit work ²	34,500	34,500
Performance audit work ³	15,300	15,136
Total fee	49,800	49,636

¹ The fees shown in this document are exclusive of VAT, which is no longer charged to you.

² Payable November 2015 to October 2016.

³ Payable April 2016 to March 2017.

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16. Planning will be ongoing, and changes to my programme of audit work and therefore my fee, may be required if any key new risks emerge. I shall make no changes without first discussing them with the Authority. Further information on my fee scales and fee setting can be found on the Wales Audit Office website at: www.audit.wales/about-us/fee-scales-and-fee-setting.

Audit team

17. The main members of my team, together with their contact details, are summarised in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5: My team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Jane Holownia	Engagement Director	029 2032 0500	jane.holownia.audit@wales
Mark Jones	Engagement Lead – Financial Audit	029 2032 0500	mark.jones@audit.wales
Amanda Hughes	Financial Audit Manager	079 6991 9986	amanda.hughes@audit.wales
Alan Hughes	Financial Audit Team Leader	077 9141 1985	alan.hughes@audit.wales
Andy Bruce	Performance Audit Manager	029 2032 0500	andy.bruce@audit.wales

18. I can confirm that my team members are all independent of the Authority and your officers. In addition, I am not aware of any potential conflicts of interest that I need to bring to your attention.

Timetable

19. I will provide reports, or other outputs as agreed, to the Authority covering the areas of work identified in this document. My key milestones are set out in [Exhibit 6](#).

Exhibit 6: Timetable

Planned output	Work undertaken	Report finalised
2016 Audit Plan	February to April 2016	April 2016
Financial accounts work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audit of Financial Statements Report• Opinion on Financial Statements• Financial Accounts Memorandum	February to September 2016	September 2016 September 2016 October 2016
Performance work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvement plan certificate• Assessment of performance certificate• Ongoing monitoring• Annual summary of audit and assessment reports	April 2016 to March 2017	July 2017

Appendix 1

Respective responsibilities

Financial audit

As amended by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013, the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 sets out my powers and duties to undertake your financial audit. It is my responsibility to issue a certificate and report on the financial statements which includes an opinion on:

- Their 'truth and fairness', providing assurance that they:
 - are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error;
 - comply with the statutory and other applicable requirements; and
 - comply with all relevant requirements for accounting presentation and disclosure.
- The consistency of information in the Annual Report with the financial statements.

I must also state by exception if the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with requirements, if proper accounting records have not been kept, if disclosures required for remuneration and other transactions have not been made or if I have not received all the information and explanations I require.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to assess whether the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. To achieve this, I consider:

- the results of the audit work undertaken on the financial statements;
- the Authority's system of internal control, as reported in the Annual Governance Statement and my report thereon;
- the results of other work carried out including work carried out under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) and any data-matching exercises;
- the results of the work of other external review bodies where relevant to my responsibilities; and
- any other work that addresses matters not covered by the above, and which I consider necessary to discharge my responsibilities.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 sets out the rights of the public and electors to inspect the Authority's financial statements and related documents, to ask me, as the Appointed Auditor questions about the accounts and, where appropriate, to challenge items in the accounts. I must also consider whether in the public interest, I should make a report on any matter which comes to my notice in the course of the audit.

My audit work does not relieve management and those charged with governance of their responsibilities which include:

- the preparation of the financial statements and Annual Report in accordance with applicable accounting standards and guidance;
- the keeping of proper accounting records;
- ensuring the regularity of financial transactions; and
- securing value for money in the use of resources.

Management agrees to provide me with:

- access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- additional information that I may request from management for the purpose of the audit; and
- unrestricted access to persons within the Authority from whom I determine it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

Management will need to provide me with written representations to confirm:

- that it has fulfilled its responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements;
- that all transactions have been recorded and are reflected in the financial statements;
- the completeness of the information provided to me for the purposes of the audit; and
- to support other audit evidence relevant to the financial statements or specific assertions in the financial statements if I deem it necessary or if required by ISAs.

Performance audit

The Measure places a general duty on improvement authorities to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions'. It also places specific requirements on authorities to set improvement objectives, and to publish annual improvement plans and assessments of performance. Improvement authorities are defined as county and county borough councils, national park authorities, and fire and rescue authorities.

The Measure also requires me to carry out an improvement assessment for each improvement authority every year, to determine whether the authority is likely to comply with its general duty and requirements of the Measure. The Auditor General must also carry out an audit of whether the authority has discharged its improvement planning and reporting duties.

The Auditor General may also in some circumstances carry out special inspections (under section 21), in respect of which he will provide a report to the relevant authorities and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). The Auditor General will summarise audit and assessment reports in his published Annual Improvement Report (under section 24). This will also summarise any reports of special inspections.

Appendix 2

National value-for-money studies

The Authority may also be interested in the national value-for-money examinations which I undertake, some of which will be of particular relevance to, and may involve evidence gathering across, local government. These studies are funded by the National Assembly and are presented to the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee to support its scrutiny of public expenditure.

The table below covers all of the value-for-money studies work currently programmed. The programme includes all-Wales summaries of audit work undertaken locally in the NHS and reactive examinations into specific issues of public concern that have been raised with me. In addition to the work outlined below, I may decide during the year to prepare other national reports summarising local audit work or based on the findings of reactive examinations.

Further updates on my programme of value-for-money studies will be provided to you within the regular progress reports prepared by my team.

Topic	Anticipated publication timeframe
Welsh Government acquisition and ownership of Cardiff Airport	Published 27 January 2016
The development of Natural Resources Wales	Published 4 February 2016
Operating theatres	Published 10 March 2016
Impact of private practice on NHS provision	Published 11 February 2016
Wales Life Sciences Investment Fund	March 2016
Welsh Government responses to audit recommendations (memorandum for the Public Accounts Committee)	Spring 2016
Coastal flood and erosion risk management	Spring 2016
Rail services	Spring 2016
Community safety	July 2016
Governance of the National Library of Wales	Spring 2016
Welsh Government oversight of further education institutions' finances and delivery	Autumn 2016
Public procurement (including development of the National Procurement Service)	Winter 2016

Topic	Anticipated publication timeframe
Early intervention and behaviour change	Spring/summer 2017 ⁴
Welsh Government interventions in local government	To be confirmed ⁵

I have been considering over recent months the inclusion in my programme of a number of new studies on:

- The NHS Wales Informatics Service
- Capital investment in schools (21st Century schools programme) and school places
- Further education finances
- Waste management
- The Supporting People programme
- Access to public services for people whose first language may not be English or Welsh and those who may be disadvantaged without access to specialist interpretation services

With the exception of the further education study, referred to in the table above, firm plans for these new studies are yet to be confirmed, although initial scoping work is underway.

⁴ My programme of good practice work includes a project that will aim to explore the range of behaviour change work across Welsh public services and opportunities to improve practice, deliver better outcomes for citizens, and achieve better value for money. The project will include a range of engagement events and the development of a community of practice to share learning and experience. I anticipate that the information and evidence gathered through this work will support the production of a report on this topic, although this is unlikely to be a traditional audit report and it would not be prepared until the first half of 2017.

⁵ Plans for this work have been under review in light of the Welsh Government commissioned review of the Anglesey intervention by the Public Policy Institute for Wales, and also to consider the implications for the work of plans for local government reform.

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