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External audit progress report and technical update

January 2016

External audit progress report and technical update – January 2016

This report provides the audit committee with an overview on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

The report also highlights the main technical issues which are currently having an impact in local government.

If you require any additional information regarding the issues included within this report, please contact a member of the audit team.

We have flagged the articles that we believe will have an impact at the Authority and given our perspective on the issue:

- ● High impact
- ● Medium impact
- ● Low impact
- ● For info

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Area	Comments
Governance arrangements work over the Better Care Fund.	The £3.8 billion Better Care Fund (BCF) (formerly the Integration Transformation Fund) was announced by the Government in the June 2013 Spending Round, to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care. The BCF is a single pooled budget to support health and social care services to work more closely together in local areas. The BCF not only brings together NHS and Local Government resources, but also provides a real opportunity to improve services and value for money, protecting and improving social care services by shifting resources from acute services into community and preventative settings. The governance arrangements for the BCF will therefore have to meet the requirements of all partners to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources. Each partner will also need to satisfy itself that the pooled budget complies with the requirements of its appropriate code of governance and annual governance reporting guidance. Each partner must also satisfy itself that all other regulatory requirements are met – for example, that discrete funding streams are only spent appropriately at a local level. Partners therefore need to make arrangements to ensure that that is happening. Additionally, there will be a requirement for an audit certificate on this expenditure and arrangements need to be in place to ensure appropriate records are kept to provide sufficient audit assurance. With this in mind, CCG governing bodies and Local Authority Executives are now considering whether governance arrangements and structures are fit for purpose and will ensure the effective management of the BCF and the pace of development and implementation. We are currently carrying out reviews of these governance arrangements and structures using the following Key Lines of Enquiry: ▪ Governance arrangements. ▪ Engagement and communication. ▪ Hosting arrangements. ▪ Signed agreement. ▪ Performance management. ▪ Financial management. For more information, please contact your audit manager, Matthew Arthur (matthew.arthur@kpmg.co.uk).

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Area	Comments
KPMG/Shelter report: Fix the housing shortage or see house prices quadruple in 20 years	Without a radical programme of house building, average house prices in England could double in just ten years to £446,000 at current prices, according to research. In twenty years they could quadruple, with the average house price estimated to rise to over £900,000 at current prices by 2034 if current trends continue. The research from KPMG and Shelter also reveals that more than half of all 20-34 year olds could be living with their parents by 2040, as soaring housing costs caused by the shortage of affordable homes leave more and more people priced out of a home of their own. The warning comes in a landmark report from KPMG and Shelter outlining how the 2015 government can turn the tide on the nation's housing shortage within a single parliament. With recent government figures showing that homeownership in England has been falling for over a decade, the consequences of our housing shortage are already being felt. The report sets out a blueprint for the essential reforms that will increase the supply of affordable homes and stabilise England's rollercoaster housing market. It calls on politicians to commit to an integrated range of key measures, including: ■ giving planning authorities the power to create 'New Homes Zones' that would drive forward the development of new homes. Combined with infrastructure, this would be led by local authorities, the private sector and local communities, and self-financed by sharing in the rising value of the land; ■ unlocking stalled sites to speed up development and stop land being left dormant, by charging council tax on the homes that should have been built after a reasonable period for construction has passed; ■ introducing a new National Housing Investment Bank to provide low cost, long term loans for housing providers, as part of a programme of innovative ways to finance affordable house building; ■ helping small builders to get back into the house building market by using government guarantees to improve access to finance; and ■ fully integrating new homes with local infrastructure and putting housing at the very centre of City Deals, to make sure towns and cities have the power to build the homes their communities need. To read the report, visit www.kpmg.com/UK/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Pages/building-the-homes-we-need–programme-2015.aspx For more information, please contact your audit manager, Matthew Arthur (matthew.arthur@kpmg.co.uk).

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Area	Comments
Better Care Fund Support Programme	The Better Care Fund Support Programme aims to help areas to overcome the barriers to the successful implementation of the Better Care Fund plans across England in 2015/16. KPMG is one of the partners that successfully bid to deliver the programme, on behalf of NHS England, alongside the Social Care Institute for Excellence ('SCIE'), PPL Consulting and the Berkeley Partnership. The focus has been on practical implementation support to deliver better care for the local population. Support has included: ■ Conferences, webinars and regional clinics – to explore the barriers to change and develop local plans to overcome them; ■ The Better Care Exchange – an online interactive space for knowledge sharing and collaboration (currently in development); ■ Virtual clinics – telephone support for BCF leads to discuss individual site issues with integration experts; and ■ Coaching and support – to enable good practice and insight gathering from within the BCF programme to support Better Care Learning Partners. A number of 'How to guides' have been developed on how to: ■ lead and manage Better Care implementation: www.scie.org.uk/about/files/nhs-england-bcf-leadership-how-to-guide.pdf ■ bring budgets together and use them to develop coordinated care provision: www.scie.org.uk/about/files/nhs-england-bcf-budgets-how-to-guide.pdf ■ work together across health, care and beyond: www.scie.org.uk/about/files/how-to-work-together-across-health-care-and-beyond.pdf The support programme also includes webinars. Further webinars are scheduled, but at present they cover the following topics: ■ Joint working; ■ Section 75 Arrangements – Pooled and unpooled budgets; and ■ Data sharing: More details on the programme, and a link to the webinar recordings, can be found on the SCIE website at www.scie.org.uk/about/partnerships-better-care.asp For more information, please contact your audit manager, Matthew Arthur (matthew.arthur@kpmg.co.uk).

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Area	Comments
Local Government Technical Update – February 2016	We are pleased to confirm that we will once again be running a series of local government accounts workshops for key members of your finance team. The workshops are focussed at Chief Accountants and similar staff who will be involved in and responsible for the 2015/16 close down and statement of accounts. The workshops will be led by our regional local government audit teams supported by our national local government technical lead Greg McIntosh. The agenda will include: ▪ Review of 2014/15; ▪ Key Issues and developments for 2015/16; ▪ Longer term developments; and ▪ Tax and Pensions specialists. The events are due to take place as follows: ▪ Leeds – 4 February 2016 ▪ Leicester – 5 February 2016 ▪ Preston – 8 February 2016 ▪ Birmingham – 12 February 2016 ▪ London (Canary Wharf) – 22 February 2016 ▪ Bristol – 24 February 2016 For more information, please contact your audit manager, Matthew Arthur (matthew.arthur@kpmg.co.uk).

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Area	Comments
KPMG publication titled: Value of Audit – Perspectives for Government	**What does this report address?** This report builds on the *Global Audit campaign – Value of Audit: Shaping the future of Corporate Reporting* – to look more closely at the issue of public trust in national governments and how the audit profession needs to adapt to rebuild this trust. Our objective is to articulate a clear opinion on the challenges and concepts critical to the value of audit in government today and in the future and how governments must respond in order to succeed. Through interviews with KPMG partners from nine countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, South Africa, the UK and the US) as well as some of our senior government audit clients from Canada, the Netherlands and the US, we have identified a number of challenges and concepts that are critical to the value of audit in government today and in the future. **What are the key issues?** ▪ The lack of consistent accounting standards around the world and the impacts on the usefulness of government financial statements. ▪ The importance of trust and independence of government across different markets. ▪ How government audits can provide accountability thereby enhancing the government's controls and instigating decision-making. ▪ The importance of technology integration and the issues that need to be addressed for successful implementation ▪ The degree of reliance on government financial reports as a result of differing approaches to conducting government audits The *Value of Audit: Perspectives for Government* report can be found on the KPMG website at https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/insights.html The *Value of Audit: Shaping the Future of Corporate Reporting* can be found on the KPMG website at www.kpmg.com/sg/en/topics/value-of-audit/Pages/default.aspx

Technical update

Area	Level of impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
New local audit framework	**Medium**	The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 included transitional arrangements covering the audit contracts originally let by the Audit Commission in 2012 and 2014. These contracts covered the audit of accounts up to 2016/17, and gave the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) the power to extend these contracts to 2019/20. DCLG have now announced that the audit contracts for large local government bodies (including district, unitary and county councils, police and fire bodies, transport bodies, combined authorities and national parks) will be extended to include the audit of the 2017/18 financial statements. From 2018/19, local government bodies will need to appoint their own auditors; it is not yet clear whether there will be a sector-led body that is able to undertake this role on behalf of bodies. CIPFA have now issued guidance that was commissioned by DCLG on the creation of Auditor Panels. The guidance is available at www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/publications/g/guide-to-auditor-panels-pdf The guidance provides options on establishing an Auditor Panel, and the roles and responsibilities the panels will have once established. NHS and smaller local government bodies (town and parish councils, and internal drainage boards), will not have their contracts extended, and will have to appoint their own auditors for 2017/18, one year earlier than for larger local government bodies.	***Members may wish to review the CIPFA guidance and begin initial discussions with colleagues about the approach the Authority may wish to adopt.***

Area	Level of impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
Reporting developments – Infrastructure assets	**Medium**	CIPFA/LASAAC, the group that produce the *Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting*, have confirmed that transport infrastructure assets owned by local authorities will be required to be included in the accounts from 2016/17. This would require prior period adjustments for 2015/16, including the opening position at 1 April 2015. The changes require local authorities to recognise the value of all transport infrastructure assets using the depreciated replacement cost method, i.e. the cost required to replace the asset with a new replacement depreciated over the life of the existing asset. Transport infrastructure assets include: - roads, bridges, roundabouts and traffic calming measures; - footways, footpaths and cycle tracks; - tunnels and underpasses; and - water supplies and drainage systems, as they support the assets identified above. Even non-highway authorities will be affected to the extent that footways etc are material to their accounts. Railway assets are not currently included in the proposals, although it is possible that these may be included in subsequent periods. CIPFA have issued a *Code of Practice on Transport Infrastructure Assets* which contains the requirements to be included in the Local Authority Code. This is available to purchase from the CIPFA website. Local authorities should have developed a project plan to identify all of the relevant transport infrastructure they own and a timetable for valuing these. CIPFA expects authorities to have undertaken the 1 April 2015 valuations by 31 December 2015. The Whole of Government Accounts submission includes unaudited data on transport infrastructure assets. 2013/14 data indicates assets of over £400 billion will be accounted for on local authority balance sheets. However, only 93% of authorities provided this information, and of these less than 70% used actual inventory data to complete the return. This indicates that the sector faces a significant challenge in accurately identifying the assets it owns and will have to account for.	***The Committee may wish to enquire of officers whether a project plan has been developed to address the requirements and review progress against this on a regular basis.***

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
The Local Government Association's 2015 Spending Review submission	**Medium**	In June 2015, the Local Government Association (LGA) set out proposals for the Government to consider as part of the Spending Review, aimed at streamlining public services, growth generating investment and social care and health – all while saving the public purse almost £2 billion a year by the end of the Parliament. The submission focusses on five core issues originally highlighted in *A Shared Commitment* (www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/L15-252+Spending+Review_WEB_new.pdf/3101e509-1e22-4c26-91ac-8fd8a953aba5), published in early 2015. The LGA hopes that local government can work with central government to balance the nation's books while improving public services and the local economic environment by delivering new, transformed and high-quality local services while at the same time reducing costs to the public sector. The LGA believes the Spending Review should: ■ enable wider integration of social care and health services to deliver savings and improve outcomes This requires the annual £700 million funding gap in social care services to be closed and a transformation fund worth £2 billion in each year of the Spending Review period be created to allow new ways of working to become commonplace. The Spending Review should also implement a single place-based budget for delivering all local services through a Local Public Services Fund as part of at least five devolution deals; ■ promote growth and productivity by accepting the case for further devolution of powers and funding that stretches beyond 25 November. The LGA is calling for devolution of, or local influence over, more than £60 billion of growth, skills and infrastructure funding over the Spending Review period, including: – the components for an ambitious and effective Local Growth Fund with agreed settlements in devolution deals that last until 2020/21 – a central-local partnership to deliver effective and targeted skills and employment initiatives – unlocking the ability of councils to contribute to the Government's target of 275,000 affordable homes built over the lifetime of the Parliament. ■ help councils adequately resource and deliver high quality public services by transforming the business rate mechanism and providing a four year local government finance settlement; and ■ help councils focus on driving efficiency and value for money through an assessment of the impact of unfunded cost burdens that core council budgets are going to face over the Spending Review period.	***The Committee may wish to seek assurances that the impact for their Authority is understood.***

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – Narrative statements	Low	Authorities will need to be aware that the *Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015* require local authorities to produce and publish a narrative statement. Section 8 of the Regulations, which apply first from the 2015/16 financial year, states: *Narrative statements* *1) A Category 1 authority must prepare a narrative statement in accordance with paragraph (2) in respect of each financial year.* *2) A narrative statement prepared under paragraph (1) must include comment by the authority on its financial performance and economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources over the financial year.* Authorities will need to publish the narrative statement along with the financial statements. The narrative statement does not form part of the financial statements and is therefore not subject to audit. As part of their audit work however, auditors will need to review the statement for consistency with their knowledge. The narrative statement replaces the explanatory foreword and will need to be prepared in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC's *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting* (the accounting code). The 2016/17 accounting code will contain high level principles for authorities to follow when preparing their narrative statements. The principles set out in the accounting code will also be relevant to 2015/16 and we understand that CIPFA/LASAAC is likely to publish an update to the 2015/16 accounting code to clarify this.	***The Committee may wish to seek assurances that their authorities have arrangements in place to meet the new requirements***

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Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – Exercise of public rights	**Low**	Authorities will be aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (the Regulations) set out new arrangements for the exercise of public rights from 2015/16 onwards. Paragraph 9(1) of the Regulations requires the responsible financial officer to commence the period for the exercise of public rights and to notify the local auditor of the date on which that period was commenced. Paragraph 9(2) is clear that the final approval of the statement of accounts by the authority prior to publication cannot take place *until after the conclusion of the period for the exercise of public rights*. As the thirty working day period for the exercise of public rights must include the first ten working days of July, this means that authorities will not be able to approve their audited accounts or publish before 15 July 2016.	***The Committee may wish to seek assurances that the necessary arrangements are in in place for their Authority.***

Technical update

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
Consultation on 2016/17 audit work programme and scales of fees	● Low	Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) has published its consultation on the 2016/17 proposed work programme and scales of fees. The consultation sets out the work that auditors will undertake at principal audited bodies for 2016/17, with the associated scales of fees. The consultation documents, and list of individual proposed scale fees, are available on the PSAA website at www.psaa.co.uk/audit-and-certification-fees/consultation-on-201617-proposed-fee-scales/ There are no planned changes to the overall work programme for 2016/17. It is proposed that scale fees are set at the same level as the scale fees applicable for 2015/16, set by the Audit Commission before it closed in March 2015. The Commission reduced scale fees from 2015/16 by 25 per cent, in addition to the reduction of up to 40 per cent made from 2012/13. Following completion of the Audit Commission's 2014/15 accounts, PSAA has received a payment in respect of the Audit Commission's retained earnings. PSAA will redistribute this and any other surpluses from audit fees to audited bodies, on a timetable to be established shortly. The work that auditors will carry out on the 2016/17 accounts will be completed based on the requirements set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and under the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office. The consultation closes on Friday 15 January 2016. PSAA will publish the final work programme and scales of fees for 2016/17 in March 2016.	***The Committee may wish to seek assurances on how their Authority have responded to the consultation.***

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NAO report – Devolving responsibilities to cities in England: Wave 1 City Deals	Low	Wave 1 City Deals encouraged cities to develop capacity to manage devolved funding and increased responsibility. The report finds it is too early to tell whether the deals will have any overall impact on growth, and that the government and the cities could have worked together in a more structured way to agree a consistent approach to evaluating the deals' impact. There have been early impacts from some of the individual programmes agreed in the deals. It has, however, taken longer for cities and departments to implement some of the programmes that required more innovative funding or assurance mechanisms. The government has set out its ambition to continue devolving responsibility for local growth to cities and other local places. The report highlights that both the government and local places can learn from the experience of Wave 1 City Deals to manage devolution to local places effectively. The report is available on the NAO website www.nao.org.uk/report/devolving-responsibilities-to-cities-in-england-wave-1-city-deals/	***The Committee may wish to seek assurances how their Authority fit into the emerging City Deals.***

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	For Information	Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has pioneered the concept of local devolution within England. 'Devo Manc" encompasses a broad range of proposals to address the challenges and opportunities GM is facing: **Health and Social Care** Greater Manchester is facing an estimated financial deficit of c. £2 billion by 2020/21. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in February 2015 between all partners in GM, committing the region to produce a comprehensive Strategic and sustainable Plan for health and social care. As part of the Plan, GM is seeking to use its share of the £8 billion promised to the NHS in the CSR to support new recurrent costs and protect social care budgets, closing over a quarter of the funding gap. A further investment by the partners of £500 million, phased over three years, will release future recurrent savings with a likely payback of £3 for every £1 invested. **GM proposals** In addition, GM has made a number of proposals to reform the way public services work together and deliver services within the region: ■ Investment in transport infrastructure ■ New funding mechanisms to support site remediation and infrastructure provision ■ Making better use of Social Housing Assets to support growth ■ Locally led low carbon ■ A scaled-up GM Reform Investment Fund ■ Devolution of decision making for apprenticeships and training, and reform to careers advice and guidance ■ Fundamental review of the way services to children are delivered ■ Research and innovation funding ■ Investment in integrated business support to drive growth and productivity ■ Reform of the New Homes Bonus ■ Further employment and skills reform ■ GM approach to data sharing across public agencies ■ Fiscal devolution, including reform to Business Rates, Council Tax, Stamp Duty Land Tax and a Hotel Bed Tax All of these proposals involve joint working, not just with other GM agencies, but also central government departments. This allows the existing financial resources provided to the region to be redeployed more efficiently to maximise the benefits to GM.

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
Care Act first-phase reforms – local experience of implementation	**For Information**	This report has been published by the National Audit Office and complements its earlier report on central government's approach to the Care Act first-phase reforms. This further report provides examples from local case study areas which show how different authorities are addressing risks arising from uncertainty in demand from carers and self-funders. The report was published on 3 August and is available from the NAO website at www.nao.org.uk/report/care-act-first-phase-reforms-local-experience-of-implementation/

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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) – VFM profiles update	For Information	Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) maintain the Value for Money profiles tool (VFM profiles) initially developed by the Audit Commission. The profiles were updated on 1 October 2015. The VFM profiles planned budget section now contains the 2015/16 data sourced from the Department for Communities and Local Government – General Fund Revenue Account Budget (RA). The values are adjusted with gross domestic product (GDP) deflators from the HM Treasury's publication in June 2015. The profiles can be accessed through the PSAA's homepage at http://www.psaa.co.uk/ Other sections of the VFM profiles have also been updated with the latest data values for the following data sources: ■ Inequality gap (2012/13) ■ Fuel poverty (2013) ■ Climate change (2013) ■ Alcohol related admissions (2013/14) ■ Mid-year population estimates (2014) ■ Chlamydia testing (2014) ■ Participation in education or work-based learning (2014) ■ Housing benefit speed of processing (2014/15) ■ CT and NNDR collection rates (2014/15) ■ NHS health checks (2014/15) ■ Planning applications (Quarter 4 2014/15) ■ Delayed transfers of care (Quarter 1 2015) ■ Under 5 provision (2015)

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Proposed changes to business rates and core grant	For Information	The Chancellor of the Exchequer has proposed some radical reforms of local government finance. The proposals are that by the end of the decade, councils will retain all locally raised business rates but will cease to receive core grant from Whitehall. The Chancellor set out the landmark changes in a speech to the Conservative party conference in Manchester, saying it was time to face up to the fact that “the way this country is run is broken”. Under the proposals, authorities will be able to keep all the business rates that they collect from local businesses, meaning that power over £26 billion of revenue from business rates will be devolved, he said The uniform national business rate will be abolished, although only to allow all authorities the power to cut rates. Cities that choose to move to systems of combined authorities with directly elected city wide mayors will be able to increase rates for specific major infrastructure projects, up to a cap, likely to be set at £0.02 on the rate. The system of tariffs and top-ups designed to support areas with lower levels of business activity will be maintained in its present state.

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