

Stirling Council

Annual Audit Plan 2018/19



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for Stirling Council
March 2019

Who we are

The Auditor General, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland work together to deliver public audit in Scotland:

- The Auditor General is an independent crown appointment, made on the recommendation of the Scottish Parliament, to audit the Scottish Government, NHS and other bodies and report to Parliament on their financial health and performance.
- The Accounts Commission is an independent public body appointed by Scottish ministers to hold local government to account. The Controller of Audit is an independent post established by statute, with powers to report directly to the Commission on the audit of local government.
- Audit Scotland is governed by a board, consisting of the Auditor General, the chair of the Accounts Commission, a non-executive board chair, and two non-executive members appointed by the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, a commission of the Scottish Parliament.



About us

Our vision is to be a world-class audit organisation that improves the use of public money.

Through our work for the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, we provide independent assurance to the people of Scotland that public money is spent properly and provides value. We aim to achieve this by:

- carrying out relevant and timely audits of the way the public sector manages and spends money
- reporting our findings and conclusions in public
- identifying risks, making clear and relevant recommendations.

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Risks and planned work

1. This annual audit plan contains an overview of the planned scope and timing of our audit and is carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs), the [Code of Audit Practice](#), and any other relevant guidance. This plan sets out the work necessary to allow us to provide an independent auditor's report on the financial statements and meet the wider scope requirements of public sector audit.

2. The wider scope of public audit contributes to assessments and conclusions on financial management, financial sustainability, governance and transparency and value for money.

Adding value

3. We aim to add value Stirling Council through our external audit work by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas for improvement and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In so doing, we intend to help Stirling Council promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making and more effective use of resources.

Audit risks

4. Based on our discussions with staff, attendance at committee meetings and a review of supporting information we have identified the following main risk areas for Stirling Council. We have categorised these risks into financial risks and wider dimension risks. The key audit risks, which require specific audit testing, are detailed in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1 2018/19 Key audit risks

 Audit Risk	Source of assurance	Planned audit work
Financial statements issues and risks		
<p>1 Risk of management override of controls</p> <p>ISA 240 requires that audit work is planned to consider the risk of fraud, which is presumed to be a significant risk in any audit. This includes consideration of the risk of management override of controls to change the position disclosed in the financial statements.</p>	<p>Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed testing of journal entries. • Review of accounting estimates. • Focused testing of accruals and prepayments. • Evaluation of significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business.
<p>2 Risk of fraud over income</p> <p>Stirling Council receives a significant amount of income from several sources including income from fees and charges. The extent and complexity of income means</p>	<p>Appropriate processes for the authorisation, separation of duties and workflow associated with income.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed testing of revenue transactions focusing on the areas of greatest risk. • Walkthrough of controls identified within key financial systems.

 Audit Risk	Source of assurance	Planned audit work
<p>that, in accordance with ISA240, there is an inherent risk of fraud.</p>	<p>Internal audit's plan includes a rolling review of core financial controls.</p>	
<p>3 Risk of fraud over expenditure</p> <p>Most public-sector bodies are net expenditure bodies and therefore the risk of fraud is more likely to occur in expenditure, due to the variety and extent of expenditure in delivering services. Stirling Council incurs significant expenditure in areas such as welfare benefits and social care payments. There is therefore an inherent risk of fraud.</p>	<p>Clear schemes of delegation and authorised signatory databases are regularly updated.</p> <p>Appropriate processes for the authorisation, separation of duties and workflow associated with expenditure.</p> <p>Member scrutiny through regular cycle of committee reporting.</p> <p>Internal audit's plan includes a rolling review of core financial controls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed testing of expenditure transactions focusing on the areas of greatest risk. • Walkthrough of controls identified within key financial systems.
<p>4 Estimation and judgements</p> <p>There is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and valuation of the material account areas of pensions and non-current assets.</p> <p>The council holds a material amount of assets at fair value. The valuations are significant estimates which are based on specialist and management assumptions. The council's housing assets will be subject to revaluation in 2018/19.</p> <p>The council's net liability relating to the Falkirk Pension Fund at 31 March 2018 was £210.965 million. This value is an estimate based on a number of assumptions</p> <p>This subjectivity represents an increased risk of misstatement in the financial statements.</p>	<p>Asset valuations completed by Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) qualified surveyor.</p> <p>Robust controls over process for updating asset register for in-year valuations.</p> <p>A year end timetable for producing the annual accounts has been prepared. This considers all aspects of cut off.</p> <p>Pension valuation completed by qualified actuary.</p> <p>Applicability of actuarial assumptions is reviewed by officers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the 'review the work of an expert' audit programme for the council's asset valuer. • Focused substantive testing of key areas. • Review of the work of the actuary. • Review appropriateness of actuarial assumptions. • Confirm pension valuations in actuarial report are correctly reflected within the 2018/19 accounts.
<p>Wider dimension issues and risks</p>		
<p>5 Financial sustainability</p> <p>Local Authorities are continuing to face significant financial challenges through funding pressures and an increased demand for services.</p> <p>The council presented an update to the Ten-Year General Fund Financial Outlook in December 2018. This sets out the likely level of resources available and considers the level of provision required to meet ongoing cost pressures. The paper outlined a</p>	<p>Periodic updates to the 10-year financial strategy are provided to the Finance and Economy Committee and the Council.</p> <p>Budget monitoring reports advise members of the progress of savings options and provide an update to the five-year funding gap.</p> <p>The council carried out an extensive budget setting exercise that reviewed all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and consider the robustness of the budget monitoring reports and the financial position at the year end. • Undertake audit work on financial planning which will include consideration of scenario planning and assumptions. • Undertake audit work on financial sustainability and financial management as part of our "audit

 Audit Risk	Source of assurance	Planned audit work
<p>funding gap of £24.1m over the five-year period (2018/19 to 2022/23), which represented an increase of £6.4 million from the previously forecast position.</p> <p>The paper also provided information over the ten-year period (2018/19 to 2028/29) and shows that the council is currently forecasting an unaddressed gap of £57.7 million, which represents a major challenge for the council over the longer-term period.</p> <p>Since then, the council set its 2019/20 budget in February 2019. This forecasts a funding gap of £32 million for the five-year period to 2023/24.</p> <p>There is a significant risk that the council is unable to identify or achieve the necessary sustainable savings measures in order to deliver a balanced budget in future years.</p>	<p>costs over the next five-year period.</p> <p>This is aligned to key objectives contained in the five-year business plan and the workforce plan.</p> <p>The five-year business plan is reviewed every year and updated in line with changes in the council's priorities.</p>	<p>dimensions" work. This will include consideration of the robustness of medium-term financial planning; and the council's long term financial strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the council's progress in achieving planned savings for 2018/19 together with any steps taken towards identifying how to address the £32 million funding gap. Review the extent to which savings achieved in 2018/19 are recurring or non-recurring.
<p>6 Financial management - impact of Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP)</p> <p>The most recent Finance Monitoring report presented to the Clackmannanshire & Stirling Integration Joint Board (IJB) Finance Committee on 19th February 2019 projects a year end overspend of £2.538 million. Of this amount, around £1.900 million (more than 75%) relates to services linked to Stirling Council.</p> <p>The IJB has budget recovery measures in place, however the impact of these measures is expected to be limited and partner bodies will be required to contribute to any overspend.</p> <p>The council's Adult Services and the IJB have incurred significant overspends in each of the last two years. There is a risk that services cannot continue to be provided from within the council's budget.</p>	<p>The IJB will continue to look at ways to mitigate the projected overspend whilst setting out and agreeing plans to bring the partnership into financial balance on a recurrent basis.</p> <p>Partners will meet to agree the basis for financing the projected 2018/19 overspend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the extent to which the year-end position reported by Stirling Council properly reflects the balances approved and agreed between the partner bodies in the IJB. Review the extent to which any recurring recovery actions are being taken by the council to address overspends within Adult Services.

Reporting arrangements

5. Audit reporting is the visible output for the annual audit. All annual audit plans and the outputs as detailed in [Exhibit 2](#), and any other outputs on matters of public interest will be published on our website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk.

6. Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft management reports will be issued to the relevant officers to confirm factual accuracy.

7. We will provide an independent auditor's report to Stirling Council and the Accounts Commission setting out our opinions on the annual accounts. We will provide the Interim Chief Executive, Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission with an annual report containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit.

Exhibit 2 2018/19 Audit outputs

Audit Output	Target date	Committee Date
Annual Audit Plan	07 March 2019	21 March 2019
Management Report	09 May 2019	23 May 2019
Annual Audit Report	15 August 2019	29 August 2019
Independent Auditor's Report	15 August 2019	29 August 2019

Source: Audit Scotland

The audit of trusts registered as Scottish charities

8. Members of Stirling Council are sole trustees for a number of trusts, registered as Scottish charities, with total assets of some £1.440 million. The preparation and audit of financial statements of registered charities is regulated by the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The council administers a Common Good Fund, with total assets of £1.246 million; and the Dunblane Cemetery Memorial Garden (Maintenance) Trust with assets of £0.140 million.

9. The council also acts as the sole trustee to 10 individual small charitable trusts. On the basis of this shared management arrangement, the council has consolidated the results of these charities into a single set of accounts, the "Consolidated Small Charitable Trusts", with assets of £0.054 million. We will carry out the audit of the council's charitable trusts and Common Good Fund in parallel with the audit of Stirling Council's financial statements.

10. The 2006 Regulations require charities to prepare annual accounts and require an accompanying auditor's report where any legislation requires an audit. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 specifies the audit requirements for any trust fund where some or all members of a council are the sole trustees. Therefore, a full and separate audit and independent auditor's report is required for each register charity where members of Stirling Council are sole trustees, irrespective of the size of the charity. As the small charitable trusts prepare consolidated accounts, we will conduct separate audits and prepare independent auditor's reports for each of the 3 sets of accounts.

11. There are no specific risks for these audits which we require to bring to your attention, although many of these trusts are dormant and in some cases the trust deed specifying the purpose of the trust can no longer be located. The council, as

sole trustee, are in the process of distributing the balance of funds held on behalf of the various dormant small charities. The aim of the distribution of funds is to make the charitable assets available for public use as the original trustee intended. We will monitor progress in this area and summarise the position within our Annual Audit Report.

Audit fee

12. The proposed audit fee for the 2018/19 audit of Stirling Council is £240,540 (2017/18: £236,070). In addition, the proposed audit fee for the audit of the charitable trust and common good accounts administered by Stirling Council is £2,000 (2017/18: £2,000). In determining the audit fee, we have taken account of the risk exposure of Stirling Council, the planned management assurances in place and the level of reliance we plan to take from the work of internal audit. Our audit approach assumes receipt of the unaudited annual accounts, with a complete working papers package on 3 June 2019.

13. Where our audit cannot proceed as planned through, for example, late receipt of unaudited annual accounts or being unable to take planned reliance from the work of internal audit, a supplementary fee may be levied. An additional fee may also be required in relation to any work or other significant exercises out with our planned audit activity.

Responsibilities

Audit Committee and Interim Chief Executive

14. Audited bodies have the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety and regularity that enable them to successfully deliver their objectives.

15. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or the Audit Committee as those charged with governance, of their responsibilities.

Appointed auditor

16. Our responsibilities as independent auditors are established by the 1973 Act for local government and the Code of Audit Practice (including supplementary guidance) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

17. Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information within the annual accounts. We also review and report on the arrangements within the audited body to manage its performance, regularity and use of resources. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

18. Following the retirement of David McConnell in December 2018, the appointed auditor for the council from January 2019 is John Cornett. John was previously a District Auditor with the Audit Commission and more recently was KPMG's head of local government audit in the Midlands.

Audit scope and timing

Annual accounts

19. The annual accounts, which include the financial statements, will be the foundation and source for most of the audit work necessary to support our judgements and conclusions. We also consider the wider environment and challenges facing the public sector. Our audit approach includes:

- understanding the business of Stirling Council and the associated risks which could impact on the financial statements
- assessing the key systems of internal control, and establishing how weaknesses in these systems could impact on the financial statements
- identifying major transaction streams, balances and areas of estimation and understanding how Stirling Council will include these in the financial statements
- assessing the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements
- determining the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to provide us with sufficient audit evidence as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

20. We will give an opinion on whether the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable law and the 2018/19 Code of the state of affairs of the council and its group as at 31 March 2019 and of the income and expenditure of the council and its group for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, as interpreted and adapted by the 2018/19 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Other information in the annual accounts

21. We also review and report on other information published within the annual accounts including the management commentary, annual governance statement and the remuneration report. We give an opinion on whether these have been compiled in accordance with the appropriate regulations and frameworks in our independent auditor's report.

22. We also read and consider any information in the annual accounts other than the financial statements and audited part of the remuneration report and report any uncorrected material misstatements.

Materiality

23. We apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing the audit. It is used in evaluating the effect of identified misstatements on the audit, and of any uncorrected misstatements, on the financial statements and in forming our opinions in the independent auditor's report.



characteristics



responsibilities



principal activities



risks



governance arrangements

24. We assess materiality at different levels as described below. The materiality values for Stirling Council are set out in [Exhibit 3](#).

Exhibit 3 Materiality values

Materiality	Amount
Planning materiality – This is the figure we use in assessing the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. Using our professional judgement, informed through our risk assessment and planning work, we have set materiality at 1.5% of gross expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2019 based on the latest audited accounts for 2018.	£5.00m
Performance materiality – This acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality this would indicate that further audit procedures should be considered. We have set performance materiality at 60% of planning materiality.	£3.00m
Reporting threshold (i.e., clearly trivial) – We are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount. This has been calculated at 1% of planning materiality.	£0.050m

Source: Audit Scotland

Timetable

25. To support the efficient use of resources it is critical that the annual accounts timetable is agreed with us to produce the unaudited accounts. We have included an agreed timetable at [Exhibit 4](#).

Exhibit 4 Annual accounts timetable

 Key stage	 Date
Consideration of unaudited annual accounts by those charged with governance	23 May 2019
Latest submission date of unaudited annual accounts with complete working papers package	03 June 2019
Latest date for final clearance meeting with Chief Finance Officer	14 August 2019
Issue of Letter of Representation and proposed independent auditor's report	16 August 2019
Agreement of audited unsigned annual accounts	16 August 2019
Issue of Annual Audit Report to those charged with governance	16 August 2019
Independent auditor's report signed	30 August 2019
Latest date for signing of WGA return	27 September 2019

Internal audit

26. Internal audit is provided by Stirling Council's in-house internal audit team. We have undertaken a formal review and have concluded that the council's Internal

Audit function, generally, operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and has appropriate documentation standards and reporting procedures in place.

Using the work of internal audit

27. Auditing standards require internal and external auditors to work closely together to make best use of available audit resources. We seek to use the work of internal audit wherever possible to avoid duplication. We will consider the findings of the work of internal audit to minimise duplication of effort and to ensure the total resource is used efficiently or effectively.

28. Internal audit plan to carry out testing of some of the council's financial systems as part of their continuous audit review of internal financial controls. We will take cognisance of the outcomes of this work and review internal audit's arrangements for supporting the annual governance statement reported in the annual accounts.

29. In respect of our wider dimension audit responsibilities we plan to consider other areas of internal audit work including:

- Roll out and implementation of 'Easybuy' purchase to pay system
- Cyber security and information governance

Audit dimensions

30. Our audit is based on four audit dimensions that frame the wider scope of public sector audit requirements as shown in [Exhibit 5](#).

Exhibit 5 Audit dimensions



Source: Code of Audit Practice

31. In the local government sector, the appointed auditor's annual conclusions on these four dimensions will help contribute to an overall assessment and assurance on best value.

32. Our standard audits are based on four audit dimensions that frame the wider scope of public sector audit requirements. These are: financial sustainability, financial management, governance and accountability and value for money.

Financial sustainability

33. As auditors we consider the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting as part of the annual audit. We will also comment on the body's financial sustainability in the longer term. We define this as medium term (two to five years) and longer term (longer than five years) sustainability. We will carry out work and conclude on:

- the effectiveness of financial planning in identifying and addressing risks to financial sustainability in the short, medium and long term
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of arrangements in place to address any identified funding gaps
- whether the council can demonstrate the affordability and effectiveness of funding and investment decisions it has made.

Financial management

34. Financial management is concerned with financial capacity, sound budgetary processes and whether the control environment and internal controls are operating effectively. We will review, conclude and report on:

- whether the council has arrangements in place to ensure systems of internal control are operating effectively
- whether the council can demonstrate the effectiveness of budgetary control system in communicating accurate and timely financial performance
- how the council has assured itself that its financial capacity and skills are appropriate
- whether the council has established appropriate and effective arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.

Governance and transparency

35. Governance and transparency is concerned with the effectiveness of scrutiny and governance arrangements, leadership and decision – making and transparent reporting of financial and performance information. We will review, conclude and report on:

- Whether the council can demonstrate that the governance arrangements in place are appropriate and operating effectively, including services delivered by, or in partnership with, others such as ALEOs.
- whether there is effective scrutiny, challenge and transparency on the decision-making and finance and performance reports.
- the quality and timeliness of financial and performance reporting.

Value for money

36. Value for money refers to using resources effectively and continually improving services. We will review, conclude and report on whether Stirling Council can demonstrate and evidence:

- value for money in the use of its resources.
- a clear link between money spent, output and outcomes delivered.
- that outcomes are improving.
- a sufficient focus on improvement and the pace of it.

Best Value

37. The Accounts Commission agreed the overall framework for a new approach to auditing Best Value in June 2016. The introduction of the new approach coincided with the new five-year audit appointments. Auditors started using the framework for their audit work from October 2016.

38. A key feature of the new approach is that it integrates Best Value into the wider scope annual audit, which will influence audit planning and reporting. Best Value will be assessed comprehensively over the five-year audit appointment, both through the ongoing annual audit work, and through discrete packages of work to look at specific issues. Conclusions and judgements on Best Value will be reported through:

- The Annual Audit Report for each council that will provide a rounded picture of the council overall.
- An annual assurance and risks report that the Controller of Audit will provide to the Commission that will highlight issues from across all 32 council annual audit reports.
- A Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) for each council that will be considered by the Accounts Commission at least once in a five-year period.

39. The seven councils on which a BVAR will be published during the third year of the new approach are listed in [Exhibit 6](#). Reports will be considered by the Accounts Commission in the period between March and November 2019.

Exhibit 6

2018/19 Best Value Assurance Reports

	North Lanarkshire Council	Highland Council
	Stirling Council	Scottish Borders Council
	South Lanarkshire Council	Perth and Kinross Council
	Midlothian Council	

Source: Audit Scotland

40. During 2018/19, a Best Value review of the council will be completed. The work will focus on the council's arrangements for demonstrating Best Value by reviewing the following:

- The council's vision and strategic direction
- The council's self assessment/evaluation processes and the impact made
- How effectively the council plans its use of resources including asset management, financial planning and workforce planning
- How the council delivers services with partners, including consideration of the City Deal and shared service developments
- Community engagement and how this impacts on the council's activities
- A review of the council's continuous improvement programmes such as strengthening Stirling's economy, transforming early years child care and learning, improving social housing, and delivering inclusive growth.

- An overall assessment of outcomes/ performance and the council's reporting of these, including public performance reporting.

41. This work will also contribute to our conclusions on the audit dimensions that we will report in our annual audit report.

Housing Benefit performance audits

42. The Accounts Commission has responsibility for the audit of housing benefit services in Scotland and Audit Scotland carries out a programme of performance audit work every year. The structural changes to the social security landscape, both at UK and Scottish level, are presenting significant implications for councils. In this context the Commission is considering a more strategic approach to the housing benefit performance audit from 2019/20. This would change the balance between reports on the risks at individual councils to more cross-cutting thematic reviews that look at risks across councils.

43. The housing benefit performance audit team will continue to review the relative performance of all councils' housing benefit services throughout the year and will take a more risk based and proportionate approach to changes in performance at an individual council. Currently there are no plans for audit work at Stirling Council. Once finalised, the change in approach will be fully communicated to councils along with planned reviews and timescales.

Independence and objectivity

44. Auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission or Auditor General must comply with the Code of Audit Practice and relevant supporting guidance. When auditing the financial statements auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council and those of the professional accountancy bodies. These standards impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with these standards including an annual "fit and proper" declaration for all members of staff. The arrangements are overseen by the Director of Audit Services, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

45. The engagement lead for Stirling Council is John Cornett, Audit Director. Auditing and ethical standards require the appointed auditor to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of audit staff. We are not aware of any such relationships pertaining to the audit of Stirling Council.

Quality control

46. International Standard on Quality Control (UK and Ireland) 1 (ISQC1) requires that a system of quality control is established, as part of financial audit procedures, to provide reasonable assurance that professional standards and regulatory and legal requirements are being complied with and that the independent auditor's report or opinion is appropriate in the circumstances.

47. The foundation of our quality framework is our Audit Guide, which incorporates the application of professional auditing, quality and ethical standards and the Code of Audit Practice (and supporting guidance) issued by Audit Scotland and approved by the Auditor General for Scotland. To ensure that we achieve the required quality standards Audit Scotland conducts peer reviews and internal quality reviews. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) have been commissioned to carry out external quality reviews.

48. As part of our commitment to quality and continuous improvement, Audit Scotland will periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. We welcome feedback at any time and this may be directed to the engagement lead.

Stirling Council

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