

Audit plan

Durham County Council Pension Fund

Audit 2011/12



Contents

- Introduction.....3**
- Accounting statements and Pension Fund Annual Report4**
- Key milestones and deadlines8**
- The audit team9**
- Independence and quality10**
- Fees11**
- Appendix 1 – Independence and objectivity13**
- Appendix 2 – Basis for fee.....15**
- Appendix 3 – Glossary.....16**

Introduction

This plan sets out the work for the 2011/12 audit. The plan is based on the Audit Commission's risk-based approach to audit planning.

Responsibilities

The Audit Commission's Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies sets out the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the audited body. The Audit Commission has issued a copy of the Statement to you.

The Statement summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body begin and end and I undertake my audit work to meet these responsibilities.

I comply with the statutory requirements governing my audit work, in particular:

- the Audit Commission Act 1998; and
- the Code of Audit Practice.

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

Accounting statements and Pension Fund Annual Report

I will carry out the audit of the accounting statements included within the Council's Statement of Accounts in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB). I also report on the accounting statements included in the Pension Fund Annual Report. I am required to issue audit reports giving my opinion on whether the accounting statements give a true and fair.

Materiality

I will apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing my audit, in evaluating the effect of any identified misstatements, and in forming my opinion.

Identifying audit risks

I need to understand the Pension Fund to identify any risk of material misstatement (whether due to fraud or error) in the accounting statements. I do this by:

- identifying the business risks facing the Fund, including assessing your own risk management arrangements;
- considering the financial performance of the Fund;
- assessing internal control, including reviewing the control environment, the IT control environment and internal audit; and
- assessing the risk of material misstatement arising from the activities and controls within the Fund's information systems.

Identification of additional risks

I have considered the additional risks that are relevant to the audit of the accounting statements and have set these out below.

Table 1: **Significant risks**

Risk	Audit response
<p>Value of Unquoted Investments</p> <p>The value of unquoted investments with Alliance Bernstein may be incorrect.</p> <p>The value of unquoted funds in the accounts will be the value calculated by the Fund Manager as in previous years. Last year, officers did not get any assurance before the audit to support the valuation applied by Alliance Bernstein.</p>	<p>I will work with officers to ensure that they obtain accounts and other appropriate supporting documents to verify the valuation by the Fund Manager of unquoted investments before submission of the accounts for audit.</p>

Table 2: **Specific risks**

Risk	Audit response
<p>Completeness of Related Party Transactions.</p> <p>Disclosure of related party transactions may be incomplete.</p> <p>There have been problems in previous years in obtaining written declarations promptly, particularly from members of the Pension Fund Committee who are not Durham County Council members.</p>	<p>We will review the management controls in place for the identification and disclosure of related party transactions.</p> <p>We will undertake substantive testing once the draft accounts are received.</p>

Risk	Audit response
<p>Compliance with CODE of Practice on Local Authority Accounting</p> <p>The Pension Fund accounts may not fully comply with the CODE.</p> <p>The Pension fund accounts may not include all information required by the CODE.</p>	<p>We will review management controls in place to ensure that the Pension Fund accounts are CODE compliant.</p> <p>We will undertake substantive testing once the accounts are received.</p>

Testing strategy

My audit involves:

- Review of the work of your internal auditors;
- testing of the operation of controls;
- reliance on the work of experts; and
- substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts.

The nature and timing of my proposed work is as follows.

Table 3: **Testing**

	Review of internal audit	Reliance on work of experts	Controls testing	Substantive testing
Interim visit	Governance and Funding Investments Contributions Benefits and other expenditure		Journal controls	TVs Out Bank reconciliation

	Review of internal audit	Reliance on work of experts	Controls testing	Substantive testing
Final visit		Actuarial information in accounts notes	TVs In reconciliation Contributions receivable reconciliation Benefits payable reconciliation Investment income reconciliation	All material accounts balances and disclosures

I will agree with you a schedule of working papers required to support the entries in the accounting statements.

Pension Fund Annual Report

I will also review and report on the accounting statements included in the Pension Fund's Annual Report prepared under Regulation 34 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008.

Key milestones and deadlines

The Pension Fund is required to prepare the accounting statements by 30 June 2012. I aim to complete my work and issue my opinions on the accounting statements included in the Statement of Accounts and the Pension Fund Annual Report by 30 September 2012.

Table 4: **Proposed timetable and planned outputs**

Activity	Date	Output
Opinion: controls and early substantive testing	January to April 2012	Interim Governance report
Opinion: receipt of accounts and supporting working papers	by 30 June 2012	
Opinion: substantive testing	July to September 2012	Final accounts report
Progress meetings	As and when required	
Present Annual Governance Report at the Audit Committee	By 30 September] 2012	Annual Governance Report
Issue opinion on accounting statements included in the Statement of Accounts	By 30 September 2012	Durham County Council (DCC) Auditor's report
Issue opinion on accounting statements included in the Pension Fund Annual Report	By 30 September 2012	DCC Auditor's report
Summarise overall messages from the audit	October 2012	DCC Annual Audit Letter

The audit team

The key members of the audit team for the 2011/12 audit are as follows.

Table 5: **Audit team**

Name	Contact details	Responsibilities
Cameron Waddell District Auditor	c-waddell@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 1632	Responsible for the overall delivery of the audit including quality of reports, signing the opinion and liaison with the Chief Executive.
Catherine Banks Audit Manager	c-banks@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 1601	Manages and coordinates the different elements of the audit work. Key point of contact for the Corporate Director Resources and Heads of Finance.
Sharon Liddle Team Leader	s-liddle@audit-commission.gov.uk 0191 383 6410	Leads the on-site team in delivering the audit.

Independence and quality

Independence

I comply with the ethical standards issued by the APB and with the Commission's additional requirements for independence and objectivity as summarised in appendix 1.

I am not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the Audit Commission, the audit team or me, that I am required by auditing and ethical standards to report to you.

Quality of service

I aim to provide you with a fully satisfactory audit service. If, however, you are unable to deal with any difficulty through me and my team please contact Chris Westwood, Director – Standards & Technical, Audit Practice, Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ (c-westwood@audit-commission.gov.uk) who will look into any complaint promptly and to do what he can to resolve the position.

If you are still not satisfied you may of course take up the matter with the Audit Commission's Complaints Investigation Officer (The Audit Commission, Westward House, Lime Kiln Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8SR).

Fees

The fee for the audit is £42,551, as set out in my letter of 6 April 2011.

The audit fee

The Audit Commission has set a scale audit fee of £42,551 which represents a small increase of £51 on the audit fee for 2010/11. The scale fee reflects the Audit Commission's decision not to increase fees in line with inflation.

Variations from the scale fee only occur where my assessments of audit risk and complexity are significantly different from those reflected in the 2010/11 fee. I have not identified significant differences and have therefore set the fee equal to the scale fee.

Assumptions

In setting the fee, I have made the assumptions set out in appendix 2. Where these assumptions are not met, I may be required to undertake more work and therefore increase the audit fee. Where this is the case, I will discuss this first with the Corporate Director Resources and I will issue a supplement to the plan to record any revisions to the risk and the impact on the fee.

Specific actions you could take to reduce your audit fee

The Audit Commission requires me to inform you of specific actions you could take to reduce your audit fee. I have not identified any specific actions that you could take at this stage.

Total fees payable

In addition to the fee for the audit, the Audit Commission will make charges for the agreed provision of non-audit services under the Audit Commission's advice and assistance powers.

Based on current plans the fees payable are as follows.

Table 6: **Fees**

	2011/12 proposed	2010/11 actual	Variance
Audit	42551	42500	51
Non-audit work	0	0	0
Total	42551	42500	51

Appendix 1 – Independence and objectivity

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission must comply with the Commission’s Code of Audit Practice and Standing Guidance for Auditors. When auditing the accounting statements, auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB). These impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. The Audit Practice puts in place robust arrangements to ensure compliance with these requirements, overseen by the Audit Practice’s Director – Standards and Technical, who serves as the Audit Practice’s Ethics Partner.

Table 7: **Independence and objectivity**

Area	Requirement	How we comply
Business, employment and personal relationships	<p>Appointed auditors and their staff should avoid any official, professional or personal relationships which may, or could reasonably be perceived to, cause them inappropriately or unjustifiably to limit the scope, extent or rigour of their work or impair the objectivity of their judgement.</p> <p>The appointed auditor and senior members of the audit team must not take part in political activity for a political party, or special interest group, whose activities relate directly to the functions of local government or NHS bodies in general, or to a particular local government or NHS body.</p>	All audit staff are required to declare all potential threats to independence. Details of declarations are made available to appointed auditors. Where appropriate, staff are excluded from engagements or safeguards put in place to reduce the threat to independence to an acceptably low level.

Area	Requirement	How we comply
Long association with audit clients	The appointed auditor responsible for the audit should, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, be changed at least once every seven years, with additional consideration of threats to independence after five years.	The Audit Practice maintains and monitors a central database of assignment of auditors and senior audit staff to ensure this requirement is met.
Gifts and hospitality	The appointed auditor and members of the audit team must abide by the Commission's policy on gifts, hospitality and entertainment.	All audit staff are required to declare any gifts or hospitality irrespective of whether or not they are accepted. Gifts and Hospitality may only be accepted with line manager approval.
Non-audit work	<p>Appointed auditors should not perform additional work for an audited body if it would compromise their independence or might result in a reasonable perception that their independence could be compromised.</p> <p>Auditors should not accept engagements that involve commenting on the performance of other auditors appointed by the Commission on Commission work without first consulting the Commission.</p> <p>Work over a specified value must only be undertaken with the prior approval of the Audit Commission's Director of Audit Policy and Regulation.</p>	All proposed additional work is subject to review and approval by the appointed auditor and the Director – Standards and Technical, to ensure that independence is not compromised.

Code of Audit Practice, Audit Commission Standing Guidance and APB Ethical Standards

Appendix 2 – Basis for fee

Assumptions

In setting the fee, I have assumed the following.

- The risk in relation to the audit of the accounting statements is not significantly different to that identified for 2010/11.
- The risk in relation to my value for money responsibilities is not significantly different to that identified for 2010/11.
- Internal Audit meets professional standards.
- Internal Audit undertakes sufficient appropriate work on all systems that provide material figures in the accounting statements on which I can rely.
- The Council provides:
 - good quality working papers and records to support the accounting statements and the text of other information to be published within the statements by 30 June 2012;
 - the full text of the Pension Fund Annual Report by 31 August 2012;
 - other information as requested within agreed timescales; and
 - prompt responses to draft reports.

Where these assumptions are not met, I will have to undertake more work which is likely to result in an increased audit fee.

Appendix 3 – Glossary

Accounting statements

The Pension Fund accounts are included within the annual statement of accounts that the Council is required to prepare. These report the financial performance and financial position of the Fund in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

Annual Governance Statement

The annual report on the Fund's systems of internal control that supports the achievement of the Fund's policies aims and objectives.

Annual Governance Report

The auditor's report on matters arising from the audit of the accounting statements presented to the [Pension Panel] before the auditor issues their opinion.

Audit of the accounts

The audit of the accounts of an audited body comprise all work carried out an auditor under the Code to meet their statutory responsibilities under the Audit Commission Act 1998.

Audited body

A body to which the Audit Commission is responsible for appointing the external auditor.

Auditing Practices Board (APB)

The body responsible in the UK for issuing auditing standards, ethical standards and associated guidance to auditors. Its objectives are to establish high standards of auditing that meet the developing needs of users of financial information and to ensure public confidence in the auditing process.

Auditing standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles and essential procedures with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the auditing standard concerned.

Auditor(s)

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

Code (the)

The Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission and approved by Parliament.

Commission (the)

The Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service in England.

Ethical Standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles relating to independence, integrity and objectivity that apply to the conduct of audits and with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the standard concerned.

Internal control

The whole system of controls, financial and otherwise, the Pension Fund establishes to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, internal financial control and compliance with laws and regulations.

Materiality

The APB defines this concept as 'an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of the accounting statements as a whole. A matter is material if its omission would reasonably influence the decisions of an addressee of the auditor's report. Also a misstatement is material if it would have a similar influence. Materiality may also be considered in the context of any individual primary statement within the accounting statements or of individual items included in them. Materiality is not capable of general mathematical definition, as it has both qualitative and quantitative aspects'.

The term 'materiality' applies only to the accounting statements. Auditors appointed by the Commission have responsibilities and duties under statute, as well as their responsibility to give an opinion on the accounting statements, which do not necessarily affect their opinion on the accounting statements.

Pension Fund Annual Report

The annual report, including accounting statements, the Pension Fund must publish under Regulation 34 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008.

Those charged with governance

Those entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of the Pension Fund.

If you require a copy of this document in an alternative format or in a language other than English, please call:
0844 798 7070

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The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors, members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
- any third party.

