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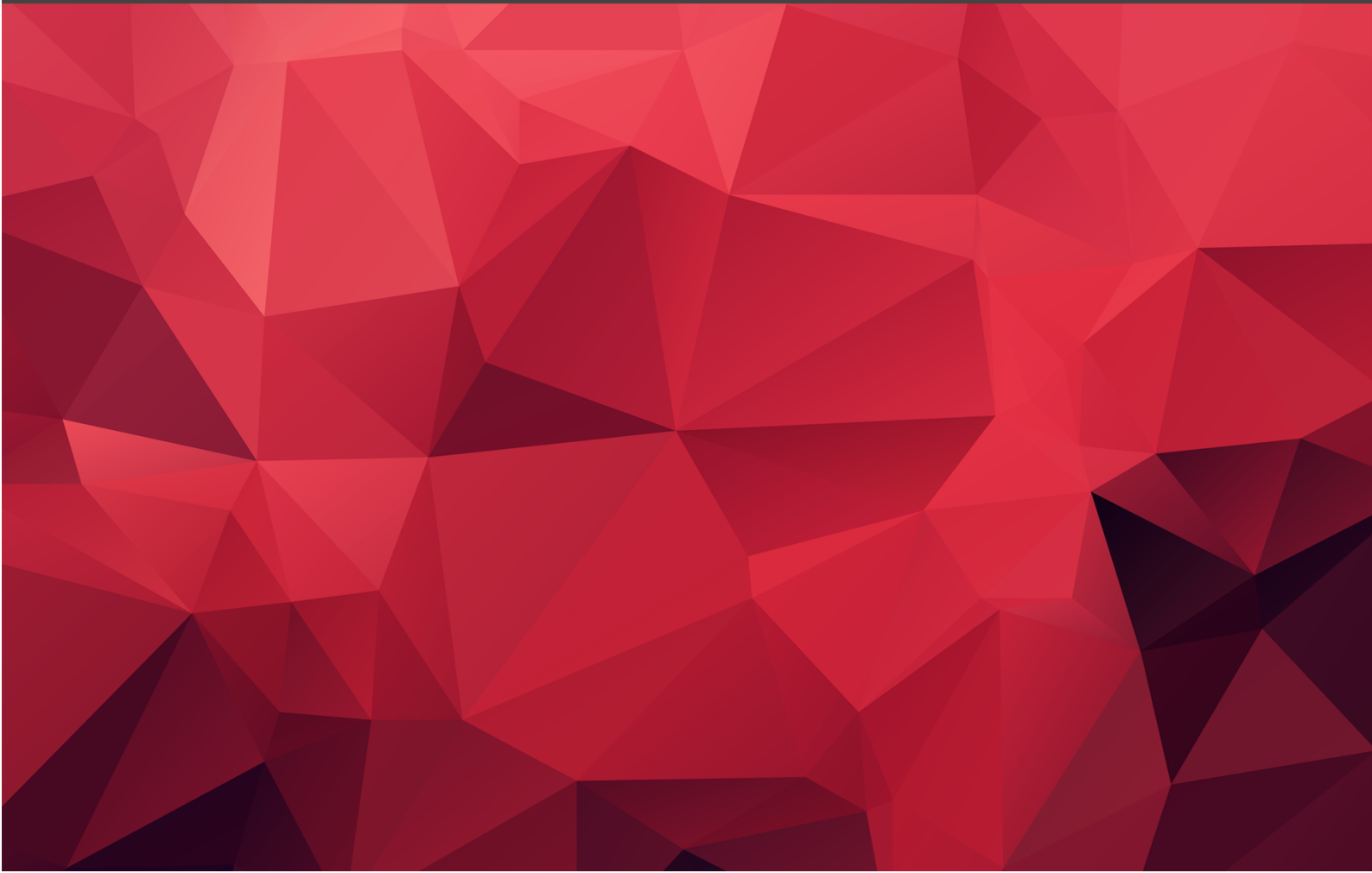
Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Audit Plan – Monmouthshire County Council

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Further information on this is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

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This document was produced by Ann-Marie Harkin, Huw Rees, Terry Lewis, Rhodri Davies, Non Jenkins and Dave Wilson

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2019 Audit Plan

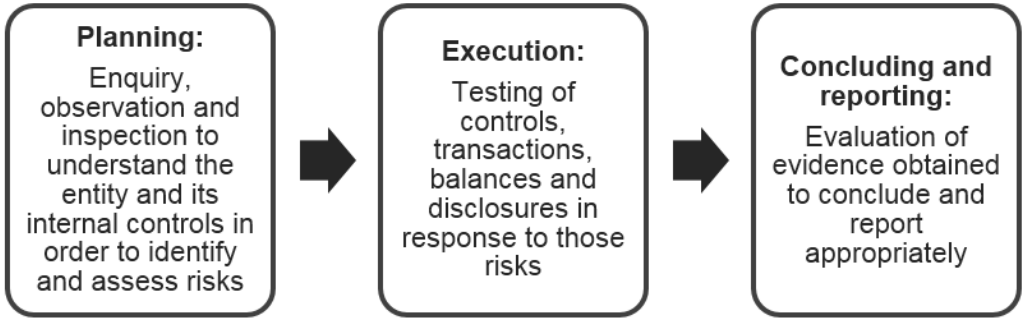
Summary

- 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), Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, 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 the 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.
- 3 There have been no limitations imposed on me in planning the scope of this audit.
- 4 My responsibilities, along with those of management and those charged with governance, are set out in [Appendix 1](#).

Audit of accounts

- 5 It is my responsibility to issue a certificate and report on the financial statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness'. This provides assurance that the accounts:
 - are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error;
 - comply with statutory and other applicable requirements; and
 - comply with all relevant requirements for accounting presentation and disclosure.
- 6 I also consider whether or not Monmouthshire County Council (the Council) 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.
- 7 [Appendix 1](#) sets out my responsibilities in full.
- 8 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



9 The risks of material misstatement which I consider to be significant and which therefore require special audit consideration, are set out in **Exhibit 2** along with the work I intend to undertake to address them. Also, included are other key areas of audit attention my team will be focusing on.

Exhibit 2: financial audit risks

Financial audit risk	Proposed audit response
Significant risks	
<p>Management Override</p> <p>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].</p>	<p>My audit team will:</p> <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.
<p>Revenue Recognition</p> <p>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].</p>	<p>My audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate if there is a risk and, if so, which types of revenue give rise to such risks; and • obtain an understanding of the Council's related controls relevant to such risks and focus testing on the timing and value of revenue where appropriate.

Financial audit risk	Proposed audit response
<p>Sensitive Disclosures</p> <p>The Council's 2018-19 financial statements will include a number of disclosures which are material by nature. These include the disclosure of Related Parties, Senior Officers' Remuneration and Members' Allowances.</p>	<p>My audit team will review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> disclosures that are material by nature and test to ensure that they are consistent with supporting evidence and all required disclosures are made in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.
<p>Other areas of audit attention</p>	
<p>Early Closing of year-end accounts</p> <p>The current deadlines for the production and audit of Local Government bodies' accounts are 30 June and 30 September respectively. The Welsh Government will be bringing these dates forward to 31 May and 31 July over the next few years in all local government bodies, with full compliance by the 2020/21 financial year. Whilst the earlier deadlines may seem like a distant challenge, the scale of the changes required for the Council and us means that planning needs to start now.</p>	<p>We are working with the Council and have already 'brought forward' a range of audit work so that it is completed earlier in the audit cycle.</p> <p>The Council is expecting to have its accounts ready for audit by the end of May and a full set of working papers shortly afterwards. In order to close the accounts earlier it will be necessary in some areas to base figures on 'estimates' and we will audit the basis of these estimates and the basis of any assumptions made to ensure there are not likely to be any material differences that may affect the accuracy of the accounts.</p> <p>We have also produced an updated 'Audit Deliverables' document so that both the Council and we are clear on the documentation required to support our audit work and to ensure that our audit progresses as smoothly and as quickly as possible.</p>

Financial audit risk	Proposed audit response
<p>New accounting standards</p> <p>IFRS 9 financial instruments applies from 1 April 2018 and brings in a new principles-based approach for the classification and measurement of financial assets. It also introduces a new impairment methodology for financial assets based on expected losses rather than incurred losses. This will result in earlier recognition of expected credit losses and will impact on how the bad debt provision is calculated.</p> <p>IFRS 15 revenue from contracts with customers introduces a principles-based five-step model for recognising revenue arising from contracts with customers. It is based on a core principle requiring revenue recognition to depict the transfer of promised goods or services to the customer in an amount that reflects the consideration a body expects to be entitled to, in exchange for those goods or services. It will also require more extensive disclosures than are currently required.</p>	<p>My audit team will assess the likely impacts of the new IFRSs and undertake work to respond to any identified risks of material misstatement.</p>

- 10 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 Audit Committee prior to completion of the audit.
- 11 For reporting purposes, I will treat any misstatements below a 'trivial' level (the lower of 5% of materiality or £100,000) as not requiring consideration by those charged with governance and therefore I will not report them.
- 12 My fees and planned timescales for completion of the audit are based on the following assumptions:
- the financial statements are provided in accordance with the agreed timescales, to the quality expected and have been subject to a robust quality assurance review;
 - information provided to support the financial statements is in accordance with the agreed audit deliverables document¹;
 - appropriate accommodation and facilities are provided to enable my audit team to deliver the audit in an efficient manner;

¹ The agreed audit deliverables document sets out the expected working paper requirements to support the financial statements and include timescales and responsibilities.

- all appropriate officials will be available during the audit;
 - 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; and
 - Internal Audit's planned programme of work is complete and management has responded to issues that may have affected the financial statements.
- 13 In addition to the audit of the accounts, I have statutory responsibilities to receive questions and objections to the accounts from local electors. These responsibilities are set out in the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004:
- Section 30 Inspection of documents and questions at audit; and
 - Section 31 Right to make objections at audit.
- 14 Audit fees will be chargeable for work undertaken in dealing with electors' questions and objections. Because audit work will depend upon the number and nature of any questions and objections, it is not possible to estimate an audit fee for this work.
- 15 If I do receive questions or objections, I will discuss potential audit fees at the time.

Other financial audit work

- 16 In addition to my responsibilities in respect of the audit of the statutory financial statements set out above, I am also responsible for the audit of Monmouthshire County Council Welsh Church Act Fund and the Monmouthshire Farm School Endowment Trust Fund. My team will undertake the audit of these accounts on my behalf in accordance with the timescales agreed with the Council, as trustees and the Charity Commission.
- 17 The fee for this work will be discussed with the Council and is excluded from the fee set out in this Plan.

Performance audit

- 1 I need 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 discharging my responsibilities, I will continue to seek to strike the most appropriate balance and add 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.
- 2 As it is likely that the anticipated Local Government Wales Bill will propose that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 no longer applies to councils, I will continue to minimise work that focuses on the process of improvement planning.

- 3 In my audit plan for 2018 I explained that in previous years I had placed reliance on my work under the Measure to help discharge my duty under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 to satisfy myself that councils have made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money) in the use of resources. Given that in the future it is likely that I will be unable to rely on my work under the Measure, in 2019-20, and subsequent years, the focus of my local performance audit programmes will continue to be more clearly aligned to discharging my Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 duty.
- 4 In 2018-19 I undertook an examination of the extent to which you are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet your well-being objectives. During 2019-20 I will undertake a further examination to assess the extent to which you are applying the sustainable development principle when taking steps towards meeting your well-being objectives. This will be the final piece of work I will undertake to discharge my duties under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act at the Council prior to laying my first cyclical report with the National Assembly in 2020. During 2019-20 I will also be considering how to discharge my duties under the Act over the period 2020 to 2024 and I will seek to engage with local authorities as well as other stakeholders in developing my approach.
- 5 The Wales Audit Office also undertakes a programme of local government studies. This work is included within the Wales Audit Office estimates for funding from the Welsh Consolidated Fund and not local fees. These studies primarily lead to a national report augmented by good practice and shared learning outputs rather than by local reports. Local findings, where relevant, will be captured in improvement assessment work and reported in annual improvement reports depending on the timing and the focus of conclusions.
- 6 Taking all these factors into consideration, my 2019-20 programme of work will comprise:

Exhibit 3: performance audit programme

Performance audit programme	Brief description
Improvement audit and assessment work including improvement planning and reporting audit.	Audit of discharge of duty to publish an improvement plan, and to publish an assessment of performance.
Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations	Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to meet its wellbeing objectives.
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper

Performance audit programme	Brief description
	arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources.
Financial Sustainability	A project common to all local councils that will assess financial sustainability in light of current and anticipated future challenges.
Procurement and contracting	A review of the robustness and sustainability of the Council's procurement and contracting arrangements in meeting recent, current and future needs.
Follow up review of the Shared Resource Service (SRS)	This review will follow up on the recommendations made by the Auditor General in his 2015 report reviewing the SRS. The review will be carried out across the four local councils that are members of the SRS.
2019-20 Local Government Studies	(Funded by the Welsh Consolidated Fund) The Auditor General has recently completed his consultation on his forward work programme and new local government studies to commence in 2019-20 will be confirmed shortly.

- 18 The performance audit projects included in last year's Audit Plan, which are either still underway or which have been substituted for alternative projects in agreement with you, are set out in [Appendix 2](#).

Certification of grant claims and returns

- 19 I have been requested to undertake certification work on the Council's grant claims and returns. A total of 12 grant claims were audited in respect of 2017-18, the same number of claims as in 2016-17. The total value of these claims was £83.4 million compared to £76.4 million in 2016-17. The overall work programme in 2019 is expected to include HB subsidy, 21st Century Schools, Non-domestic rates, Teachers' Pensions, Social Care Workforce Development and the Summary Schedule of Welsh Government funding. Locally, there may also be pooled budgets and money transfers.
- 20 As was the case last year, the Welsh Government will not require me to provide any report of factual findings related to any activity levels or outcomes.
- 21 My audit fee for this work is set out in [Exhibit 5](#).

Overall issues identified

- 22 **Exhibit 4** summarises the more significant and/or recurring issues I identified when undertaking grant certification work in 2018-19.

Exhibit 4: overall issues relating to grant claim and return certification

Qualified grant claims and returns qualified in 2017-18
Of the 12 claims that were certified, four were qualified. Three claims were amended/adjusted to reflect changes required following our audit.
Effectiveness of grant co-ordination arrangements
The co-ordination arrangements for the compilation of grant claims are good and there were no significant areas where problems arose. The supporting working papers were of an adequate standard. The Council submitted 50% of its 2017-18 grant claims to us on time. All claims were certified by the required deadlines and we can confirm that we have certified all of the claims.

Fee, audit team and timetable

Fee

- 23 Your estimated fee for 2019 is set out in **Exhibit 5**. There have been some small changes to my fees rates for 2019, however my audit teams will continue to drive efficiency in their audits to ensure any resulting increases will not be passed to you.

Exhibit 5: audit fee

Audit area	Proposed fee (£) ²	Actual fee last year (£)
Audit of accounts ³	176,068	176,068
Performance audit work ⁴	103,282	103,341
Grant certification work ⁵	65,000	68,000
Total fee	344,350	347,409

² Notes: The fees shown in this document are exclusive of VAT, which is not charged to you

³ Payable November 2018 to October 2019.

⁴ Payable April 2019 to March 2020.

⁵ Payable as work is undertaken

- 24 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 Council.
- 25 Further information on my [fee scales and fee setting](#) can be found on our website.

Audit team

- 26 The main members of my team, together with their contact details, are summarised in [Exhibit 6](#).

Exhibit 6: my audit team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Ann-Marie Harkin	Engagement Director and Engagement Lead – Financial Audit	02920 320562	ann-marie.harkin@audit.wales
Huw Rees	Engagement Lead Performance Audit	02920 320599	huw.rees@audit.wales
Terry Lewis	Financial Audit Manager	02920 320641	terry.lewis@audit.wales
Rhodri Davies	Financial Audit Team Leader	02920 320500	rhodri.davies@audit.wales
Non Jenkins	Performance Audit Manager	02920 320595	non.jenkins@audit.wales
David Wilson	Performance Audit Lead	02920 320500	david.wilson@audit.wales

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

Timetable

- 28 I will provide reports, or other outputs as agreed, to the County Council covering the areas of work identified in this document. My key milestones are set out in [Exhibit 7](#).

Exhibit 7: timetable

Planned output	Work undertaken	Report finalised
2019 Audit Plan	December 2018 to January 2019	March 2019
Financial accounts work:		

Planned output	Work undertaken	Report finalised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of Financial Statements Report Opinion on Financial Statements Financial Accounts Memorandum 	February to September 2019	September 2019 September 2019 October 2019
Performance work		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews in 2018 Plan still in progress (see Appendix 2) 	January - August 2019	May – September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan Audit 	April 2019	April 2019*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFG Act Examination 	April - September 2019	September 2019*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of Performance Audit 	October- November 2019	November 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance and Risk Assessment 	October – November 2019	December 2019*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Sustainability 	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement and contracting 	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRS Review 	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Annual Improvement Report	April 2019 – May 2020	June 2020*
2020 Audit Plan	October to December 2019	January 2020*

* Estimated

Future developments to my audit work

- 29 Details of other future developments including forthcoming changes to key International Financial Reporting Standards, the Wales Audit Office's Good Practice Exchange (GPX) seminars and my planned work on the readiness of the Welsh public sector for Brexit, are set out in [Appendix 3](#).

Appendix 1

Respective responsibilities

Audit of accounts

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 Monmouthshire County Council 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;
- Monmouthshire County Council'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), certification of claims and returns, and 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 Monmouthshire County Council'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 Monmouthshire County Council 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 Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me, by examination of the accounts or otherwise, to satisfy myself that the body has made proper arrangements for:

- securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- that the body, if required to publish information in pursuance of a direction under section 47 (performance information) has made such arrangements for collecting and recording the information and for publishing it as are required for the performance of its duties under that section.

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. I 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.

Section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 requires me to carry out examinations of public bodies for the purposes of assessing the extent to which it has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when:

- (a) setting well-being objectives; and
- (b) taking steps to meet those objectives.

I must carry out such an examination of each public body at least once during a five-year period. Before the end of the period I must report on the results of those examinations to the National Assembly.

Appendix 2

Performance work in last year's audit outline still in progress

Exhibit 8: performance work in last year's audit outline still in progress

Five pieces of performance audit work included in last year's audit plan remain outstanding.

Performance audit project	Status	Comment
Environmental Health Review of the arrangements the Council has put in place to deliver environmental health services building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.	Scoping	We are conducting a short follow up of the Council's progress in addressing the recommendations made in the Auditor General's national study. We aim to conclude this work by early Autumn 2019.
Leisure Services Review of the arrangements the Council has put in place to deliver leisure services building on the 'study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.	Scoping	We are conducting a short follow up of the Council's progress in addressing the recommendations made in the Auditor General's national study. We aim to conclude this work by early Autumn 2019.
Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements Follow-up review of progress in implementing the proposals for improvement from the Auditor General's 'Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding'.	Scoping	We are conducting a short follow up review of the Council's progress in implementing proposals for improvement included in this report. We aim to conclude this work by early Autumn 2019.
Review of Whistleblowing and Fairness at Work (Grievance) arrangements Review of the Council's arrangements for dealing with whistleblowing concerns and for dealing with employee grievances (Fairness at Work).	Scoping	We aim to report on this work in May 2019

Performance audit project	Status	Comment
<p>Service User Perspective Review - Customer contact. Review of the extent to which services respond to the needs and expectations of service users both in their design and delivery and take their views and aspirations into account.</p>	Fieldwork complete	We aim to report on this work in Spring 2019
<p>WFG examinations This examination will enable the Auditor General to assess the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to meet its Wellbeing Objectives.</p>	Fieldwork nearly complete	The final workshop will take place in March 2019 and we will report on this work in Spring 2019.

Appendix 3

Other future developments

A. Forthcoming key IFRS changes

Exhibit 9: changes to IFRS standards

Standard	Effective date	Further details
IFRS 16 leases	Expected in 2020-21	IFRS 16 will replace the current leases standard IAS 17. The key change is that it largely removes the distinction between operating and finance leases for lessees by introducing a single lessee accounting model that requires a lessee to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases with a term of more than 12 months, unless the underlying asset is of low value. It will lead to all leases being recognised on balance sheet as an asset based on a right of use principle with a corresponding liability for future rentals. This is a significant change in lessee accounting.

B. Good Practice Exchange

The Wales Audit Office's GPX helps public services improve by sharing knowledge and practices that work. Events are held where knowledge can be exchanged face to face and resources shared on line. The main areas of work are regarding financial management, public-sector staff and governance.

[Further information, including details of forthcoming GPX events and outputs from past seminars.](#)

C. Brexit: preparations for the United Kingdom's departure from membership of the European Union

In accordance with Article 50 of the Treaty of Rome, on 29 March 2019 the United Kingdom will cease to be a member of the European Union. Negotiations are continuing, and it currently remains unclear whether agreement will be reached on a transition period to 31 December 2020, or whether a 'no deal' immediate exit will take place in March.

The Auditor General is undertaking a programme of work looking at the arrangements that the devolved public sector in Wales, including all NHS bodies, is putting in place to prepare for, and respond to, Britain's exit from the European Union. This will take the form of a high-level overview to establish what is being put in place across the Welsh public sector, and what the key issues are from the perspectives of different parts of the Welsh public service.

The Auditor General intends to carry out this initial work in two tranches. In autumn 2018, he issued a call for evidence to compile a baseline summary of arrangements being put in place. On 19 February 2019, the Auditor General issued a report⁶ on preparations in Wales for a 'no deal' Brexit. This will be followed up by further audit fieldwork during the rest of 2019.

⁶ <http://www.audit.wales/publication/preparations-wales-no-deal-brexite>

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