

Monmouthshire County Council – Detailed Audit Plan 2023

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

About Audit Wales

Our aims and ambitions

Assure



the people of Wales that public money is well managed

Explain



how public money is being used to meet people's needs

Inspire



and empower the Welsh public sector to improve



Fully exploit our unique perspective, expertise and depth of insight



Strengthen our position as an authoritative, trusted and independent voice



Increase our visibility, influence and relevance



Be a model organisation for the public sector in Wales and beyond

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Introduction

I have now largely completed my planning work.

This Detailed Audit Plan specifies my statutory responsibilities as your external auditor and to fulfil my obligations under the Code of Audit Practice.

It sets out the work my team intends undertaking to address the audit risks identified and other key areas of focus during 2023.

It also sets out my estimated audit fee, details of my audit team and key dates for delivering my audit team's activities and planned outputs.



Adrian Crompton

Auditor General for
Wales

My audit responsibilities

I complete work each year to meet the following duties:

- I audit the Council's financial statements to make sure that public money is being properly accounted for.
- the Council has to put in place arrangements to get value for money for the resources it uses, and I have to be satisfied that it has done this.
- the Council needs to comply with the sustainable development principle when setting and taking steps to meet their well-being objectives. The Auditor General must assess the extent to which they are doing this.

Audit of financial statements

I am required to issue a certificate and report on your financial statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness' and an assessment as to whether the Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement is prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance and is consistent with your financial statements and my knowledge of the Authority.

In addition to my responsibilities for auditing the Council's financial statements, I also have responsibility for:

- responding to questions and objections about the accounts from local electors (additional fees will be charged for this work, if necessary);
- the independent examination of Monmouthshire Farm School Endowment Trust charity
- the audit of the Welsh Church Act Fund Charity (a separate plan will be issued for this audit); and
- the certification of a number of grant claims and returns as agreed with the funding bodies.

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 is set out later in this plan.

I will also report by exception on a number of matters which are set out in more detail in our [Statement of Responsibilities](#).

There have been no limitations imposed on me in planning the scope of this audit.

Performance audit work

I carry out a programme of performance audit work to discharge my duties¹ as Auditor General in relation to value for money and sustainable development.

My local performance audit programme will continue to be delivered through a combination of an Assurance and Risk Assessment Project, bespoke local projects and thematic projects examining risks common to all councils.

The majority of my performance audit work is conducted using INTOSAI auditing standards. The International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions is a global umbrella organisation for the performance audit community. It is a non-governmental organisation with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

¹ When we undertake audit work under our statutory powers and duties we may collect information from public bodies that contains some personal data. Our general audit fair processing notice, explains what we do with personal data, and how you can contact our Data Protection Officer.

Your audit at a glance



My financial statements audit will concentrate on your risks and other areas of focus

My audit planning has identified the following risks:

Significant financial statement risk

- Management override of controls
- Material misstatement due to fraud in expenditure recognition

Other areas of audit focus:

Other areas of audit focus

- Valuation of land and buildings
- Valuation of the pension fund net liability
- Completeness of related party disclosures
- Capital creditor accruals



My performance audit will include:

- Assurance and Risk Assessment
- Thematic reviews – financial sustainability of Local Government, commissioning and contract management
- Local Report – performance management



Materiality

Materiality	£3.492 million
Reporting threshold	£0.171 million

Financial statements materiality



Materiality £3.429 million

My aim is to identify and correct material misstatements, that is, those that might otherwise cause the user of the accounts to be misled.

Materiality is calculated using:

- 2021-22 gross expenditure of £342.9 million
- Materiality percentage of 1%

I report to those charged with governance any misstatements above a trivial level (set at 5% of materiality).



Areas of specific interest

There are some areas of the accounts that may be of more importance to the user of the accounts and we have set a lower materiality level for these:

- Senior officer remuneration £1,000
- Senior officer and member related parties £10,000

Significant financial statements risks

Significant risks are identified risks of material misstatement for which the assessment of inherent risk is close to the upper end of the spectrum of inherent risk or those which are to be treated as a significant risk in accordance with the requirements of other ISAs. The ISAs require us to focus more attention on these significant risks.

Exhibit 1: significant financial statement risks

Significant risk	Our planned response
<p>Management Override 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 240.32-33].</p>	<p>The 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 bias; and • evaluate the rationale for any significant transactions outside the normal course of business.
<p>Expenditure Recognition There is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud in expenditure and as such is treated as a significant risk [PN 10].</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perform risk assessed substantive testing of material classes of transactions within expenditure; and • perform cut-off procedures on a sample basis to check expenditure has been recorded within the correct financial year

The audit team is yet to conclude all areas of the risk assessment. Should any further significant financial risks arise on completion of this work we will update the S151 officer and the Governance and Audit Committee via its chair and re-issue my Detailed Audit Plan if required.

Other areas of focus

I set out other identified risks of material misstatement which, whilst not determined to be significant risks as above, I would like to bring to your attention.

Exhibit 2: other areas of focus

Audit risk	Our planned response
<p>Valuation of land and buildings</p> <p>The value of land and buildings reflected in the balance sheet and notes to the accounts represent material estimates. Land and buildings are required to be held on a valuation basis which is dependent on the nature and use of the assets. This estimate is subject to a high degree of subjectivity depending on the specialist and management assumptions adopted and changes in these can result in material changes to valuations. Assets are required to be revalued every five years, but values may also change year on year and there is a risk that the carrying value of assets reflected in the accounts could be materially different to the current value of assets as at 31 March 2023. Given continued high levels of inflation, the Authority are intending to uplift asset values to ensure carrying values remain materially correct.</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the process undertaken by the Council/Authority to ensure that asset valuations are materially correct. • test a sample of assets revalued in the year to ensure the valuation basis, key data and assumptions used in the valuation process are reasonable, and the revaluations have been correctly reflected in the financial statements; and • test the reconciliation between the financial ledger and the asset register.
<p>Valuation of pension fund net liability</p> <p>The Local Government Pension scheme (LGPS) pension fund liability as reflected in the financial statements represents a material estimate. The nature of this estimate means that it is subject to a high degree of estimation uncertainty as it is sensitive to small adjustments in the assumptions used in its calculation.</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the instructions issued by management to their management experts (actuary) for this estimate and the scope of the actuary's work; • assess the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the valuations; • assess the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Council/Authority

	<p>to the actuary to estimate the liability;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test the accuracy of the pension fund net liability and disclosures in the financial statements with the actuarial report from the actuary; and • assess the reasonableness of the assumptions made by the actuary by reviewing the report of the consulting actuary (auditor's expert) and undertaking any additional procedures required.
<p>Related Party Disclosures</p> <p>There is a risk that the disclosures are materially understated given the sensitive nature and lower materiality threshold for related party transactions.</p> <p>In 2021-22, we recommended that the Council put procedures in place to collate updated declarations of interest from members as part of the annual accounts process. Previously, declarations were completed by members following their election and updated on an ad hoc basis. However, this meant some declarations were five years out of date at the time of the 2021-22 audit.</p>	<p>The audit team will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review annual returns to identify related parties; • review other sources, such as Companies House, to confirm the completeness of declarations; and • review ledger transactions to confirm all transactions with related parties have been appropriately disclosed.
<p>Capital Creditors</p> <p>There is a risk that creditors and expenditure in relation to capital projects is materially overstated. In both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 audits we identified several errors where expenditure in relation to capital projects had been accounted for in the wrong financial year resulting in overstated creditors and expenditure.</p>	<p>The audit team will perform substantive testing of expenditure and creditor balances to confirm transactions have been recorded within the correct financial year.</p>

Financial statements audit timetable

I set out below key dates for delivery of my accounts audit work and planned outputs.

Exhibit 3: key dates for delivery of planned outputs

Planned output	Work undertaken	Report finalised
2023 Outline Audit Plan	February – March 2023	March 2023
2023 Detailed Audit Plan	February – June 2023	July 2023
Audit of financial statements work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audit of Financial Statements Report• Opinion on the Financial Statements	July – November 2023	November 2023 ²

² Subject to delivery of draft accounts in line with agreed timetable.

Planned performance audit work

I set out below details of my performance audit work and key dates for delivery of planned outputs.

Exhibit 4: key dates for delivery of planned outputs

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 arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.	July 2023 – March 2024
Thematic review – financial sustainability of local government	A review of councils' financial sustainability including a focus on the actions, plans and arrangements to bridge funding gaps and address financial pressures over the medium term.	To be confirmed
Thematic review – commissioning and contract management	A review focusing on how councils' arrangements for commissioning and contract management apply value for money considerations and the sustainable development principle.	To be confirmed
Local review – Performance management	A review of the Council's performance management arrangements.	To be confirmed

We will provide updates on the performance audit programme through our regular updates to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Certification of grant claims and returns

I have also been requested to undertake certification work on the Council's grant claims, which I anticipate will include Housing Benefits, Teachers Pension, NDR and pooled budget returns.

Statutory audit functions

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.

As this work is reactive, I have made no allowance in the fee table below. If I do receive questions or objections, I will discuss potential audit fees at the time.

Fee and audit team

In January 2023, I published the fee scheme for the 2023-24 year as approved by the Senedd Finance Committee. My fee rates for 2023-24 have increased by 4.8% for inflationary pressures. In addition, my financial audit fee has a further increase of 10.2% for the impact of the revised auditing standard ISA 315 on my financial audit approach. More details of the revised auditing standard and what it means for the audit I undertake is set out in **Appendix 1**.

I estimate your total audit fee will be £379,931.

Exhibit 5: audit fee

This table sets out the proposed audit fee for 2023, by area of audit work, alongside the estimated audit fee for last year.

Audit area	Proposed fee (£) ³	Estimated ⁴ fee last year (£)
Audit of accounts ⁵	210,007	182,560
Performance audit work ⁶	111,510	106,848
• Grant certification work ⁷	49,000	54,000
• Other financial audit work ⁸	9,414	7,713
• Total fee	379,931	351,121

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 S151 and Deputy S151 Officers.

³ The fees shown in this document are exclusive of VAT, which is not charged to you.

⁴ Estimate as performance audit work and grant certification work is ongoing.

⁵ Payable November 2021 to October 2022.

⁶ Payable April 2022 to March 2023.

⁷ Payable as work is undertaken.

⁸ Independent Examination of Monmouthshire Farm School Endowment trust £1,896 and Audit of Welsh Church Act Trust Fund £7,518.

Our financial audit fee is based on the following assumptions:

- the agreed audit deliverables sets out the expected working paper requirements to support the financial statements and includes timescales and responsibilities; and
- no matters of significance, other than as summarised in this plan, are identified during the audit.

The main members of my team, together with their contact details, are summarised in **Exhibit 6**.

Exhibit 6: my local audit team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Helen Goddard	Engagement Director	029 20320 642	helen.goddard@audit.wales
Rachel Freitag	Audit Manager (Financial Audit)	029 20829 359	rachel.freitag@audit.wales
Colin Davies	Audit Manager (Performance Audit)	029 20320 666	colin.davies@audit.wales
Julie Owens	Audit Lead (Financial Audit)	029 20829 392	julie.owens@audit.wales
Charlotte Owen	Audit Lead (Performance Audit)	029 20829 331	charlotte.owen@audit.wales

I can confirm that my team members are all independent of the Council and your officers.

Audit quality

Our commitment to audit quality in Audit Wales is absolute. We believe that audit quality is about getting things right first time.

We use a three lines of assurance model to demonstrate how we achieve this. We have established an Audit Quality Committee to co-ordinate and oversee those arrangements. We subject our work to independent scrutiny by QAD* and our Chair, acts as a link to our Board on audit quality. For more information see our [Audit Quality Report 2022](#).

Our People



The first line of assurance is formed by our staff and management who are individually and collectively responsible for achieving the standards of audit quality to which we aspire.

- Selection of right team
- Use of specialists
- Supervisions and review

Arrangements for achieving audit quality



The second line of assurance is formed by the policies, tools, learning & development, guidance, and leadership we provide to our staff to support them in achieving those standards of audit quality.

- Audit platform
- Ethics
- Guidance
- Culture
- Learning and development
- Leadership
- Technical support

Independent assurance



The third line of assurance is formed by those activities that provide independent assurance over the effectiveness of the first two lines of assurance.

- EQCRs
- Themed reviews
- Cold reviews
- Root cause analysis
- Peer review
- Audit Quality Committee
- External monitoring

* QAD is the quality monitoring arm of ICAEW.

Appendix 1

The key changes to ISA315 and the potential impact on your organisation

Key change	Potential impact on your organisation
More detailed and extensive risk identification and assessment procedures	<p>Your finance team and others in your organisation may receive a greater number of enquiries from our audit teams at the planning stage of the audit. Requests for information may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• information on your organisation's business model and how it integrates the use of information technology (IT);• information about your organisation's risk assessment process and how your organisation monitors the system of internal control;• more detailed information on how transactions are initiated, recorded, processed, and reported. This may include access to supporting documentation such as policy and procedure manuals; and• more detailed discussions with your organisation to support the audit team's assessment of inherent risk.
Obtaining an enhanced understanding of your organisation's environment, particularly in relation to IT	<p>Your organisation may receive more enquiries to assist the audit team in understanding the IT environment. This may include information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT applications relevant to financial reporting;• the supporting IT infrastructure (e.g. the network, databases);• IT processes (e.g. managing program changes, IT operations); and• the IT personnel involved in the IT processes. <p>Audit teams may need to test the general IT controls and this may require obtaining more detailed audit evidence on the operation of IT controls within your organisation.</p> <p>On some audits, our audit teams may involve IT audit specialists to assist with their work. Our IT auditors may need to engage with members of your IT team who have not previously been involved in the audit process.</p>

Key change	Potential impact on your organisation
<p>Enhanced requirements relating to exercising professional scepticism</p>	<p>Our audit teams may make additional inquiries if they identify information which appears to contradict what they have already learned in the audit.</p>
<p>Risk assessments are scalable depending on the nature and complexity of the audited body</p>	<p>The audit team's expectations regarding the formality of your organisation's policies, procedures, processes, and systems will depend on the complexity of your organisation.</p>
<p>Audit teams may make greater use of technology in the performance of their audit</p>	<p>Our audit teams may make use of automated tools and techniques such as data analytics when performing their audit. Our teams may request different information or information in a different format from previous audits so that they can perform their audit procedures.</p>

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