

Audit and Inspection Plan

June 2008



Audit and Inspection Plan

Wyre Forest District Council

Audit 2008/09

External audit is an essential element in the process of accountability for public money and makes an important contribution to the stewardship of public resources and the corporate governance of public services.

Audit in the public sector is underpinned by three fundamental principles:

- auditors are appointed independently from the bodies being audited;
- the scope of auditors' work is extended to cover not only the audit of financial statements but also value for money and the conduct of public business; and
- auditors may report aspects of their work widely to the public and other key stakeholders.

The duties and powers of auditors appointed by the Audit Commission are set out in the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Local Government Act 1999 and the Commission's statutory Code of Audit Practice. Under the Code of Audit Practice, appointed auditors are also required to comply with the current professional standards issued by the independent Auditing Practices Board.

Appointed auditors act quite separately from the Commission and in meeting their statutory responsibilities are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of both the Commission and the audited body.

Status of our reports

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.

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Introduction

- 1 This plan sets out the audit and inspection work that we propose to undertake for the 2008/09 financial year. The plan is based on the Audit Commission's risk-based approach to audit planning and the requirements of moving towards Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). It reflects:
 - audit and inspection work specified by the Audit Commission for 2008/09;
 - current national risks relevant to your local circumstances; and
 - your local risks and improvement priorities.
- 2 During 2008/09, the role of Relationship Manager will be replaced by the post of Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead (CAAL). The CAAL will provide the focal point for the Commission's work in your local area, lead the CAA process, and ensure that the combined inspection programme across all inspectorates is tailored to the level and nature of risk for the area and its constituent public bodies. The Commission has become the statutory gatekeeper of all inspection activity involving local authorities.
- 3 As we have not yet completed our audit for 2007/08, the audit planning process for 2008/09, including the risk assessment will continue as the year progresses, and the information and fees in this plan will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

Responsibilities

- 4 We comply with the statutory requirements governing our audit and inspection work, in particular:
 - the Audit Commission Act 1998;
 - the Local Government Act 1999; and
 - the Code of Audit Practice.
- 5 The Code of Audit Practice (the Code) defines auditors' responsibilities in relation to:
 - the financial statements (including the annual governance statement); and
 - the audited body's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- 6 The Audit Commission's Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies (from April 2008) sets out the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Council. The Audit Commission has issued a copy of the Statement to every audited body.
- 7 The Statement summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body begin and end and our audit work is undertaken in the context of these responsibilities.

Fees

- 8 The details of the structure of scale fees are set out in the Audit Commission's work programme and fee scales 2008/09. Scale fees are based on a number of variables, including the type, size and location of the audited body.
- 9 The total indicative fee for the audit and inspection work included in this audit and inspection plan for 2008/09 is for £115,420, which compares to the actual/planned fee of £106,610 for 2007/08.
- 10 A summary of this is shown in the table below. The fee is determined by audit risks identified, mandated work and basic assumptions. A detailed breakdown of the audit and inspection fee is included in Appendix 2.

Table 1 Audit fee

Audit area	Planned fee 2008/09	Actual fee 2007/08	Page
Total audit fee	102,350	100,710	
Total inspection fee	13,070	5,900	

- 11 The Audit Commission scale fee for Wyre Forest District Council is £98,000. The fee proposed for 2008/09 is + 4 per cent compared to the scale fee and is within the normal level of variation specified by the Commission.
- 12 In setting the fee, we have assumed that:
 - the level of risk in relation to the audit of the financial statements is not significantly different to that identified for 2007/08;
 - internal audit undertakes appropriate work on all systems; and
 - good quality working papers and records will be provided to support the financial statements.

Further details of the assumptions are outlined in Appendix 2.
- 13 The Audit Commission has the power to determine the fee above or below the scale fee where it considers that substantially more or less work is required than envisaged by the scale fee. The Audit Commission may, therefore, adjust the scale fee to reflect the actual work that needs to be carried out to meet the auditor's statutory responsibilities, on the basis of the auditor's assessment of risk and complexity at a particular body.
- 14 It is a matter for the auditor to determine the work necessary to complete the audit and, subject to approval by the Audit Commission, to seek to agree an appropriate variation to the scale fee with the Council. The Audit Commission expects normally to vary the scale fee by no more than 30 per cent (upwards or downwards). This fee then becomes payable.

- 15 We will also charge for our certification of certain grants and claims. An estimate of the total cost for 2008/09 will be communicated to the Council after we have completed our certification work for 2007/08.

Process for agreeing any changes in audit fees

- 16 As set out in paragraph 4, we expect that the initial risk assessment may change as the year progress. Where this is the case, we will discuss this in the first instance with the [name officer]. Supplements to the plan will be issued to record any revisions to the risk and the impact on the fee.

Auditor's report on the financial statements

- 17 We are required to issue an audit report giving our:
- opinion on whether the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2009; and
 - conclusion on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Financial statements

- 18 We have not undertaken a risk assessment for our audit of the financial statements as many of the specific risks which may become apparent after we have completed our 2007/08 audit. A separate opinion plan for the audit of the financial statements will be issued in 2008.

VFM conclusion

- 19 In reaching our conclusion, we will review evidence that is relevant to the Council's performance management and financial management arrangements.
- 20 The key risks highlighted from the planning are summarised in the table below with details of planned work to mitigate the risks. Full details of the risk assessment are outlined in Appendix 3.

Table 2 Key risks identified

Key risks identified	Planned work to address the risk
Robust performance management is required to deliver the council's objectives.	Review of performance management system in operation at the authority.

Use of resources

- 21 The Audit Commission has specified that auditors will complete a use of resources assessment for 2008/09. This will be a new assessment forming part of the CAA framework for 2009.
- 22 The approach to the use of resources assessment has been subject to consultation and will be finalised after April 2008. Further information about our use of resources work for 2008/09 will be provided once the approach has been confirmed. For each of the significant risks identified in relation to our use of resources work, we consider the arrangements put in place by the Council to mitigate risk, and plan our work accordingly.
- 23 The initial risk assessment for use of resources work is shown in Appendix 3. This will be updated through the continuous planning process as the year progresses.

Mandated work

24 As part of the audit, the mandated work programme comprises:

- data quality; and
- whole of government accounts.

Appendix 1 highlights the work to be undertaken.

CPA and inspection

- 25 From April 2009, the Audit Commission, jointly with the other public service inspectorates, will be implementing Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Therefore, 2008/09 is the last year in which corporate assessments and programme service inspections will be undertaken as part of the CPA framework.
- 26 The Audit Commission's CPA and inspection activity is underpinned by the principle of targeting our work where it will have the greatest effect, based upon
- 27 The Council's CPA category is a key driver in the Commission's inspection planning process. Wyre Forest district Council was assessed as Fair in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out in 2004.
- 28 I have applied the principles set out in the CPA framework, '*CPA – District Council Framework From 2006*', recognising the key strengths and areas for improvement in the Council's performance and recognising issues arising from our Direction of Travel work.
- 29 On the basis of the planning process, I have identified that inspection activity will be focused on an inspection of the regeneration activity at the council.

30 Summary of inspection activity

Inspection activity	Reason/impact
Direction of Travel (DoT) assessment	An annual assessment, carried out by the RM, of how well the Council is securing continuous improvement. The DoT statement will be reported in the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. The DoT assessment summary will be published on the Commission's website.
Regeneration Inspection	Our risk assessment shows that this is a priority for 2008/09. We will carry out a review of regeneration plans and how they integrate with those of the council's partners.

Advice and assistance

- 31 Under paragraph 9 of Schedule 2A of the Audit Commission Act 1998 we have powers to provide 'advice and assistance' (A&A) to another public body where this is requested.
- 32 If you wish the Commission to provide additional services under these powers, please contact Dorothy Welsh.

The audit and inspection team

- 33 The key members of the audit and inspection team for the 2008/09 audit are shown in the table below.

Table 3 Audit and inspection team

Name	Contact details	Responsibilities
Elizabeth Cave District Auditor	e-cave@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 7987552	Responsible for the overall delivery of the audit including the quality of outputs, signing the opinion and conclusion, and liaison with the Chief Executive and audit committee.
Mary-Ann Bruce CAAL	ma-bruce@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 3554	The primary point of contact with the authority and the interface at the local level between the Commission and the other inspectorates, government offices and other key stakeholders.
David Evans Audit Manager	d-evans@audit-commission.gov.uk 0845 798 7580	Manages and co-ordinates the different elements of the audit work. Key point of contact for the Director of Finance.

Quality of service

- 34 We are committed to providing you with a high quality service. If you are in any way dissatisfied, or would like to discuss how we can improve our service, please contact me in the first instance. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the West Midlands Head of Operations, Phil Jones.
- 35 If we are unable to satisfy your concerns, you have the right to make a formal complaint to the Audit Commission. The complaints procedure is set out in the leaflet '*Something to Complain About*', which is available from the Commission's website or on request.

Planned outputs

- 36 Reports will be discussed and agreed with the appropriate officers before being issued to the audit committee.

Table 4 Planned outputs

Planned output	Indicative date
Opinion Audit Plan	December 2008
Annual governance report	September 2009
Auditor's report giving an opinion on the financial statements	September 2009
Final accounts memorandum	November 2009
Use of resources report	October 2009
Performance Management report	March 2009
Regeneration Inspection report	January 2009
Annual Audit and Inspection Letter	February 2010

Appendix 1 – Elements of our work

Financial statements

- 1** We will carry out our audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB).
- 2** We are required to issue an opinion on whether the financial statements present fairly, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2008, the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2009 and its income and expenditure for the year.
- 3** We are also required to review whether the Annual Governance Statement has been presented in accordance with relevant requirements, and to report if it does not meet these requirements or if the Annual Governance Statement is misleading or inconsistent with our knowledge of the Council.

Value for money conclusion

- 4** The Code requires us to issue a conclusion on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the value for money conclusion. The Code also requires the auditor to have regard to a standard set of relevant criteria, issued by the Audit Commission, in arriving at our conclusion.
- 5** In meeting this responsibility, we will review evidence that is relevant to the Council's corporate performance management and financial management arrangements. Where relevant work has been undertaken by other regulators, we will normally place reliance on their reported results to inform our work.
- 6** We will also follow up our work from previous years to assess progress in implementing agreed recommendations.

Use of resources assessment

- 7** The approach to the use of resources assessment for 2008/09 has been subject to a consultation process which ended in February 2008. The Commission is considering the responses to the consultation and will finalise the assessment framework after April 2008. We will provide further information on the work needed for the assessment once the approach has been confirmed.

Data quality

- 8 We are required to undertake audit work in relation to data quality which will be directly linked to the VFM conclusion and the use of resources assessment.
- 9 The approach to data quality is being considered as part of the use of resources framework and we will provide further information on the work needed once the framework has been finalised. As part of the approach, the Audit Commission will specify work on housing and council tax benefit performance indicators.

Whole of government accounts

- 10 We will be required to review and report on your WGA consolidation pack in accordance with the approach agreed with HM Treasury and the National Audit Office.

National Fraud Initiative

- 11 From 2008/09 work relating to the National Fraud Initiative will be carried out directly by the Commission under its new data matching powers under the Serious Crime Act 2007. The Commission will be consulting audited bodies on the work programme and fee scales for the National Fraud Initiative later this year.

Certification of grant claims and returns

- 12 We will continue to certify the Council's claims and returns on the following basis.
 - Claims below £100,000 will not be subject to certification.
 - Claims between £100,000 and £500,000 will be subject to a reduced, light-touch certification.
 - Claims over £500,000 will be subject to a certification approach relevant to the auditor's assessment of the control environment and management preparation of claims. A robust control environment would lead to a reduced certification approach for these claims.

Appendix 2 – Basis for fee

- 13 The Audit Commission is committed to targeting its work where it will have the greatest effect, based upon assessments of risk and performance. This means planning work to address areas of risk relevant to our audit responsibilities and reflecting this in the audit fees. It also means making sure that our work is coordinated with the work of other regulators, and that our work helps you to improve.
- 14 The risk assessment process starts with the identification of the significant financial and operational risks applying at the Council with reference to:
- our cumulative knowledge of the Council;
 - planning guidance issued by the Audit Commission;
 - the specific results of previous and ongoing audit work;
 - interviews with Council officers;
 - liaison with internal audit; and
 - the results of other review agencies' work where relevant.

Assumptions

- 15 In setting the fee, we have assumed that:
- the level of risk in relation to the audit of the financial statements is not significantly different from that identified for 2007/08;
 - you will inform us of significant developments impacting on our audit;
 - internal audit meets the appropriate professional standards;
 - internal audit undertakes appropriate work on all systems that provide material figures in the financial statements sufficient that we can place reliance for the purposes of our audit;
 - good quality working papers and records will be provided to support the financial statements by [date];
 - requested information will be provided within agreed timescales;
 - prompt responses will be provided to draft reports; and
 - additional work will not be required to address questions or objections raised by local government electors.
- 16 Where these assumptions are not met, I will be required to undertake additional work which is likely to result in an increased audit fee. The fee for the audit of the financial statements will be re-visited when we issue the opinion audit plan.

- 17 Changes to the plan will be agreed with you. These may be required if:
- new residual audit risks emerge;
 - additional work is required by the Audit Commission or other regulators; or
 - additional work is required as a result of changes in legislation, professional standards or as a result of changes in financial reporting.
- 18 Below is a detailed breakdown of the audit and inspection fee for 2008/09.
- 19 The fee (plus VAT) will be charged in 12 equal instalments from April 2008 to March 2009.

Table 5 Detailed audit and inspection fee

Audit area	Planned fee 2008/09	Planned/Actual fee 2007/08	Page
Audit			
Financial statements	65,400	64,070	
Use of resources and Voluntary Improvement work	34,500	34,300	
Whole of government accounts	2,450	2,340	
Total audit fee	102,350	100,710	
Inspection			
Relationship management	2,985	2,950	
Direction of Travel	2,985	2,950	
Service inspection	7,100	-	
Corporate inspection			
Total inspection fee	13,070	5,900	
Total audit and inspection fee	115,420	106,610	

Appendix 3 – Initial risk assessment – Use of resources and VFM conclusion

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor’s responsibilities
<p>Performance management Consistency and ownership of performance management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training for Cabinet and Scrutiny Members - Workshops for DMTs for business plans and Nis - Performance clinics for under achieving indicators/targets - Exception reporting and ensuring that appropriate officers attend Scrutiny meetings. 	Yes	We will undertake a review of performance management at the Authority.	Use of Resources/VFM conclusion
<p>Partnership working The Council is currently involved in 50+ partnerships and the drive from Central Government is to increase partnership working. Are the management and governance arrangements sufficient to deliver partnership targets?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Authority has a number of policies in place for the governance of partnership arrangements. - The Partnership Framework is being implemented. - Quarterly reporting to CMT and Cabinet of partnership outcomes. 	Yes	We will review as part of our UoR/VFM work.	Use of Resources/VFM conclusion

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor’s responsibilities
<p>Single Site</p> <p>The Council has decided to go ahead with proposals for offices on a single site. However there are still uncertainties over the site, transport infrastructure, finance and IT considerations. Does the authority have the capacity to deliver?</p>	<p>Progress with the project has been delayed.</p> <p>Agents have been appointed to advise council.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We will review progress during the year.</p>	<p>Use of Resources/VFM conclusion</p>

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor's responsibilities
<p>Finance</p> <p>CSR2007 has proved to be tight. In addition high pension fund contributions, low Council Tax promise and fluctuation in investments mean the Council will need to make efficiency savings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The authority has a strong budgetary control system and there is quarterly reporting to the cabinet committee. - A strategy for delivery of CSR07 is being developed. - CMT buy-in still required to achieve efficiency savings. 	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We will review financial position during the year as part of our review of financial standing.</p>	<p>Use of Resources/VFM conclusion</p>
<p>Finance</p> <p>Need to agree and deliver a sustainable medium term financial strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate planning process working well - Regular communication and meetings with members - MTFS will be reviewed as part of the budget review process. 	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We will review financial position during the year as part of our review of financial standing.</p>	<p>Use of Resources/VFM conclusion</p>
<p>Capital programme</p> <p>Are project management skills and resources sufficient to deliver programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CPO to determine what support is needed for managers - Training is being introduced across the authority 	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We will review as part of our UoR/VFM.</p>	<p>Use of Resources/VFM conclusion</p>

24 Audit and Inspection Plan | Appendix 3 – Initial risk assessment – Use of resources and VFM conclusion

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor's responsibilities
	- risk register structure is being reviewed and updated.			

Appendix 4 – Independence and objectivity

- 20 We are not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the District Auditor and the audit staff, which we are required by auditing and ethical standards to communicate to you.
- 21 We comply with the ethical standards issued by the APB and with the Commission's requirements in respect of independence and objectivity as summarised below.
- 22 Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission are required to comply with the Commission's Code of Audit Practice and Standing Guidance for Auditors, which defines the terms of the appointment. When auditing the financial statements, auditors are also required to comply with auditing standards and ethical standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB).
- 23 The main requirements of the Code of Audit Practice, Standing Guidance for Auditors and the standards are summarised below.
- 24 International Standard on Auditing (UK and Ireland) 260 (Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance) requires that the appointed auditor:
- discloses in writing all relationships that may bear on the auditor's objectivity and independence, the related safeguards put in place to protect against these threats and the total amount of fee that the auditor has charged the client; and
 - confirms in writing that the APB's ethical standards are complied with and that, in the auditor's professional judgement, they are independent and their objectivity is not compromised.
- 25 The standard defines 'those charged with governance' as 'those persons entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of an entity'. In your case, the appropriate addressee of communications from the auditor to those charged with governance is the [audit committee]. The auditor reserves the right, however, to communicate directly with the Council on matters which are considered to be of sufficient importance.
- 26 The Commission's Code of Audit Practice has an overriding general requirement that appointed auditors carry out their work independently and objectively, and ensure that they do not act in any way that might give rise to, or could reasonably be perceived to give rise to, a conflict of interest. In particular, appointed auditors and their staff should avoid entering into 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.

27 The Standing Guidance for Auditors includes a number of specific rules. The key rules relevant to this audit appointment are as follows.

- Appointed auditors should not perform additional work for an audited body (ie work over and above the minimum required to meet their statutory responsibilities) if it would compromise their independence or might give rise to a reasonable perception that their independence could be compromised. Where the audited body invites the auditor to carry out risk-based work in a particular area that cannot otherwise be justified as necessary to support the auditor's opinion and conclusions, it should be clearly differentiated within the Audit and Inspection Plan as being 'additional work' and charged for separately from the normal audit fee.
- 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.
- The District Auditor responsible for the audit should, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, be changed at least once every five years.
- The District Auditor and senior members of the audit team are prevented from taking part in political activity on behalf of 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.
- The District Auditor and members of the audit team must abide by the Commission's policy on gifts, hospitality and entertainment.

Appendix 5 – Working together

Meetings

- 28 The audit and inspection team will maintain knowledge of your issues to inform audit and inspection through regular liaison with key officers.
- 29 Our proposal for meetings is as follows.

Table 6 Proposed meetings with officers

Council officers	Audit Commission staff	Timing	Purpose
Chief Executive	District Auditor (DA) and/or Audit Manager (AM)	Quarterly: April, August, November, February	General update plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April - Audit and Inspection Plan; and • June - accounts progress and VFM.
Directors			General update
Head of Financial Services	AM and Team Leader (TL)	Quarterly	Update on audit and opinion issues
Chief Internal Auditor	AM and TL	Quarterly	Update on audit progress and issues
Audit Committee	DA and/or AM, with TL as appropriate	Quarterly	Formal reporting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and Inspection Plan; • Annual governance report; • Annual Audit and Inspection Letter; and • other issues as appropriate.

Sustainability

- 30 The Audit Commission is committed to promoting sustainability in our working practices and we will actively consider opportunities to reduce our impact on the environment. This will include:
- reducing paper flow by encouraging you to submit documentation and working papers electronically;
 - use of video and telephone conferencing for meetings as appropriate; and
 - reducing travel.