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External audit progress report and technical update

**North East Derbyshire District
Council**

March 2016

This report provides the audit committee with an overview on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

The report also highlights the main technical issues which are currently having an impact in local government.

If you require any additional information regarding the issues included within this report, please contact a member of the audit team.

We have flagged the articles that we believe will have an impact at the Authority and given our perspective on the issue:

- High impact
- Medium impact
- Low impact
- For info

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Progress report

This document provides the audit committee with a high level overview on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

At the end of each stage of the audit we issue certain deliverables, including reports and opinions. A summary of progress against these deliverable is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

Area of responsibility	Commentary
Financial statements	<p>We have completed our planning work for the 2015/16 audit, the outcome of which was reported to the Chief Financial Officer in our External Audit Plan in March 2016 and is due to be received by the Audit and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee in April 2016.</p> <p>During March 2016 we undertook our interim audit visit. There are no matters arising which were necessary to be separately reported to you at this stage.</p> <p>Our year end visit is due to commence on 27 June 2016 and our audit team will be on-site for a period of two weeks.</p>
Value for Money	<p>Our work in relation to the Value for Money conclusion is underway and the Authority has provided some additional information which we have requested to inform our view in a number of areas.</p> <p>Further work will be undertaken to finalise our opinion once the final outturn position is known and the audit of the financial statements is substantially complete.</p>



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KPMG resources

Area	Comments
<p>KPMG Local Government Budget Survey</p>	<p>KPMG has recently published the results of its Local Government Budget Survey. The survey collated data from 97 KPMG local authority clients on topics including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The content of budget monitoring reports; ■ Savings plans; ■ Invest-to-save projects ■ The type of savings being made; ■ Assumptions underlying the medium term financial plan; and ■ Reserve movements. <p>The Survey also poses questions for management and members to consider when reviewing their budget setting and budget monitoring processes.</p> <p>For more information, and a copy of the report, please contact Kay Meats at kay.meats@kpmg.co.uk.</p>



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Technical update

Area	Level of impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
DCLG consultation on pension fund investment reform	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Low</p>	<p>The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has recently closed a consultation on revised regulations for the investment of local government pension scheme assets. The proposed regulations include the proposal to allow pension schemes to pool assets for investment purposes.</p> <p>The revised regulations can be found here at www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-pension-scheme-investment-reform-criteria-and-guidance</p> <p>The outcome of the consultation will be published here: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revoking-and-replacing-the-local-government-pension-scheme</p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to enquire of officers whether their Authority responded to the consultation and the views expressed.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
<p>CIPFA briefings on accounting for highways infrastructure assets</p>	<p>● Low</p>	<p>CIPFA has published the first of a series of briefings on highways infrastructure assets.</p> <p>The first briefing focuses on the decisions made by CIPFA/LASAAC Local Authority Accounting Board following its consultation on the <i>Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17</i>. The briefing also covers the applicability of the measurement requirements for district councils and the resources available to support the implementation process. In particular the briefing notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the change to recognising the assets using the depreciated replacement cost approach will be prospective, so will not require the 2015/16 accounts to be restated; and ■ district councils are unlikely to meet the definition of having a single highways network asset, although they will need to reach their own view on this. <p>The first briefing can be found at www.cipfa.org/~media/files/policy%20and%20guidance/local%20authority%20transport%20infrastructure/final%20briefing%20hna%20no%201.pdf?la=en</p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to seek assurances how their Authority is progressing with the new requirements.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
2015/16 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) – update	<p style="text-align: center;">● Low</p>	<p>CIPFA/LASAAC has issued an update to the <i>2015/16 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom</i> (the Code) following its consultation process. The 2015/16 Code update should be read alongside the 2015/16 Code published in April 2015.</p> <p>Authorities should note that the update confirms the transitional reporting requirements for the measurement of the Highways Network Asset. The Code does not require a change to the preceding year information for the move to measuring the Highways Network Asset at current value (and under that provision would not require a change to the balance sheet information at 1 April 2015). It also does not require a restatement of the opening 1 April 2016 information but there will need to be an adjustment to those balances.</p> <p>The Code update also includes amendments as a result of legislative changes and particularly the <i>Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015</i> for English authorities. It specifies the principles for narrative reporting which CIPFA/LASAAC considers should be used to meet the new requirements of those regulations.</p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to seek assurances that their Authority is aware of the update to the 2015/16 Code.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
Capital receipts flexibility	<p style="text-align: center;">● Low</p>	<p>The 2015 Spending Review included an announcement that local authorities would be able to use capital receipts on the revenue costs of service reform projects. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has now issued guidance on the capital receipts flexibility, including a draft direction setting out the types of project that would qualify and expected governance and transparency framework. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the flexibility is available from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2019; ■ only capital receipts generated during that period can be used for the flexibility; ■ the Secretary of State’s direction will have the effect of allowing authorities to treat revenue expenditure on service reform as capital during the three year period; ■ authorities will not be allowed to borrow to fund revenue expenditure on service reform; and ■ authorities are required to have regard to a statutory code which contains certain transparency requirements when taking advantage of the flexibility. <p>We understand that DCLG’s aim is that the final signed direction will be issued with the final settlement in February 2016.</p> <p>A copy of the draft guidance can be found at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486999/Capital_receipts_flexibility - draft statutory guidance and direction.pdf</p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to seek assurances how their Authority is planning to use the new flexibility.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
Better Care Fund policy framework 2016/17	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Low</p>	<p>The Department of Health, in conjunction with the Department for Communities and Local Government, has recently published <i>2016-17 Better Care Fund planning guidance</i>.</p> <p>The guidance introduces a number of changes, requiring local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), councils and providers to establish risk sharing arrangements to fund unplanned emergency admissions. Local areas will also have to agree to ‘stretching’ local targets for cutting delayed transfers of care supported by an action plan.</p> <p>The guidance can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-care-fund-how-it-will-work-in-2016-to-2017</p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to seek assurances how their Authority is developing these arrangements.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<p>PSAA update – VFM profiles March 2016 release</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For Information</p>	<p>Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) updated its Value for Money Profiles Tool (VFM profiles) on 3 February 2016.</p> <p>The VFM profiles have been updated with the 2014-15 data sourced from the Department for Communities and Local Government – General Fund Revenue Outturn Budget (RO). The values are adjusted with gross domestic product (GDP) deflators from HM Treasury's publication in November 2015. The profiles can be accessed through the PSAA website at www.psaa.co.uk/</p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<p>Joint report by CIPFA and HFMA: <i>The Better Care Fund – six months on</i></p>	<p>● For Information</p>	<p>Authorities may wish to be aware of a recent joint report by CIPFA and the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) examining the progress that has been made six months into the implementation of Better Care Fund arrangements.</p> <p>The report is based on the results of an HFMA and CIPFA joint finance staff survey of NHS bodies and local authorities representing almost a third of BCF sites.</p> <p>The report can be found on the CIPFA website at www.cipfa.org/about-cipfa/press-office/latest-press-releases/better-care-fund-struggling-with-red-tape</p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<p>Proposed changes to business rates and core grant</p>	<p>● For Information</p>	<p>The Chancellor of the Exchequer has proposed some radical reforms of local government finance. The proposals are that by the end of the decade, councils will retain all locally raised business rates but will cease to receive core grant from Whitehall.</p> <p>The Chancellor set out the landmark changes in a speech to the Conservative party conference in Manchester, saying it was time to face up to the fact that “the way this country is run is broken”.</p> <p>Under the proposals, authorities will be able to keep all the business rates that they collect from local businesses, meaning that power over £26 billion of revenue from business rates will be devolved, he said</p> <p>The uniform national business rate will be abolished, although only to allow all authorities the power to cut rates. Cities that choose to move to systems of combined authorities with directly elected city wide mayors will be able to increase rates for specific major infrastructure projects, up to a cap, likely to be set at £0.02 on the rate.</p> <p>The system of tariffs and top-ups designed to support areas with lower levels of business activity will be maintained in its present state.</p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For Information</p>	<p>Authorities will wish to note that the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 received Royal Assent on 28 January 2016. The Act provides the enabling legislation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ allow for the election of mayors for a combined authority area; ■ allow for the devolution of functions, including transport, health, skills, planning and job support; and ■ provide a power to establish sub-national transport bodies which will advise the Government on strategic schemes and investment priorities in their own area. <p>Most of the changes under the Act, including the implementation of ‘devolution’ deals, will be implemented by Orders to be made under the Act.</p>



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Appendix

Deliverable	Purpose	Timing	Status
Planning			
Fee letter	Communicate indicative fee for the audit year	April 2015	Complete
External audit plan	Outline our audit strategy and planned approach Identify areas of audit focus and planned procedures	February 2016	Complete
Substantive procedures			
Report to those charged with governance (ISA+260 report)	Details the resolution of key audit issues. Communication of adjusted and unadjusted audit differences. Performance improvement recommendations identified during our audit. Commentary on the Council's value for money arrangements.	September 2016	TBC
Completion			
Auditor's report	Providing an opinion on your accounts (including the Annual Governance Statement). Concluding on the arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources (the VFM conclusion).	September 2016	TBC
WGA	Concluding on the Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office.	September 2016	TBC
Annual audit letter	Summarise the outcomes and the key issues arising from our audit work for the year.	October 2016	TBC
Certification of claims and returns			
Certification of claims and returns report	Summarise the outcomes of certification work on your claims and returns for Government departments.	January 2017	TBC



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