

Cambridge City Council

Provisional Audit Planning Report

Year ended 31 March 2026

29 April 2026



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29 April 2026

Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
The Guildhall
Peas Hill
Cambridge
CB2 3QJ

Dear Civic Affairs and Audit Committee Members,

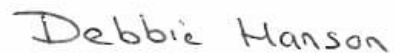
Provisional Audit Planning Report 2025/26

We are pleased to attach our Audit Planning Report for the forthcoming meeting of the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a basis to review our proposed audit approach and scope for the 2025/26 audit, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2024 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards, and other professional requirements.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee, and is not intended to be, and should not be used, by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you on 22 June 2026 as well as understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Debbie Hanson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Debbie Hanson

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies'. It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psaa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas. The 'Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated 1 October 2025)' issued by the PSAA (<https://www.psaa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/contract-monitoring-2023-24-to-2027-28/terms-of-appointment-from-2023-24/terms-of-appointment-and-further-guidance-from-1-october-2025/>) sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice 2024 (the NAO Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee and Management of Cambridge City Council. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee and Management of Cambridge City Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee and Management of Cambridge City Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



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Overview of our 2025/26 audit strategy

2025/26 audit strategy overview: Rebuilding Assurance

The purpose of this report

As the Council's body charged with governance, the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee plays a crucial role in ensuring assurance over both the quality of the draft financial statements prepared by management and the Council's wider arrangements to support a timely and efficient audit. Failure to achieve this will significantly increase the level of resources required to fulfil our respective responsibilities.

As part of our responsibilities, we assess and report on the adequacy of the Council's external financial reporting arrangements, as well as the effectiveness of the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee in fulfilling its role within those arrangements as part of our Value for Money assessment. Our ability to complete the audit is dependent on the timely formulation of appropriately supported accounting judgements, provision of accurate and relevant supporting evidence, access to the finance team and management's responsiveness to issues identified during the audit. Wherever necessary, we will consider invoking other statutory reporting powers to highlight any weaknesses in these arrangements. We direct Civic Affairs and Audit Committee members and officers to the Public Sector Audit Appointment Limited's Statement of Responsibilities (paragraphs 26-28) for expectations on preparing financial statements (see Appendix A).

Our shared strategy to rebuild assurance

We are now in Phase 2 of the implementation of the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) measures to address the backlog facing local government audit. Throughout 2023/24 and 2024/25, we have applied a structured, risk-based prioritisation approach to local government audits to support a return to unqualified audit opinions wherever feasible, while still meeting statutory backstop requirements. Our approach recognises that recovery depends heavily on the Council's own capacity and preparedness and that audit effort must be targeted where it can deliver meaningful assurance.

Management has overall responsibility for leading and sustaining the Council's recovery from a disclaimed audit opinion. This includes ensuring that the financial statements are prepared in accordance with proper practices and supported by complete, accurate and timely audit evidence.

To deliver this, it is essential that management:

- Strengthen the underlying control environment, particularly in areas linked to prior year disclaimers.
- Provide high quality working papers and ensure that all audit evidence is complete, consistent and readily accessible.
- Allocate sufficient, knowledgeable resources throughout the audit cycle.
- Actively engage with auditors, promptly addressing findings and resolving weaknesses in financial reporting arrangements.
- Communicate transparently with the Audit and Risk Committee, as Those Charged with Governance, ensuring that Committee members have clear visibility of risks, progress and emerging issues.

In line with the National Audit Office's Local Audit Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance (LARRIGs) - and specifically the guidance on rebuilding assurance following a disclaimed opinion - management must support the restoration of reliable opening balances and enable a phased progression from disclaimed to qualified and ultimately unmodified audit opinions. Achieving this requires sustained delivery of the "natural rebuild," through the completion of all planned audit procedures across successive annual cycles, alongside targeted work to rebuild assurance over historical balances, including both usable and unusable reserves, where cumulative gaps in evidence present the most significant challenges.

2025/26 audit strategy overview: Rebuilding Assurance

Our shared strategy to rebuild assurance continued

Appendix A explains the expected timeline to full assurance set out within the NAO's LARRIG 01 guidance, along with our assessment of the Council's status. We did not undertake any audit procedures on the 2022/23 financial statements and issued a disclaimer opinion under the agreements to reset and recover local government audit.

During 2023/24 and 2024/25, the focus of the rebuild process has been on this "natural" rebuild, to complete all planned audit procedures for each respective audit year. As we set out in Appendix A and in our Audit Completion Report and Audit Results Report dated 01 May 2025 and 11 February 2026, respectively, we were not able to complete all planned audit procedures for the following reasons:

2023/24

We were not able to commence any work to rebuild assurance ahead of the 2023/24 backstop date, as the Council did not publish its draft financial statements by the target date outlined in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (31 May 2024). The unaudited statements for 2023/24 were published on 28 February 2025. Taken together with the requirement to conclude our work by the 2023/24 backstop date, the lack of evidence over these movements and balances means we are unable to conclude that the 2023/24 financial statements are free from material and pervasive misstatements.

2024/25

Due to the disclaimers of opinion on the financial statements in the prior years, delays in receiving associated audit evidence and inability to support the audit in advance of the backstop date, we have not been able to complete all the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025. The detail of balances where we have a lack of assurance are set out in Appendix A.

2025/26

As part of our interim audit procedures for 2025/26, we will undertake a detailed risk assessment to evaluate the risk of material misstatement in the opening reserves balances at 1 April 2025, and to assess management's readiness to support the historic rebuild process over transactions and balances in 2022/23 and 2023/24 that were not subject to audit. This work is expected to be completed by 30 June 2026 and is essential to determining whether the pre-2024/25 gaps in assurance - particularly those relating to reserves and other cumulative balances - can be sufficiently addressed to support future progression towards qualified or unmodified audit opinions. We will discuss the outcome of our risk assessment over the opening reserves balances with management to confirm our planned approach for 2025/26. However, because we were unable to complete planned audit procedures for 2023/24 and 2024/25 for the reasons outlined above, it is unlikely that we will commence any rebuilding of assurance over the historic position during the 2025/26 audit cycle. In line with our established prioritisation principles, we will focus our audit resources on rebuilding assurance for those bodies where planned audit procedures were completed in 2023/24 and 2024/25, to support the sector wide objective of returning to unmodified audit opinions as quickly and sustainably as possible.

It is therefore critical that Management ensure they can provide high quality working papers, robust audit evidence, and resolve the underlying issues identified in prior years as part of the 2025/26 audit cycle. This will be essential to avoid any further delay in the eventual process for rebuilding assurance over the Council's historic position.

2025/26 audit strategy overview: Rebuilding Assurance

Preparedness for audit

Our ability to complete the audit is dependent on the timely formulation of appropriately supported accounting judgements, provision of accurate and relevant supporting evidence, access to the finance team and management's responsiveness to issues identified during the audit. Our 2024/25 reporting included our assessment of the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements to support the external audit process across a range of relevant measures (reproduced in Appendix A). We concluded that the Council was not fully prepared for the audit and that improvements were required in relation to:

- The timeliness and quality working papers and supporting evidence provided in accordance with the agreed timetable.
- The availability of key finance personnel to support the execution phase of the audit in accordance with the agreed project plan.

We will continue to report on our assessment of the quality of the Council's financial statements' preparation and support, to support ongoing transparency of the audit process to those charged with governance, and to facilitate benchmarking and tracking of progress in future years.

Scope of our audit

In accordance with the NAO Code, our primary objectives are to conduct work that supports the delivery of our audit report to the Council. Additionally, we aim to ensure that the Council has established proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources, as mandated by relevant legislation and the requirements of the NAO Code. We will issue an Audit Results Report that summarises our opinion on the financial statements by 30 November 2026 and other procedures required by the Code. This includes our assessment of the control environment, including our follow up of the recommendations that we made in 2024/25 (refer to Appendix D). In addition, our Auditor's Annual Report will conclude on whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources and report a commentary on those arrangements.

In addition to the audit of the Council, we will also audit the in-scope balances of the subsidiary company, Cambridge City Housing Company Ltd as part of our Group audit procedures. Our Group risk assessment and procedures are outlined in Section 5.

Timeline

An audit timetable has been agreed with management. In Section 7 we include a provisional timeline for the audit. It is essential that all parties collaborate to ensure compliance with this timeline.

Our independence considerations

We have not identified any matters that would compromise our independence in relation to the 2025/26 audit.

Please refer to Appendix B for our update on independence.

2025/26 audit strategy overview: Audit risks and materiality

Audit risks and areas of focus

The purpose of our audit is to obtain reasonable assurance to express an opinion about whether the group financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. There is one significant change to the scoping for the audit of the 2025/26 financial statements, relating to the implementation of CIPFA's Bulletin 22 in relation to the valuation of Property, Plant and Equipment.

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Risk/area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Presumptive risk of management override of controls	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	There is a risk that the financial statements as a whole are not free from material misstatement whether caused by fraud or error. We perform mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks.
Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition, through inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure including Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition. We have assessed the risk is most likely to occur through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and REFCUS.
Valuation of investment properties	Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	The Council's investment property is a material balance (£171.30 million at 31 March 2025) disclosed on the Council's Balance Sheet. There is a significant level of judgement around assumptions within valuations, especially where these assumptions rely on market data or income-based measures, given difficulties in estimating future income.
Pension valuation	Risk of material misstatement (previously referred to as inherent risk)	Decrease in risk or focus	Accounting for the Council's participation in the Cambridgeshire Pension Fund involves significant estimation and judgement, including financial and demographic assumptions. There is a risk that the net pension asset/liability recognised is materially misstated, as its recognition and measurement is subject to significant management judgement, including the application of the IAS 19 asset ceiling and the assessment of the Council's ability to realise future economic benefits. The Council engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates. This was assessed as a significant risk in the prior year due to asset ceiling considerations. As no issues were identified through our prior year audit work, we have reduced the risk for 2025/26.

2025/26 audit strategy overview: Audit risks and materiality

Audit risks and areas of focus (cont'd)

Risk/area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Valuation of land and buildings, including right of use (ROU) assets	Risk of material misstatement (previously referred to as inherent risk)	No change in risk or focus	Other land and buildings (OLB) and right of use (ROU) assets represent a significant balance in the Council's accounts. These assets are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Significant judgemental inputs and estimation techniques are required to calculate the year-end balances. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of experts and assumptions underlying fair value estimates. In the 2025/26 financial statements, the Council will be required to apply CIPFA Bulletin 22 which reassesses the current regime of valuation for non-investment assets across the public sector. The guidance mandates a quinquennial revaluation or a five-year rolling programme for formal valuations, supported by annual indexation in the intervening years. Successful implementation will depend on the Council ensuring that their existing valuation programme is adapted in line with the guidance and that appropriate indices are selected to be applied in intervening years.
Council dwellings valuation	Risk of material misstatement (previously referred to as inherent risk)	No change in risk or focus	Council dwellings represent a significant balance in the Council's accounts (£831 million at 31 March 2025) and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. As the value of council houses are significant, and the outputs from the valuer are subject to estimation, there is a higher inherent risk that balances may be under/overstated, or the associated accounting entries incorrectly posted.
Group accounting	Risk of material misstatement (previously referred to as inherent risk)	No change in risk or focus	The Council prepares consolidated Group Accounts. The Council will need to undertake its annual assessment of the group structure and boundary to determine the procedures required to consolidate the relevant component entities. We will consider the need to engage with the auditors of the significant components to understand and evaluate any risks they have recognised on the 2025/26 audits and what impact this has on our risk procedures in relation to the group accounts.

2025/26 audit strategy overview: Audit risks and materiality

Group and Council materiality

 Materiality has been set at £3.58 million, which represents 2% of total gross expenditure in 2024/25 (2024/25: £3.64 million, 2%).	 Performance materiality has been set at £1.79 million, which represents 50% of materiality.	 We will report all uncorrected misstatements relating to the income statement and balance sheet that have an effect on income and misstatements in the CIES over £0.18 million. Other misstatements identified will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee.
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2025/26 audit strategy overview: Value for Money

Our risk assessment

Under the NAO Code we are required to:

- Satisfy ourselves that the Cambridge City Council has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, having regard to [NAO AGN 03](#).
- Design work to provide sufficient assurance to support reporting against the Code's specified reporting criteria outlined below; and
- Apply a risk-based approach to our work, informed by sector knowledge, the annual governance statement, evidence from the financial statements audit and relevant work of other bodies.

In undertaking our risk assessment, we obtain an understanding of the key processes the Council has in place, including financial management, risk management and partnership working arrangements. Our Auditor's Annual Report, which will be issued before 30 November 2026 will include a summary of our commentary on the arrangements in place against each of the three value for money criteria and recommendations raised as a result of any significant weaknesses identified. A key part of our work will be the follow up of previous recommendations to provide the Committee with assurance on the pace of planned improvements. Refer to Appendix D for recommendations identified in 2024/25.



Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified in 2025/26 based on work completed to date which remains in progress:

Financial sustainability	Governance	Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness
How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.	How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.	How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.
No risks of significant weakness identified	Capacity and capability of the Finance Team to support the 2025/26 audit process	No risks of significant weakness identified



02 Audit risks

Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Presumptive risk of management override of controls*

What is the risk, and the key judgements and estimates?

In accordance with ISA 240, the presumptive risk of management override of controls is present at every entity and we design the appropriate procedures to consider such risk.

- Management has the primary responsibility to prevent and detect fraud. It is important that management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, has put in place a culture of ethical behaviour and a strong control environment that both deters and prevents fraud.
- Our responsibility is to plan and perform audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free of material misstatements whether caused by error or fraud.

We consider this risk to be relevant to the Group and Council as a single entity.

Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement

To address the risks outlined we will carry out a range of procedures including:

- Identifying fraud risks during the planning stages.
- Inquiry of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks.
- Understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud.
- Discussing with those charged with governance the risks of fraud in the entity, including those risks that are specific to the entity's business sector (those that may arise from economic industry and operating conditions).
- Considering whether there are any fraud risk factors associated with related party relationships and transactions and if so, whether they give rise to a risk of material misstatement due to fraud.
- Considering the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud and determining an appropriate strategy to address those identified risks of fraud.
- Performing mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments in the preparation of the financial statements.
- Undertaking procedures to identify significant unusual transactions.
- Considering whether management bias was present in the key accounting estimates and judgements in the financial statements.

Having evaluated this risk, we have considered whether we need to perform other audit procedures not referred to above. We concluded that those procedures included under 'Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and REFCUS' are required.

Our response to significant risks (cont'd)

Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition, through inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure including REFCUS*

Financial statement impact	What is the risk, and the key judgements and estimates?	Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement
We have assessed that the risk of misreporting revenue outturn in the financial statements is most likely to be achieved through: - Revenue expenditure being inappropriately recognised as capital expenditure at the point it is posted to the general ledger. - Expenditure being classified as revenue expenditure financed as capital under statute (REFCUS) when it is inappropriate to do so. - Expenditure being inappropriately transferred by journal from revenue to capital codes on the general ledger at the end of the year. If this were to happen it would have the impact of understating revenue expenditure and overstating Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) additions and REFCUS in the financial statements.	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition. We have assessed the risk is most likely to occur through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and REFCUS.	To address the risks outlined we will carry out a range of procedures including: - Testing Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) additions to ensure that the expenditure incurred and capitalised is clearly capital in nature. - Assessing whether the capitalised spend clearly enhances or extends the useful life of asset rather than simply repairing or maintaining the asset on which it is incurred. - Considering whether any development or other related costs that have been capitalised are reasonable to capitalize, i.e., the costs incurred are directly attributable to bringing the asset into operational use. - Testing REFCUS, if material, to ensure that it is appropriate for the revenue expenditure incurred to be financed from ringfenced capital resources. Based on our work at the planning stage of the audit we do not expect there to be material REFCUS in the year. - Seeking to identify and understand the basis for any significant journals transferring expenditure from revenue to capital codes on the general ledger at the end of the year.

Our response to significant risks (cont'd)

Valuation of Investment Properties

Financial statement impact	What is the risk, and the key judgements and estimates?	Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement
The Council's Investment Property portfolio is a material balance (£171.30 million at 31 March 2025) disclosed on the Council's Balance Sheet. The value of Investment Property represents a significant balance in the Council's accounts and is subject to valuation based on market information. Given potential impacts of market uncertainty, this may limit the valuer's scope in determining reasonable estimates within the valuation model of investment properties at 31 March 2026. This leads to a risk of material uncertainty in the valuations of Investment Property within the Council's financial statements.	Individual asset markets may react differently to ongoing uncertainties and considerations must be given to ensure sufficient and appropriate market data is used for valuations in 2025/26. There is a significant level of judgement around assumptions within valuations, especially where these assumptions rely on market data or income-based measures, given difficulties in estimating future income.	To address the risks outlined we will carry out a range of procedures including: ▪ Considering the work performed by the valuer, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work; ▪ Sample testing key asset information used by the valuer in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support valuations based on price per square metre); ▪ Engaging EY internal specialists to review the underlying assumptions used to value any material investment property assets; ▪ Considering if there are any specific changes to assets that have occurred and that these have been communicated to the valuer; ▪ Reviewing assets not subject to valuation in 2025/26 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated; ▪ Testing accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements; ▪ Reviewing financial statement disclosures to ensure that adequate disclosures have been made in relation to estimation uncertainty.

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures.

Financial statement impact	What is the risk, and the key judgements and estimates?	Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement
Pension valuation The Council's net pension liability is measured as the sum of the long-term payments due to members as they retire against the Council's share of the Cambridgeshire Pension Fund investments. The Council's pension valuation is a material estimated balance. At 31 March 2025 the Council's net liability totalled £30.63 million.	The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by the Council. The Council's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet. The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the Council. Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.	In response to the risk, we will: ▪ Liaise with the auditor of Cambridgeshire Pension Fund to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary and confirm joint assurances in respect of employer and employee contributions, as well as the membership data used for the 31 March 2025 triennial valuation. ▪ Engage our actuarial specialists to assess the work of the actuary. This will involve a consideration of the net asset/liability and any calculation of the asset ceiling in accordance with IFRIC 14 where relevant . ▪ Assess the work of PwC, appointed to consider actuarial assumptions used at the year end for all local government sector bodies. ▪ Review and test the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Group Council's financial statements in relation to IAS19. ▪ Assess whether there have been no material movement in the value of pension fund assets between the initial IAS19 report, and the signing of the financial statements. ▪ Consider the valuation and disclosure of unfunded liabilities, for which there are no plan assets to meet the pension liabilities. As part of our audit procedures, we will request that the Group and Council obtain an asset ceiling report from their actuaries. Our actuarial specialists will review the asset ceiling report to satisfy themselves that it is materially correct. Following review, we will also ensure that pension assets and liabilities are appropriately recorded within the Group financial statements.

Other areas of audit focus

Financial statement impact	What is the risk, and the key judgements and estimates?	Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement
Valuation of other land and buildings (including RoU assets)		
The relevant 2024/25 account balances in the audited financial statements were: - Property, plant and equipment: £1,075.99 million - Relating to other land and buildings: £116.35 million; - ROU assets included within the other land and buildings: £37 million. OLB and ROU Assets constitute a significant balance in the Council's accounts and is subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges.	Material judgemental inputs and estimation techniques are required to calculate the year-end balances held in the balance sheet. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of experts and assumptions underlying fair value estimates. In the 2025/26 financial statements, the Council will be required to apply CIPFA Bulletin 22 which reassesses the current regime of valuation for non-investment assets across the public sector. The guidance mandates a quinquennial revaluation or a five-year rolling programme for formal valuations, supported by annual indexation in the intervening years. These changes do not impact investment property which is still required to be revalued in full each year. The Council intends to implement a five-year rolling programme for a number of assets, with indexation applied to the remainder. In our 2024/25 Audit Results Report, we reported control deficiencies in relation to asset values being incorrectly recorded in the Fixed Asset Register, and discrepancies between the data and assumptions used in valuation calculations. These matters are described in more detail in Appendix D.	In response to the risk, we will: - Review and assess management's assessment and planned approach to CIPFA Bulletin 22, in the context of other challenges in the application. In particular, considering the appropriateness of indices applied to assets not revalued during intervening years and triggers for revaluation; - Review and appraise the work performed by the Council's valuer, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work; - Sample test key asset information and assess assumptions used by the valuers in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support price per square metre, yields and future income); - Involve EY internal specialists, where necessary, to challenge the work performed by the Council's valuers, focusing on more material assets which have been subject to audit differences in the past; - Assess any changes to useful economic lives against the most recent valuer assessments; - Test accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements; - Sample test transfers from assets under construction and confirm for a sample that remain within assets under construction that development is still in progress; - Review and assess management's impairment assessment of ongoing and completed capital projects to ensure assets are held at an appropriate value.

Other areas of audit focus

Financial statement impact	What is the risk, and the key judgements and estimates?	Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement
Council dwellings valuation		
The relevant 2024/25 account balances in the audited financial statements is: Council dwellings: £831 million.	These assets are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. As the value of council dwellings are significant, and the outputs from the its valuer are subject to estimation, there is a higher inherent risk balances may be under/overstated or the related accounting entries incorrectly posted.	To address this risk, we will undertake the following audit procedures: - Consider the work performed by the Council's valuers, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work; - Sample test key asset information and assess assumptions used by the valuer in performing their valuation; - Consider changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation; and - Test accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements.
Group accounting		
We have assessed that the risk of misreporting in Group consolidation is most likely to occur from the complexity of the group structure, which increases the likelihood that changes in subsidiaries or joint ventures (such as additions, disposals, or ownership changes) are not appropriately identified and accounted for.	The Council prepares Group Accounts and will therefore need to undertake its annual assessment of the group structure and boundary to determine the procedures it needs to undertake to consolidate the relevant component entities. During the year, the Council entered into a new joint venture arrangement with Cambridge Social Investments Ltd, which was incorporated in May 2025.	To address this risk, we will undertake the following audit procedures: - Review the Council's assessment of its group structure - Consider the need to liaise with the component auditors to understand any risks that they are recognising; - Evaluate any risks at component level on the group accounts; and - Review the consolidation adjustments and group accounts. - Assess management's judgement over the accounting and disclosure of the newly established joint venture.



03 Value for money

Value for money

Council's responsibilities for value for money

The Council is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

As part of the material published with the financial statements, the Council is required to bring together a commentary on the governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing the governance statement, the Council tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the relevant accounting and reporting framework and having regard to any guidance issued in support of that framework. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on arrangements for securing value for money from the use of resources.

Auditor responsibilities

Under the NAO Code we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. The Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Council a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Council has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:



Financial sustainability

How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.



Governance

How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

Value for money

Planning and identifying risks of significant weakness in value for money arrangements

The NAO's guidance notes require us to conduct a risk assessment that collects sufficient evidence to document our evaluation of the Council's arrangements, allowing us to draft a commentary under the three reporting criteria. This involves identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations. In considering the Council's arrangements, we consider:

- The 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement;
- Evidence of arrangements during the reporting period;
- Evidence obtained from our audit of the financial statements;
- The work of inspectorates and other bodies; and
- Any other evidence that we deem necessary to facilitate the performance of our statutory duties.

We then evaluate whether there is evidence indicating significant weaknesses in arrangements. According to the NAO's guidance, determining what constitutes a significant weakness and the extent of additional audit work required to address the risk is based on professional judgment. The NAO indicates that a weakness can be considered significant if it:

- Exposes, or could reasonably be expected to expose, the council to significant financial loss or risk;
- Leads to, or could reasonably be expected to lead to, significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service or on the council's reputation or unlawful actions;
- Identifies a failure to take action to address a previously identified significant weakness, such as failure to implement or achieve planned progress on action/improvement plans.

When planning work identifies a risk of significant weakness, the NAO's guidance requires us to consider the additional evidence needed to verify whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements. This involves conducting further procedures as necessary. We are required to report our planned procedures to the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee.

Reporting on value for money arrangements

If we determine that the Council has not made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources, the NAO Code mandates that we reference this by exception in the audit report on the financial statements.

Additionally, we are required to provide a commentary on the value for money arrangements in the Auditor's Annual Report. The NAO Code specifies that this commentary should be clear, readily understandable, and highlight any issues we wish to draw to the Council's or the wider public's attention. This may include matters that are not considered significant weaknesses in arrangements but should still be brought to the Council's attention. It will also cover details of any recommendations from the audit and the follow-up of previously issued recommendations, along with our assessment of their satisfactory implementation. Our 2025/26 Auditor's Annual Report must be issued in draft by 30 November 2026 to comply with the revised requirements of the NAO Code.

Value for money

Value for money risk assessment

We have completed our initial value for money planning, subject to Manager and Partner review, where we have considered:

- Our entity level controls and understanding the business assessment
- The Council's Risk Register
- Council meeting minutes and our planning meetings with Management
- Key financial and budget information
- Key performance reports (including Internal Audit reports)
- Value For Money reporting in 2024/25

As part of our initial planning work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing value for money that we needed to perform further procedures on. The risks we have identified are detailed on the table below along with the further procedures we will perform. We will continue to review the Council's arrangements and report.

Criteria	2024/25 judgements on arrangements	2025/26 risk assessment	2025/26 expected procedures to respond
Financial sustainability	No significant weakness identified.	▪ No weakness identified	▪ Not Applicable
Governance	Significant weakness in arrangements identified	▪ A risk of significant weakness has been identified relating to capacity and capability of the Finance Team to support the 2025/26 audit process. ▪ The prior year significant weakness is an indicator of a risk in the current year.	▪ As part of our discussions with the Council, Management advised that new recruitments have been completed and that an additional resource has been put in place to support the audit, in response to issues identified in the prior year. We will continue to assess the adequacy of the Council's arrangements to ensure that the audit process is appropriately supported, and that working papers and supporting evidence are provided in accordance with the agreed timetable.
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	No significant weakness identified.	▪ No weakness identified	▪ Not Applicable

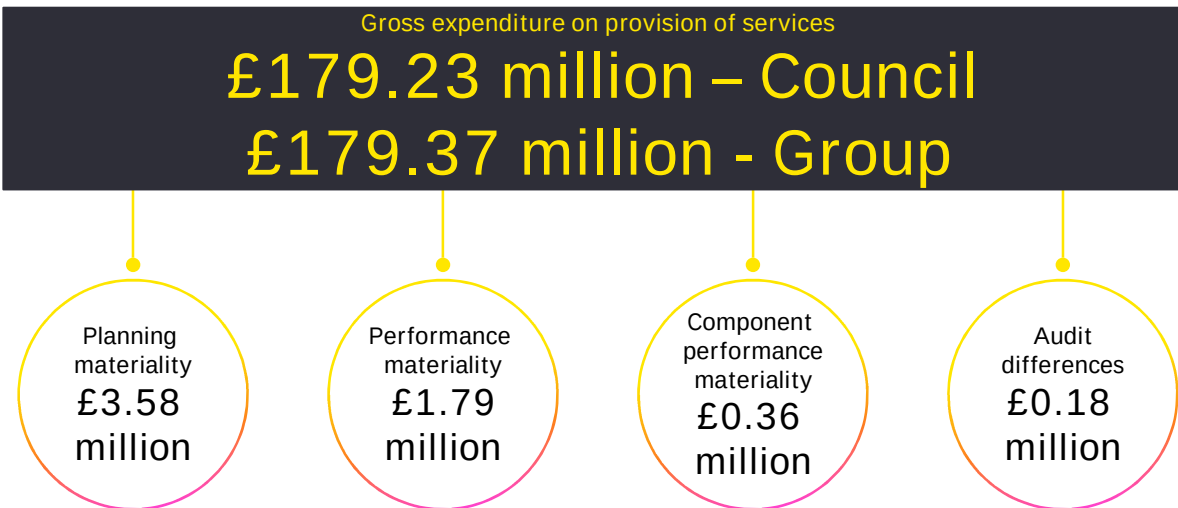


04 Audit materiality

Materiality

Group and Council materiality

For planning purposes, Group and Council materiality for 2025/26 has been set at £3.58 million. This represents 2% of the Group and Council's 2024/25 gross expenditure on provision of services. It will be reassessed throughout the audit process. We have provided supplemental information about audit materiality in Appendix G.



We request that the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee confirm its understanding of, and agreement to, these materiality and reporting levels.

Key definitions

Planning materiality – the amount over which we anticipate misstatements would influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements.

Performance materiality – the amount we use to determine the extent of our audit procedures. We have set performance materiality at £1.79 million which represents 50% of group materiality. This reflects the higher level of risk of material misstatements considering disclaimed audit opinions, and the material misstatements and control deficiencies identified in 2024/25.

Component performance materiality – we determine component performance materiality as a percentage of Group performance materiality based on risk and relative size to the Group.

Audit difference threshold – We will report to you all uncorrected misstatements over £0.18 million, relating to the income statement and balance sheet that have an effect on income and misstatements in the CIES.

Other uncorrected misstatements, such as reclassifications and misstatements in the cashflow or disclosures and corrected misstatements will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee or are important from a qualitative perspective.



05 Scope of our audit

Audit process and strategy

Objectives of our audit scoping

In accordance with the NAO Code, our primary objectives are to conduct work that supports the delivery of our audit report to the Council. Additionally, we aim to ensure that the Council has established proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources, as mandated by relevant legislation and the requirements of the NAO Code. We will issue an audit report that covers:

1. Financial statement audit

Our opinion on the financial statements:

- Whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the group and its expenditure and income for the period in question; and
- Whether the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework as set out in legislation, applicable accounting standards or other direction.

Our opinion on other matters:

- whether other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements.

Other procedures required by the Code:

- Examine and report on the consistency of the Whole of Government Accounts schedules or returns with the body's audited financial statements for the relevant reporting period in line with the instructions issued by the National Audit Office.

2. Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money)

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources and report a commentary on those arrangements.

Internal audit

We will review internal audit plans and the results of their work. We will reflect the findings from these reports, together with reports from any other work completed in the year, where they raise issues that could have an impact on the financial statements.

In 2024/25, the Council's Internal Audit Annual Report concluded that reasonable assurance can be provided regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control, governance, and risk management arrangements. This level of assurance was consistent with the previous reporting period.

Scoping the group audit

Group scoping

The Council prepares its annual report and financial statements on a group basis. In line with ISA (UK) 600, our audit strategy for performing an audit of a group with multiple components is risk-based and our scoping of the group audit responds to the risks of material misstatement that we have identified for the group financial statements.

We first determined whether centralised procedures could be performed before we determined which components to include in the group audit scope, and the work to be performed at those components. We determined that centralised audit procedures can be performed on components.

We next identified individually relevant components based on various risk characteristics and applied professional judgement to determine which accounts were to be included in the work performed at these components. We then considered whether the remaining group significant account balances not yet subject to audit procedures, in aggregate, could give rise to a risk of material misstatement of the group financial statements. When

determined that these residual balances could give rise to a risk of material misstatement of the group financial statements, we determine whether it is necessary to perform audit procedures on further accounts in components which are individually relevant and/or include accounts in additional components within the group audit scope to address the risks of material misstatement of the group financial statements. Having identified the components for which work will be performed, we determined the scope to assign to each component.

For the remaining residual amount of balances and accounts of the group financial statements which are not included within the group scope we perform further risk assessment procedures to confirm that there is no risk of material misstatement within those amounts.

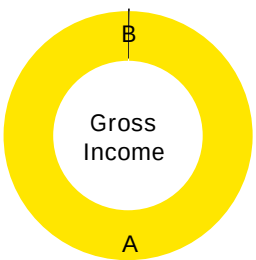
Details of procedures performed centrally

We determined that centralised audit procedures can be performed in certain areas, refer to Appendix C for further details on procedures that will be performed centrally.

Scoping the group audit

Coverage of gross income/gross expenditure/total assets

Based on the Group's prior year results, our scoping is expected to achieve the following coverage of the Group's gross income, gross expenditure and total assets. The remaining components, individually do not exceed more than 15% of the Group's gross income, gross expenditure and total assets. Our audit approach is risk based and therefore the data below on coverage is provided for your information only. Further details on the scoping of the Group audit can be found at Appendix C.

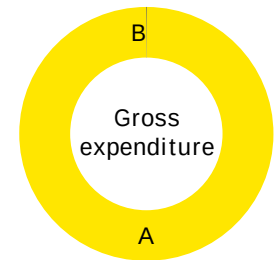


100%
(2024/25: 100%)

of the Group's forecast revenue will be covered by full and specific scope audits, leaving an immaterial residual balances.

A

Full scope audits: (Cambridge City Council): Cambridge City Council involve the design and performance of audit procedures on a significant proportion of the financial information of the component. Procedures performed at full scope locations support an interoffice conclusion on the reporting package. These may not be sufficient to issue a stand-alone audit opinion on the local statutory financial statements because of the scope of work, materiality used and any additional procedures required to comply with local laws and regulations

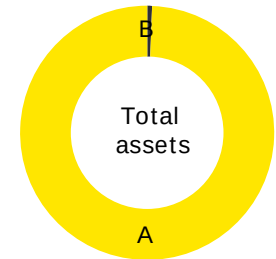


100%
(2024/25: 100%)

of the Group's gross expenditure will be covered by full and specific scope audits, leaving an immaterial residual balances.

B

Specific scope: (Cambridge City Housing Company Ltd) Cambridge City Housing Company Ltd involve the design and performance of audit procedures on one or more classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosures of the financial information of the group. The accounts included in the scope are not a significant proportion of the financial information of the component.



99%
(2024/25: 100%)

of the Group's forecast total assets will be covered by full and specific scope audits, leaving an immaterial residual balances.



06 Audit team

Audit team

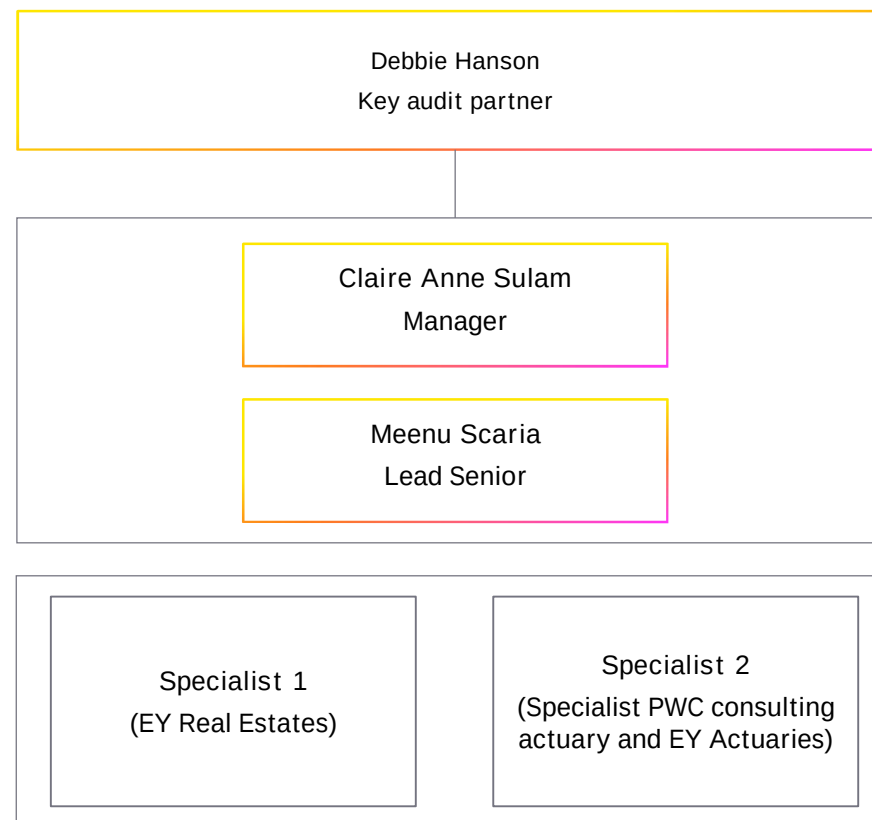
Audit team leadership

The global engagement team is led by Debbie Hanson, who has overall responsibility for the performance of the audit and for the auditor's report issued on behalf of EY.

Our approach to the use of specialists

When auditing key judgements, we are often required to use the input and advice provided by specialists who have qualifications and expertise not possessed by the core audit team. The areas where specialists are expected to provide input for the current year audit are:

Area	Specialists
Valuation of land and buildings and investment properties	EY Real Estates Management specialist – Bruton Knowles
Valuation of council dwellings	Management specialist – Wilkes Head & Eve
Pensions disclosure	EY Actuaries PwC (Consulting Actuary commissioned by NAO) Management Specialist – Hymans Robertson (Actuary to Cambridgeshire Pension Fund)
NDR appeals provision	Management Specialist – Inform CPI
Financial instruments	Management Specialist – MUFG Pension & Market Services



In accordance with Auditing Standards, we will evaluate each specialist's professional competence and objectivity, considering their qualifications, experience and available resources, together with the independence of the individuals performing the work.

We also consider the work performed by the specialist in light of our knowledge of the Group's business and processes and our assessment of audit risk in the particular area. For example, we would typically perform the following procedures:

- Analyse source data and make inquiries as to the procedures used by the specialist to establish whether the source data is relevant and reliable
- Assess the reasonableness of the assumptions and methods used
- Consider the appropriateness of the timing of when the specialist carried out the work
- Assess whether the substance of the specialist's findings are properly reflected in the financial statements.



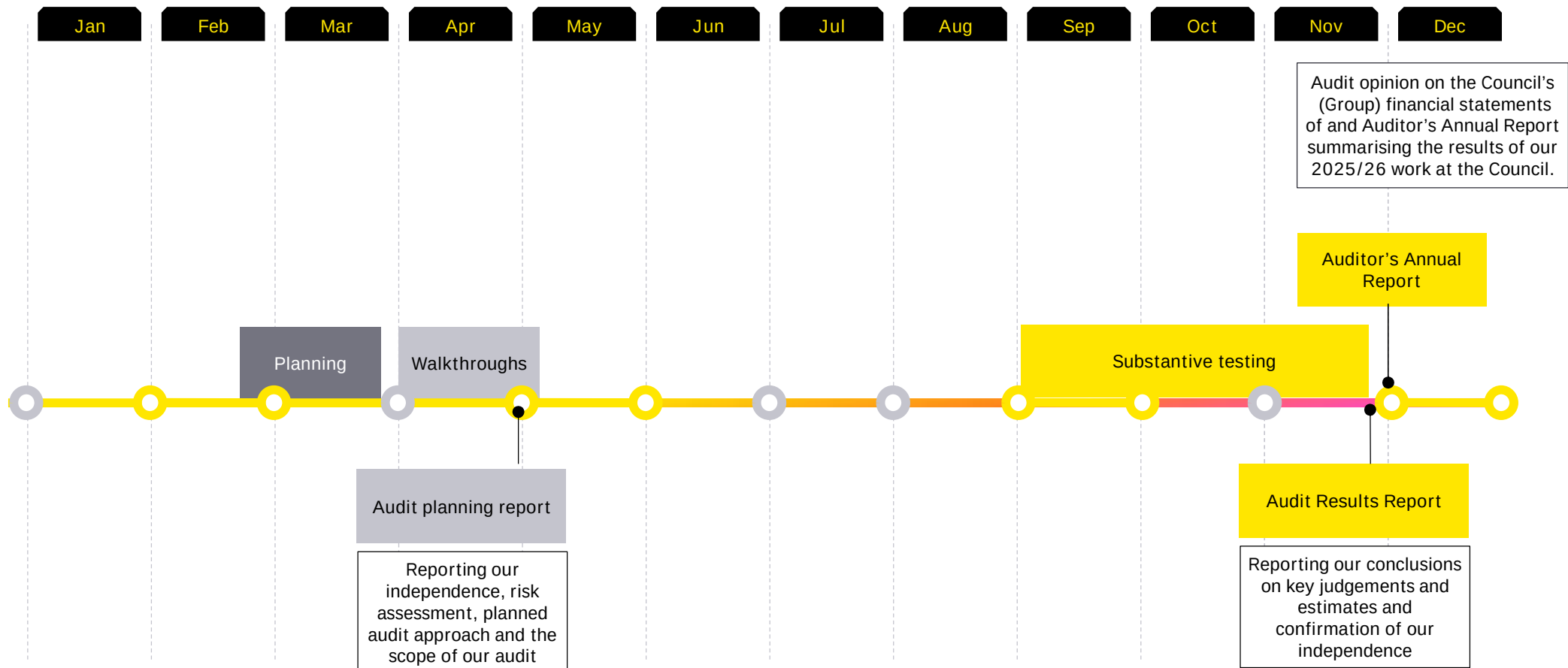
07 Audit timeline

Timetable of communication and deliverables

Timeline

Below is a timetable showing the key stages of the audit and the deliverables we have agreed to provide to you through the audit cycle in 2025/26.

From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee and we will discuss them with the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee Chair as appropriate. We will also provide updates on corporate governance and regulatory matters as necessary.





08 Appendices

Appendix A – Rebuilding assurance: responsibilities

The Council's responsibilities

As set out in Appendix B our fee is based on the assumption that the Council complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psaa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular, the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26-28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. We set out these paragraphs in full below:

Preparation of the statement of accounts

26. Audited bodies are expected to follow Good Industry Practice and applicable recommendations and guidance from CIPFA and, as applicable, other relevant organisations as to proper accounting procedures and controls, including in the preparation and review of working papers and financial statements.

27. In preparing their statement of accounts, audited bodies are expected to:

- prepare realistic plans that include clear targets and achievable timetables for the production of the financial statements;
- ensure that finance staff have access to appropriate resources to enable compliance with the requirements of the applicable financial framework, including having access to the current copy of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code, applicable disclosure checklists, and any other relevant CIPFA Codes.
- assign responsibilities clearly to staff with the appropriate expertise and experience;
- provide necessary resources to enable delivery of the plan;
- maintain adequate documentation in support of the financial statements and, at the start of the audit, providing a complete set of working papers that provide an adequate explanation of the entries in those financial statements including the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the judgements and estimates made by management;
- ensure that senior management monitors, supervises and reviews work to meet agreed standards and deadlines;
- ensure that a senior individual at top management level personally reviews and approves the financial statements before presentation to the auditor; and
- during the course of the audit provide responses to auditor queries on a timely basis.

28. If draft financial statements and supporting working papers of appropriate quality are not available at the agreed start date of the audit, the auditor may be unable to meet the planned audit timetable, and the start date of the audit will be delayed.

Observations from 2024/25

As we have outlined in prior years, our ability to complete the audit is dependent on the timely formulation of appropriately supported accounting judgements, provision of accurate and relevant supporting evidence, access to the finance team and management's responsiveness to issues identified during the audit. We presented our views on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements to support external financial across a range of relevant measures as part of our 2024/25 Audit Results Report.

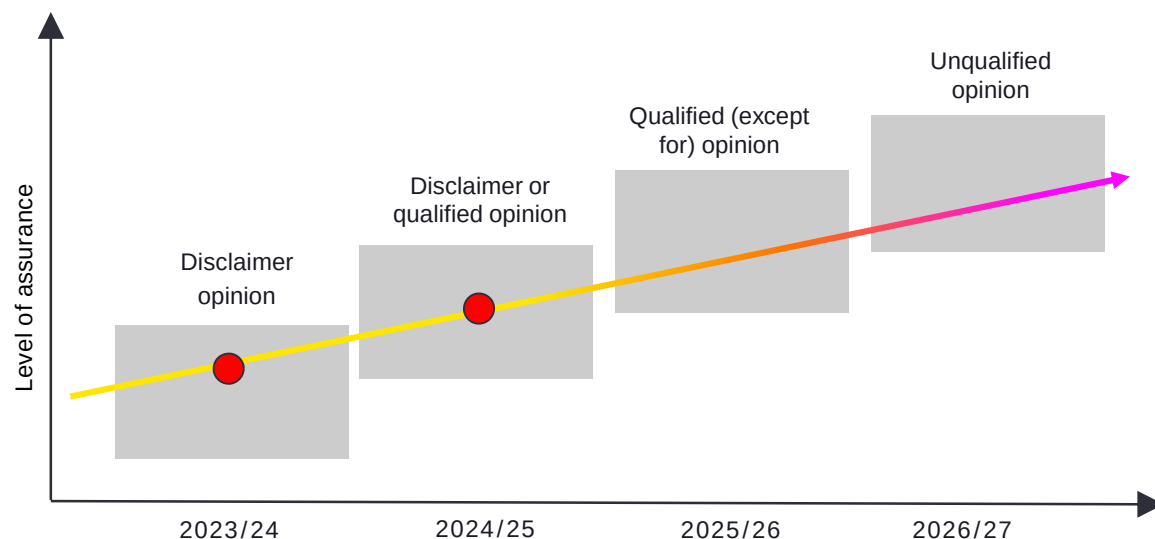
We have repeated this assessment on the following page. Where we have been unable to undertake all planned procedures, this is likely to extend the timetable to recover assurance on the Council's financial statements, see the following page for further details for further details.

Appendix A – Rebuilding assurance continued

Progress to full assurance

The chart below sets out the illustrative timescale for the process of rebuilding assurance set out in the NAO's Local Audit Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance (LARRIG) 01, together with our view of the Council's actual progress against that timescale, the reasons for that assessment and what still needs to be done to successfully rebuild assurance.

The guidance recognises that the path to full assurance, and therefore an unqualified opinion, will usually take a number of years to achieve, and depends upon co-ordination and engagement between the Council and audit team. Since 2022/23, we have applied a structured, risk-based prioritisation approach to local government audits to support a return to unqualified audit opinions wherever feasible, while still meeting statutory backstop requirements.



Cambridge City Council progress

● In the audit reports for the years ended 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2025, a disclaimer of opinion was issued due to the application of the backstop. This means the auditor has not been able to form an opinion on the financial statements.

In our view, the Council's progress falls behind the expected timescales set out in LARRIG 01.

In 2024/25, additional assurance was achieved in relation to Borrowings (short term and long term), Investments (short term and long term), Leases (IFRS 16), Long Term Debtors, Provision for HRA Liabilities, REFCUS, Net cost of services - Employee costs. However, there is a continuing lack of assurance over comparator income and expenditure balances, property, plant and equipment balances, Short-term Debtors, Short-term Creditors (including Receipts in Advance), Provisions, Reserves, Collection Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts. As a result, we anticipate that for 2025/26:

- We will have limited assurance over the opening balances for 2025/26; and
- Limited assurance over the closing reserves balance, due to uncertainty over the opening amount.

We will continue to work with the Council to rebuild assurance over time and monitor management's progress as to our recommendations in Appendix D. Our objective is to continue to rebuild assurance, by providing assurance over the in year 2025/26 transactions and movements, where possible, and closing balances which can be materially determined without the opening balance, such as debtors and creditors.

Appendix A – Rebuilding assurance: responsibilities continued

Factors impacting the execution of the 2024/25 audit

Area	Status			Explanation
	R	A	G	
Timeliness of the draft financial statements	Effective			The financial statements were published by the 30th June 2025 deadline set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
Quality and completeness of the draft financial statements	Effective			There were few non-material internal inconsistencies, typographical and arithmetic errors in the draft financial statements that should have been detected through internal quality review prior to publication.
Delivery of working papers in accordance with agreed client assistance schedule	Ineffective			Working papers and supporting evidence were not provided in line with the agreed timetable.
Quality of working papers and supporting evidence	Ineffective			Working papers and supporting evidence were generally not to the required standard to support the audit.
Timeliness and quality of evidence supporting key accounting estimates	Ineffective			There have been significant delays in receiving the required supporting working papers for the audit from the Council. The documentation was not provided within the agreed timetable. The absence of timely, supporting working papers, has impacted our ability to perform all of our planned audit procedures. As reported in Appendix B of 2024/25 Audit Results Report, key audit procedures in a number of areas are incomplete because essential evidence was not made available for review. The timely provision of working papers is a critical component of an effective audit process, ensuring that planned work can be completed efficiently and that any emerging issues can be addressed promptly.
Access to finance team and personnel to support the audit in accordance with agreed project plan	Requires improvement			The primary finance team member responsible for the financial statements has not been available to support the audit process due to long term leave. In addition, we have experienced delays in obtaining responses and evidence from other members of the finance team. As a result, certain areas have been significantly delayed.
Volume and value of identified misstatements	Requires improvement			We have identified a number of material misstatements as a result of our work which have been corrected by Management.
Volume of misstatements in disclosure	Effective			A limited number of misstatements in disclosure were detected in our work.

Key:

■ Red: Ineffective. In our judgement, significant improvements are required in the Council's arrangements to support the rebuilding of assurance. Action should be taken to respond immediately.

■ Amber: Requires Improvement. Matters and/or issues had an impact on the delivery of the audit and should be addressed in future years.

■ Green: Effective. There were no significant matters that impacted the timing or effectiveness of audit procedures.

Appendix B - Independence and fees

The FRC Ethical Standard 2024 and ISA (UK) 260 'Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance', requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications

Planning stage

- The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;
- The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;
- The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;
- Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence

Final stage

- In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;
- Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;
- Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;
- Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner
- Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;
- Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence (for breaches of the FRC Ethical Standard include details of its significance); and
- An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

Appendix B - Independence and fees (continued)

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

Overall assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Debbie Hanson, your audit engagement partner and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in your company. Examples include where we have an investment in your company; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees. We currently do not provide any non-audit services or additional services to you. No safeguards are therefore required.

A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with FRC ES Section 4. There are no other self interest threats at the date of this report.

Appendix B - Independence and fees (continued)

Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements. There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of your company. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decisions based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report

EY Transparency Report

EY has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the period ended 30 June 2025 and can be found here: [EY UK 2025 Transparency Report](#).

Appendix B – Independence and fees (continued)

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

The agreed fee presented is based on the following assumptions:

- officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- our financial statement opinion and value for money conclusion being unqualified;
- appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Council;
- an effective control environment; and
- compliance with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psaa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26–28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly sets out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. These are set out in full on the previous page.

If any of the above assumptions prove to be unfounded, we will seek a variation to the agreed fee. This will be discussed with the Council in advance.

	Current Year 2025/26	Prior Year 2024/25
	£	£
Total Fee – Code Work	205,767	200,163
Other	Note 2	Note 1
Total audit	TBC	TBC

All fees exclude VAT

1. As set out in the joint statement on update to proposals to clear the backlog and embed timely audit issued by DHLUC, PSAA will use its fee variation process to determine the final fee the Council have to pay for the 2024/25 audits. We submitted a proposed scale fee variation to PSAA covering the following areas, which has yet to be determined by PSAA:
 - Implementation of new IFRS 16 Leases standard
 - Use of internal specialists (PPE/IP and Pensions)
 - Completion of ISA 315 work
 - Group
 - Pension Valuation
 - PPE Valuation
 - Non-compliance with laws and regulation (NOCLAR) matter
 - Value For Money risks
 - Quality or preparation issues leading to extra work
 - Build back costs
 - Disclaimer planning and reporting
2. The 2025/26 scale fee also may be impacted by a range of other factors which will result in additional work, which include but are not limited to:
 - Consideration of correspondence from the public and formal objections
 - Non-compliance with law and regulation with an impact on the financial statements
 - VFM risks of, or actual, significant weaknesses in arrangements and related reporting impacts
 - The need to exercise auditor statutory powers
 - Prior period adjustments
 - Modified financial statement opinions

Appendix C – Scoping the group audit

The below table sets out the scoping details of all locations. We assign a scope of work to each component for which procedures are required, which when taken together in addition to procedures performed centrally by the group audit team, enable us to form an opinion on the group financial statements.

Detailed scoping							
Component/location	One or more account balance is subject to centralised audit procedures	Individually relevant component (IRC) / Additional relevant component (ARC)	Scope	Statutory audit performed by EY	Coverage		
					Gross Income	Gross Expenditure	Total assets
Cambridge City Council	Yes	IRC	Full	✓	99.81%	99.92%	99.33%
Cambridge City Housing Company Limited	Yes	IRC	Specific	Williamson and Croft	0.19%	0.08%	0.64%
Total full & specific scope coverage					100%	100%	99.97%

Centralised audit procedures will be performed in the following audit areas:

Key audit area on which procedures will be performed	Overview of procedures that will be performed centrally	Components subject to the centralised procedures	Team responsible for performing the centralised procedures
All significant accounts	Centralised testing will be performed for all the relevant accounts.	Cambridge City Council	Team: Primary Team
- Investment property - Cash and cash equivalents	Specific audit procedures will be performed for these accounts.	Cambridge City Housing Company Limited	Team: Primary Team

Appendix C - Scoping the group audit continued

Scoping for relevant components

The below table provides an overview of the initial relevant components identified and scopes assigned to these components:

	Total	Full scope	Specific scope	Specified procedures
Total relevant components	2	1	1	0
Individually relevant components (IRC) ¹	2	1	1	0
Relevant component identified as IRCs due to risks of material misstatement associated with several account balances of the component (i.e. FR and higher IRs which are areas of higher assessed ROMMs) associated with the component and financial size of the component relative to the group.	0	0	0	0
Additional relevant components (ARC) ²	0	0	0	0

¹ An individually relevant component is a component that individually has a risk of material misstatement to the group financial statements

² An additionally relevant component is a component at which audit procedures are to be performed to address the remaining risks of material misstatement present in the significant account balances that are not subject to audit procedures performed centrally or at individually relevant components.

Appendix C – Scoping the group audit continued

Identification of individually relevant components and additional relevant components:

We considered the following when identifying individually relevant components and the accounts to be included in the work to be performed at these components:

- Identification of individually relevant components (IRC): IRC components, are components that individually have a risk of material misstatement to the group financial statements. We considered the following matters to determine which components were individually relevant:
 - The significant risks (including fraud risks), and other areas of higher assessed risk associated with the component and the nature of the circumstances related to those risk(s) of material misstatement, including the relative size of the balance at the component.
 - The financial size of the component relative to the group
- Accounts to be included in the work to be performed by IRCs: We applied professional judgment in determining those accounts having considered:
 - The reasons the component was identified as individually relevant and the accounts affected by risks associated with the component
 - The extent of centralised procedures
 - Whether the accounts are affected by other assessed risks of material misstatement of the group financial statements
 - The relative size of the balance at the component.

We identify additional relevant components when we determined that the remaining group significant account balances (residual balances) not yet subject to audit procedures, in aggregate, could give rise to a risk of material misstatement of the group financial statements. In determining the number of additional components and extent of procedures to be performed took into consideration:

- The extent of evidence already planned to be obtained from components which are individually relevant and the related in-scope accounts
- Whether centralised procedures can be performed on the residual account balances, including testing direct entity-level controls that operate throughout the group
- The results of risk assessment analytical procedures performed
- The results of the analysis on the residual significant account balances

Key changes to our group scoping from the last year

- Centralised procedures: No changes
- Individually relevant components and additional relevant components: In the prior year, the Council's joint venture, Cambridge Investment Partnership LLP (CIP), was scoped under Specified Procedures. As CIP has been assessed as immaterial for 2025/26, no audit procedures are planned for the current year.
- Assigned scopes: No changes.

Appendix C - Scoping the group audit continued

Group audit team involvement in component audits

Auditing standards require us to be involved in the work of our component teams.

The group audit team's involvement in the work of the component teams is not uniform. The involvement is affected by the assessed risks of material misstatement, their effect on different locations, the nature and extent of work and scope assigned to component teams and the group audit team's experience and understanding of the component teams. The group audit team's involvement takes different forms and will include: site visits; involvement in key decision discussions, such as: component team's involvement in discussions of the group audit team or the group team's involvement in component team discussions; other discussions and sharing of information, such as: regular team discussions/touch points, risk assessment discussions, discussions with component management and/or those charged with governance of components, or other ad hoc discussions; review of component team workpapers, such as: audit deliverables and underlying workpapers.

We have listed the significant aspects of our planned involvement below.

Location name	Planned involvement by the Group team
All full scope- Cambridge City Council	All full scope locations and specific scope entities will participate in the Group audit team's planning event to be held virtually. Review of Cambridge City Council audit working papers covering the significant risk areas and other areas of assessed higher risk.
Specific scope -Cambridge City Housing Company Ltd.	Risk assessment discussions.

Appendix D – Prior year recommendations

As part of our annual audit procedures we will follow up the specific open and in progress recommendations reported within our 2024/25 reporting, including those relating to value for money arrangements. The six open recommendations from prior years are outlined below, along with the response from Management.

Classification of recommendations		
Grade 1: Key risks and / or significant deficiencies which are either critical to the achievement of strategic objectives or significant risks to material compliance with regulatory requirements. Management needs to address and seek resolution urgently.	Grade 2: Risks or potential weaknesses which impact on objectives and compliance, or impact the operation of a single process, and so require prompt but less urgent immediate action by management.	Grade 3: Less significant issues and / or areas for improvement which consider merit attention but do not require to be prioritised by management.

Internal control weaknesses

No.	Finding and/or risk	Recommendation and grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
1	Delays in Receiving Key Working Papers There were delays in receiving key working papers and responses to audit queries throughout the audit, with many items not provided in line with the agreed timescales. In several instances, the working papers submitted were incomplete, required further clarification, or did not meet the required format and evidential standards to enable us to perform our planned procedures efficiently. These delays caused significant disruption to the audit timetable, increased the level of rework required, and restricted our ability to progress audit testing in accordance with the agreed project plan. The cumulative impact of these matters has materially affected our ability to obtain sufficient and appropriate audit evidence on a timely basis and to complete the audit as scheduled.	We recommended that the Council strengthens its year-end closedown and audit preparation processes to ensure that all required working papers are prepared to the expected standard and provided in line with the agreed timescales. Management should establish clear internal ownership for each working paper, introduce appropriate quality review checks prior to submission, and implement realistic internal deadlines to ensure documentation is complete, accurate, and audit-ready. Improving the timeliness and quality of working papers will support a more efficient audit process, reduce the need for repeated requests and rework, and help ensure that the audit can progress in accordance with the planned timetable.. Grade 1	Management response: Management acknowledges that delays occurred in responding to certain audit requests. In several cases, the format of the request contributed to response times, particularly where proof of payment was sought for individual items embedded within very large BACS files. Clarification was required to determine the appropriate method of evidencing these transactions, including whether to provide disaggregated extracts, controlled read-only access to the finance system, or guided system walkthroughs. Despite this, the majority of evidence was supplied, with only a small proportion delayed due to staff turnover and operational pressures. We will work with EY in advance of next year's audit to ensure early understanding of their working paper requirements and put in place an action plan to ensure delivery of these.

Appendix D – Prior year recommendations (continued)

Internal control weaknesses (cont'd)

No.	Finding and/or risk	Recommendation and grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
2	Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) Valuation – Agreement to the Fixed Asset Register (FAR) The agreement of the PPE valuation schedules to the Fixed Asset Register (FAR) identified several instances where land values had not been updated in the FAR, resulting in assets being recorded at a valuation of £nil as at 31 March 2025. The carrying values of these assets were consequently treated as downward revaluation movements. This issue resulted in a material misstatement, as reported in Section 05.	A comprehensive review of the Council's fixed asset accounting processes should be undertaken to ensure that appropriate rigour is applied consistently and that the accounting treatment for all asset transactions is accurate and compliant with the relevant accounting standards. Grade 1	Management response: Management acknowledges the audit finding that several land asset values were not updated in the Fixed Asset Register (FAR), resulting in incorrect valuations and associated revaluation movements at 31 March 2025. This issue arose from system limitations and historic manual update processes. The affected assets have now been reviewed and corrected. Processes have been strengthened to ensure valuation updates are captured promptly and consistently, supported by additional review checks to confirm accuracy before year-end. Management is committed to ensuring the FAR reliably reflects all valuation movements and to preventing recurrence in future years. A second review checkpoint has been introduced to ensure valuation movements—particularly for land—are verified and reflected in both systems before final accounts preparation
3	Debtors and Creditors Listings The Council's debtors listing as at 31 March 2025, amounting to £17.22 million, and creditors listing, amounting to £43.28 million, contained opening balances that management was unable to cleanse for audit purposes. As a result, we were unable to complete our planned audit procedures in these areas.	We recommended that the Council performs a review of all creditor and debtor balances to ensure that opening balances are understood and cleansed so that the balance only contains year-end amounts. Grade 1	Management response: Management acknowledges the audit finding regarding the inclusion of opening balances within the debtors (£17.22m) and creditors (£43.28m) listings as at 31 March 2025. These balances reflected historic items that could not be fully cleansed within the audit timeframe due to the scale of the listings, the age of certain entries, and the level of manual review required. While efforts were made to validate and clear older balances, some items required further investigation or historic supporting information that was not readily accessible, particularly where staff turnover had impacted knowledge of legacy transactions. Management did, however, provide explanations and supporting detail for current-year balances and for the majority of material items. Finance team will undertake a comprehensive review and cleansing of all historic debtors and creditors entries, prioritising aged balances and legacy items and improving system reporting to meet the audit requirements and standards.

Appendix D – Prior year recommendations (continued)

Internal control weaknesses (cont'd)

No.	Finding and/or risk	Recommendation and grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
4	Agreement of the Fixed Asset Register (FAR) to the Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) Note in the Financial Statements We obtained the Fixed Asset Register (FAR) for Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) and reconciled the closing balances to the financial statements. However, we were unable to agree the in-year movements across the asset categories to the figures reported in the PPE note within the financial statements. The Council did not respond to our queries in relation to the variances identified, and therefore we were unable to conclude our audit work in this area.	We recommended that the Council have robust review process in place to ensure that all in-year movements are fully reconciled to the figures reported in the financial statements. Grade 2	Management acknowledges the audit finding. This issue arose from system limitations and historic manual update processes. Processes have been strengthened to ensure valuation updates are captured promptly and consistently, supported by additional review checks to confirm accuracy before year-end. Management is committed to ensuring the FAR reliably reflects all valuation movements and to preventing recurrence in future years. A second review checkpoint has been introduced to ensure valuation movements— particularly for land—are verified and reflected in both systems before final accounts preparation.
5	Bank reconciliation Our review of the Council's bank reconciliation identified a reconciling item, amounting to £2.8 million, which the Council was unable to provide any evidence and explanation to support it. We cannot therefore conclude on its appropriateness as a reconciling item in the bank reconciliation. The issue has arisen due to the individual responsible for preparing bank reconciliation as part of the year-end closing process has since left the Council, resulting in difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation and clarification.	We recommended that the Council ensure that all key reconciliations have proper documentation and corroborating evidence to support the process. This should be kept centrally and remain accessible regardless of staff turnover. Grade 3	Management response: Management acknowledges the audit findings and the concerns raised in relation to the lack of supporting documentation for the £2.8m reconciling item. Upon notification, the Finance Team commenced a detailed internal review to reconstruct the reconciliation and identify the underlying transactions associated with this balance. This work included a review of all available bank statements, general ledger postings, and associated schedules for the relevant period, alongside engagement with service areas to investigate potential matches. However, the findings in the investigations were not conclusive to evidence the appropriateness of the original accounting treatment. Monthly reconciliation procedures have been strengthened, with improvements to quality checks, supervision, and escalation arrangements, meaning that all reconciling items in the monthly bank reconciliations during 2025/26 have supporting documentation.

Appendix D – Prior year recommendations (continued)

Internal control weaknesses (cont'd)

No.	Finding and/or risk	Recommendation and grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
6	Valuation of Investment Properties and Right of Use Assets We have been unable to obtain a clear explanation or corroborating evidence from either the Council or the Valuer regarding certain assumptions used in the valuation of Investment Properties and Right of Use Assets. In addition, we identified discrepancies between the rent data provided by the Council and the information used by the Valuer in their valuation calculations.	We recommend that the Council and the property valuer work together to address the findings from our audit. The Council should ensure that valuation assumptions are supported by accurate and verifiable data. A clear process should be in place to review and validate information provided and used by the Valuer. Grade 2	Management response: Management acknowledges the audit finding concerning the lack of clear explanation and corroborating evidence for certain assumptions used by the Valuer, as well as the discrepancies noted between the rent schedules provided by the Council and the rental information used within the Valuer's calculations. Certain valuation assumptions (including yield assumptions, discount rates, lease terms, and market rent estimates) were not fully documented or supported in a manner sufficient for audit evidence. A more robust review process is being introduced, requiring Finance and Property Services to jointly verify the inputs and outputs of the valuation models and to challenge assumptions where necessary.

Appendix D – Prior year recommendations (continued)

Value for money arrangements

No.	Value for money reporting criteria	Finding and/or risk	Recommendation and grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
1.	Governance: How the body ensures effective processes and systems are in place to support its statutory financial reporting requirements.	Capacity and capability of the Finance Team to support the audit process	The Council should strengthen its approach to preparing financial statements and supporting the audit process. The Finance Team must: • Ensure a thorough understanding of the Local Government accounting framework and the CIPFA Code of Practice; • Deepen its knowledge of the Council's financial operations to support accurate reporting; • Maintain sufficient capacity of skilled professionals with appropriate training to produce high-quality audit-ready working papers; and • Provide timely and effective support throughout the audit cycle. ▪ High	Management response: Draft financial statements were published on time, and we note that EY have rated the timeliness, quality and completeness of these statements as 'effective'. We believe this demonstrates that we have a sufficient understanding of the accounting framework and the council's financial operations to support accurate reporting. We acknowledge that there were delays and difficulties in providing high quality audit-ready working papers as a result of key staff absences which were unavoidable. Going forwards, additional resource has been brought in for 2025/26 to avoid a repeat of these issues.

Appendix E – Regulatory update

Key regulatory changes

There are a number of key regulatory developments underway relating to local authority governance and the audit of the Council's financial statements. The following table provides a high level summary of those that have the potential to have the most significant impact on you:

Name	Summary of key measures	Impact on Cambridge City Council
English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill	The Bill has completed all scrutiny stages in the House of Commons and is now at Committee stage (Grand Committee) in the House of Lords. The following measures therefore remain proposals until Royal Assent is granted: - Local audit system reforms: The Bill includes provisions to reform elements of the local audit framework in England alongside support measures intended to address the audit backlog. The Bill will also enable changes to the way audit oversight and local audit responsibilities operate. Section 61 of the Bill provides for the establishment of the Local Audit Office (LAO). Legislation will set out that the main objective of the LAO is to secure the effective operation of the system of audit, with a view to meeting the needs of users of audited accounts. The LAO will appoint auditors to non-NHS bodies, determine audit fees and prepare one or more Code of Audit Practice. - Combined authorities and Combined County Authorities: The Bill expands powers and functions of combined authorities and places combined county authorities on a clearer statutory footing. This will allow further transfer of functions from constituent councils. - Devolution of functions to "Strategic Authorities": The Bill expands the category of Strategic Authorities and allows transfer of responsibilities from central government and councils. - Local Government Reorganisation: The Bill supports changes to council structures to support devolution.	- Local audit system reforms may result in changes to audit timescales or responsibilities and there may therefore be transition risks in future years. - The Bill provides that the Council must have an audit committee, and that at least one member of the committee be an independent person.
Renters Right Act	- The Renter's Rights Act became law on 27th October 2025. Under the Act, Councils are going to gain new powers to investigate landlords; act against rogue landlords; and ensure landlord compliance with new standards expected of them. - Local housing authorities will receive £18.2 million in 2025/26 to support preparations for the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 and to build enforcement capacity. Funding will be allocated based on the number of private rented sector properties in each local area.	Enforcement guidance for local Councils has now been published. The guidance provides the critical information that enforcement officers will need to know to carry out their work in line with the new legislation. There will be a bespoke programme of training, webinars and resources through 'Operation Jigsaw', a cross-local Councils initiative; Changes will start coming into effect from 1st May 2026.

Appendix E – Regulatory update continued

Key regulatory changes continued

Name	Summary of key measures	Impact on Cambridge City Council
Public Office (Accountability) Bill	The Public Office (Accountability) Bill aims to impose a duty on public authorities and public officials to “at all times act with candour, transparency and frankness in their dealings with inquiries and investigations.” Breach of the duty would be a criminal liability. The Bill is expected to apply not only to both core public bodies delivering public services but also private bodies delivering public functions such as those on a government contract. The Bill also proposes: ▪ A new statutory duty on public authorities to promote and take steps to maintain high standards of ethical conduct, as defined by the Seven Principles of Public Life, or “Nolan Principles”; ▪ Reforms that will make it easier to prosecute misconduct in public office; and ▪ An offence of misleading the public.	▪ While the Bill continues to make its way through the House of Commons Committee processes, the Council should ensure that training and support for Councillors is enhanced to take account of greater expectations in relation to local government standards.
Fair Funding Review	▪ On 20 November 2025, the government announced a multi-year Local Government Finance Settlement in a decade, together with the Fair Funding Review . Key measures include: ▪ There will be a single settlement for 2026/27 to 2028/29 ▪ The government plans to use up to date English Indices of Multiple Deprivation, together with up-to-date services cost and demand data to calculate individual council allocations for 2026/27 to 2028/29; and ▪ The Children and Young People’s Services formula will use the latest index of deprivation affecting children. The new indices are expected to lead to greater transparency and a reduced reliance on competitive bidding for funds. The Government also announced it will simplify 33 funding streams, worth almost £47 billion over three years.	Using new indices will result in some Councils seeing increases in their allocations, whilst others see decreases. The government has, however, set out transitional arrangements to help with managing change: ▪ A Recovery Grant funding guarantee to upper tier authorities in receipt of Recovery Grant; ▪ Funding floors and phasing in of new allocations across the multi-year settlement; and ▪ Additional money in the national settlement for children’s social care and a new ring-fenced combined Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse grant over three years.

Appendix E – Regulatory update continued

National Audit Office reporting

There are a number of key publications from the National Audit Office that have an impact on the Council. The following table provides a high level summary of those that have the potential to have the most significant impact on you:

Name	Summary of key messages	Impact on Cambridge City Council
Local government finance report 2026 to 2027	The 2026–27 Local Government Finance Report introduces a multi-year settlement covering 2026/27 to 2028/29 and implements the Fair Funding Review 2.0. Updated distribution formulas will reallocate resources between councils, reflecting more recent demographic and deprivation data. The report confirms the continuation of council tax referendum principles and introduces significant changes to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding, including the extension of the statutory override for DSG deficits to 2027/28 and a government-funded write-off of approximately 90% of historical DSG deficits. These policy changes represent one of the most substantial re-baselining exercises in recent years.	▪ Councils must re-model their Medium-Term Financial Plans (MTFPs) to account for formula redistribution effects and redesigned SEND funding arrangements. The ongoing restrictions on council tax increases will continue to limit local financial flexibility. For many authorities, particularly those with substantial DSG deficits, the reforms will have material implications for reserves management and financial stability.
Exceptional Financial Support for local authorities for 2025-26	Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) remains a mechanism for councils facing acute short-term financial pressures. For 2025–26, thirty authorities received in-principal approval for EFS, allowing them to treat certain revenue costs as capital expenditure through capitalisation directions. The government has removed the additional 1% borrowing premium previously applied and has imposed conditions including enhanced assurance reviews and restrictions on community-asset disposals. The NAO notes that, although EFS can prevent immediate failure, it shifts the burden to future years through increased borrowing.	▪ For the sector, the continuation of EFS signals sustained financial fragility. Authorities using EFS must demonstrate credible, independently-scrutinised recovery and savings plans, along with significant improvements in governance, financial management, and internal controls. ▪ Councils should expect intensive oversight and stringent follow-up from central government when accessing this mechanism.
Local audit reform: Government response to the consultation to overhaul local audit in England	The government response sets out a comprehensive overhaul of the local audit system in England. Central to the reforms is the creation of the Local Audit Office (LAO), which will assume responsibility for appointing auditors, preparing Codes of Audit Practice, enforcing quality standards, and overseeing audit delivery. A phased transition plan will move existing responsibilities from Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) and other bodies to the NAO between 2026 and 2027, with the aim of stabilising the system, addressing audit backlogs, and restoring confidence in the timeliness and quality of local audit.	▪ For councils, the reforms will lead to more prescriptive expectations around audit readiness, governance, documentation quality, and responsiveness. Authorities should anticipate tighter reporting deadlines and increased scrutiny of working papers, internal controls, and VFM arrangements.

Appendix E – Regulatory update continued

National Audit Office reporting continued

Name	Summary of key messages	Impact on Cambridge City Council
Local Government Financial Sustainability	The National Audit Office most recently reported on the context of local government finances in February 2024, which included their consideration of service and financial pressures. They concluded that although total local government funding has risen modestly in recent years, it has not kept pace with population growth, rising service demand, or the increasing complexity and cost of supporting people with high needs. Real-terms funding per person fell between 2015-16 and 2023-24, while demand for essential services such as adult social care, children's social care, SEND provision and homelessness continued to escalate. The NAO highlights growing evidence of strain across services, including delays in Education, Health and Care Plans and a sharp rise in families housed in temporary accommodation for longer than legally permitted. Repeated delays to long-promised funding reforms mean councils continue to rely on short-term, stop-gap measures. Exceptional Financial Support has become increasingly common, but while it prevents immediate failure, it also shifts financial risk into future years, reflecting underlying structural weaknesses in the local government finance system	▪ The report signals deepening financial fragility across the sector, with many councils facing heightened risk of issuing Section 114 notices unless systemic pressures are addressed. Rising demand and cost escalation in statutory services are absorbing an ever-greater share of local authority budgets, reducing the capacity to invest in preventative activity and long-term service improvement. The NAO warns that widespread reliance on temporary fixes—including Exceptional Financial Support—creates additional future liabilities and limits councils' ability to plan sustainably. Without coordinated, cross-government reform of funding, accountability and service oversight frameworks, councils will remain locked in reactive financial management, with growing consequences for service quality, citizen outcomes and long-term financial resilience.
Unlocking land for housing	The National Audit Office reported in February 2026 that the government aims to deliver 1.5 million new homes by July 2029. To support this ambition, various land-unlocking programmes have been introduced to address constraints such as inadequate infrastructure, land assembly challenges, and site viability issues. Since 2016, £10.5 billion has been allocated across 768 projects, with £8.4 billion committed and £5.7 billion spent. Although these programmes collectively predict enabling around 713,000 homes, the NAO highlights that only a small proportion—around 33,300 homes—can currently be evidenced as completed, pointing to gaps in monitoring and programme assurance. Additionally, the creation of the National Housing Delivery Fund and a new National Housing Bank from April 2026 signals a shift toward a more consolidated and strategic funding model.	▪ The sector will experience increased expectations to produce detailed and evidence-based infrastructure planning to secure funding from the new mechanisms. Councils will be required to strengthen the robustness of business cases, improve monitoring of actual housing delivery, and anticipate tighter central-government scrutiny of riskier or larger projects. The shift to a single-gateway funding structure will also compel councils to maintain well-developed pipelines to access multi-year support.
Improving local areas through developer funding	The NAO identifies developer contributions—primarily Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)—as essential tools for funding local infrastructure and affordable housing. However, the report finds significant variation across councils in both the application and governance of these mechanisms. Negotiated viability assessments often reduce the contributions developers agree to provide, while only around half of planning authorities have formally adopted CIL. Developer contributions account for roughly 44% of affordable housing delivery nationally, yet over 17,000 S106-linked affordable homes with planning consent lacked a housing association buyer at the time of review, indicating a delivery bottleneck. The government is providing additional planning capacity funding and establishing a Section 106 Affordable Homes Clearing Service to support councils in unlocking stalled developments.	▪ For councils, strengthening internal governance and transparency around developer contributions will be increasingly important. Authorities will need improved planning capacity, including specialist viability expertise, to mitigate risks of reduced contributions and ensure developer obligations are properly monitored. With the proposed Infrastructure Levy no longer being taken forward, councils must optimise and professionalise the existing S106 and CIL frameworks.

Appendix F – Required communications with the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee

We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee.

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the audit committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	Communication of: ▪ The planned scope and timing of the audit ▪ The planned use of internal audit ▪ The significant risks identified	Audit Planning Report - 22 June 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Significant findings from the audit	▪ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▪ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▪ Other significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed, or subject to correspondence with management ▪ Circumstances that affect the form and content of our auditor's report ▪ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee

Appendix F – Required communications with the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee continued

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including: ▪ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty related to going concern ▪ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▪ The appropriateness of related disclosures in the financial statements	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Misstatements	▪ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▪ Material misstatements corrected by management ▪ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▪ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Fraud	▪ Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▪ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▪ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, unless prohibited by law or regulation any identified or suspected fraud involving: ▪ Management; ▪ Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or ▪ Others, when the identified or suspected fraud is other than clearly inconsequential. ▪ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▪ Matters, if any, to communicate regarding management's process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud ▪ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit Committee responsibility	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee

Appendix F – Required communications with the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee continued

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Independence	Communication of the relevant ethical requirements, including those related to independence, that we apply for the audit engagement, including any independence requirements specific to audits of financial statements of the entity. Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, integrity, objectivity and independence Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as: ▪ The principal threats ▪ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▪ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▪ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence ▪ Breaches of IESBA Code of Ethics, local independence regulations or professional standards (for breaches of the FRC Ethical Standard, include details of the breach and its significance) Communication whenever significant judgements are made about threats to integrity, objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place. Communication of relevant information to those charged with governance, to enable them to provide concurrence on the non-audit services being provided.	Audit Planning Report - 22 June 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee

Appendix F – Required communications with the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee continued

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
External confirmations	- Management's refusal for us to request confirmations - Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Consideration of laws and regulations	- Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur - Enquiry of the audit committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the audit committee may be aware of	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Internal controls	Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Group audits	- An overview of the work to be performed at the components and the nature of the group audit team's planned involvement in the work to be performed by component teams - Instances when the group audit team's review of the work of a component team gave rise to a concern about the quality of that team's work, and how the group audit team addressed the concern - Any limitations on the ability to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence in support of the group audit opinion, for example, where the group audit team's access to people or information may have been restricted - Fraud or suspected fraud involving group management, component management, employees who have significant roles in the group's system of internal control or others when the fraud has the potential for having a "more than inconsequential" effect - Significant deficiencies identified in the group's system of internal control	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee

Appendix F – Required communications with the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee continued

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Representations	Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
System of quality management	How the system of quality management (SQM) supports the consistent performance of a quality audit	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Auditors report	Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report	Audit Results Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee
Auditor's Annual Report	A summary of the conclusions of our audit and our detailed Value for Money Commentary	Auditor's Annual Report - November 2026 – Civic Affairs and Audit Committee

Appendix G – Additional audit information

Objective of our audit

In addition to the key areas of audit focus outlined within the plan, we have to perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards and other regulations. We outline the procedures below that we will undertake during the course of our audit.

Other required procedures during the course of the audit

- Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.
- Obtaining an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Group and Council's internal control.
- Evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Concluding on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting.
- Evaluating the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Obtaining sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the Group to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. Reading other information contained in the financial statements, including the board's statement that the annual report is fair, balanced and understandable, the audit committee reporting appropriately addresses matters communicated by us to the audit committee and reporting whether it is materially inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements.
- Maintaining auditor independence.

Purpose and evaluation of materiality

For the purposes of determining whether the accounts are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in the aggregate, in light of the surrounding circumstances, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation of it requires professional judgement and necessarily takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implicit in the definition. We would be happy to discuss with you your expectations regarding our detection of misstatements in the financial statements.

Materiality determines:

- The locations at which we conduct audit procedures to support the opinion given on the Group financial statements
- The level of work performed on individual account balances and financial statement disclosures

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all of the circumstances that may ultimately influence our judgement about materiality. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the accounts, including the total effect of the audit misstatements we identify, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

EY | Building a better working world

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