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Report to those charged with governance (ISA 260) 2012/13

Gedling Borough Council

24 September 2013



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Page

Report sections

■ Introduction	2
■ Headlines	3
■ Financial statements	4
■ VFM conclusion	8

Appendices

1. Key issues and recommendations	9
2. Declaration of independence and objectivity	10
3. Draft management representation letter	12

This report is addressed to the Authority and has been prepared for the sole use of the Authority. We take no responsibility to any member of staff acting in their individual capacities, or to third parties. The Audit Commission has issued a document entitled *Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies*. This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is expected from the audited body. We draw your attention to this document which is available on the Audit Commission's website at www.auditcommission.gov.uk.

External auditors do not act as a substitute for the audited body's own responsibility for putting in place proper arrangements to ensure that public business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

If you have any concerns or are dissatisfied with any part of KPMG's work, in the first instance you should contact John Cornett, the appointed Engagement Lead to the Authority, who will try to resolve your complaint. If you are dissatisfied with your response please contact Trevor Rees on 0161 246 4000, or by email to trevor.rees@kpmg.co.uk, who is the national contact Partner for all of KPMG's work with the Audit Commission. After this, if you are still dissatisfied with how your complaint has been handled you can access the Audit Commission's complaints procedure. Put your complaint in writing to the Complaints Unit Manager, Audit Commission, 3rd Floor, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF or by email to complaints@audit-commission.gsi.gov.uk. Their telephone number is 03034448330.

This report summarises:

- the key issues identified during our audit of Gedling Borough Council's (the Authority's) financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2013; and
- our assessment of the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money (VFM) in its use of resources.

Financial statements

Our *External Audit Plan 2012/13* presented to you in March 2013 set out the four stages of our financial statements audit process.



This report focuses on the second and third stages of the process: control evaluation and substantive procedures. Our on site work for these took place in two tranches during April 2013 (interim audit) and July 2013 (year end audit). We carried out the following work:



We are now in the final phase of the audit. Some aspects are also discharged through this report:

VFM conclusion

Our *External Audit Plan 2012/13* explained our risk-based approach to VFM work, which follows guidance provided by the Audit Commission. We have completed our work to support our 2012/13 VFM conclusion. This included:

- assessing the potential VFM risks and identifying the residual audit risks for our VFM conclusion;
- considering the results of any relevant work undertaken by the Authority, the Audit Commission, other inspectorates and review agencies in relation to these risk areas.

Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 summarises the headline messages
- Section 3 sets out the key findings from our audit work in relation to the 2012/13 financial statements
- Section 4 outlines the key findings from our work on the VFM conclusion

Our recommendations are included in Appendix 1.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Officers and Members for their continuing help and co-operation throughout our audit work.

This table summarises the headline messages. The remainder of this report provides further details on each area.

Proposed audit opinion	We anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion by 30 September 2013. We will also report that the wording of your Annual Governance Statement accords with our understanding of your governance arrangements.
Audit adjustments	We are pleased to report that our audit of your financial statements did not identify any audit adjustments. We have raised one recommendation arising from our work, which is summarised in Appendix 1.
Accounts production and audit process	The Authority has good processes in place for the production of the accounts and good quality supporting working papers. Officers dealt efficiently with audit queries and the audit process has been completed within the planned timescales. We have worked with Officers throughout the year to discuss the specific risk areas for this year's audit. The Authority addressed the issues appropriately.
Control environment	The Authority's organisation and IT control environment is effective, and controls over the key financial systems are sound.
Completion	At the date of this report our audit of the financial statements is substantially complete. Before we can issue our opinion we require a signed management representation letter. A draft of this letter has been included at Appendix 3. We confirm that we have complied with requirements on objectivity and independence in relation to this year's audit of the Authority's financial statements.
VFM conclusion	We have concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We therefore anticipate issuing an unqualified VFM conclusion by 30 September 2013.

We have identified no issues in the course of the audit that are considered to be material.

The wording of your Annual Governance Statement accords with our understanding of your governance arrangements.

Proposed audit opinion

We anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion by 30 September 2013.

Audit differences

In accordance with ISA 260 we are required to report uncorrected audit differences to you. We also report any material misstatements which have been corrected and which we believe should be communicated to you to help you meet your governance responsibilities.

We are pleased to report that we identified no audit differences.

Annual Governance Statement

We have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and confirmed that:

- it complies with *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: A Framework* published by CIPFA/SOLACE; and
- it is not misleading or inconsistent with other information we are aware of from our audit of the financial statements.

The Authority has good processes in place for the production of the accounts as well as good quality supporting working papers.

Officers dealt efficiently with audit queries and the audit process was completed within the planned timescales.

Accounts production and audit process

ISA 260 requires us to communicate to you our views about the significant qualitative aspects of the Authority's accounting practices and financial reporting. We also assessed the Authority's process for preparing the accounts and its support for an efficient audit.

We considered the following criteria:

Element	Commentary
Accounting practices and financial reporting	The Authority has good financial reporting arrangements in place. We consider that current accounting practices are appropriate and effective.
Completeness of draft accounts	We received a complete set of accounts for audit on 27th June 2013, in advance of the final accounts audit visit.
Quality of supporting working papers	Our <i>Accounts Audit Protocol</i> , which we issued in March 2013 and discussed with Alison Ball and Sue Healey, set out our working paper requirements for the audit. The quality of working papers provided met the standards specified in our <i>Accounts Audit Protocol</i> and enabled the audit to be carried out in an efficient manner. All audit queries raised throughout the final accounts visit were dealt with efficiently.

Element	Commentary
Critical accounting matters (key audit risks)	We have discussed with officers throughout the year the areas of specific audit risk, including the accounting treatment of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme. Relevant audit procedures have been undertaken to address the specific audit risks. There are no matters to draw to your attention.
Response to audit queries	Officers were prompt in addressing all audit queries.

Prior year recommendations

There were no prior year recommendations to follow-up.

Control environment

The Authority's organisational level controls and IT control environment is considered to be effective overall. Controls over the key financial systems are also sound.

During April 2013 we completed our control evaluation work. We did not issue an interim report as there were no significant issues arising from this work. For completeness we reflect on key findings from this work.

Organisational and IT control environment

Controls operated at an organisational level often have an impact on controls at an operational level and if there were weaknesses this would have implications for our audit. We therefore obtain an understanding of the Authority's overall control environment and determine if appropriate controls have been implemented.

The Authority also relies on information technology (IT) to support both financial reporting and internal control processes. In order to satisfy ourselves that we can rely on the use of IT, we tested relevant controls over access to systems and data, system changes, system development and computer operations in relation to those key IT systems used to inform the financial statements.

We found that your organisational and IT control environment over these systems is effective overall.

Controls over key financial systems

Where we have determined that this is the most efficient audit approach to take, we test selected controls that address key risks within the financial systems. The strength of the control framework informs the substantive testing we complete during our final accounts visit.

Based on the work of your internal auditors, and our own work on controls over the year end process, the controls over the financial systems are sound.

Completion

We confirm that we have complied with requirements on objectivity and independence in relation to this year's audit of the Authority's financial statements.

Before we can issue our opinion we require a signed management representation letter.

Once we have finalised our opinions and conclusions we will prepare our *Annual Audit Letter* and close our audit.

Declaration of independence and objectivity

As part of the finalisation process we are required to provide you with representations concerning our independence.

In relation to the audit of the financial statements of Gedling Borough Council for the year ending 31 March 2013, we confirm that there were no relationships between KPMG LLP and Gedling Borough Council, its directors and senior management and its affiliates that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the objectivity and independence of the audit engagement lead and audit staff. We also confirm that we have complied with Ethical Standards and the Audit Commission's requirements in relation to independence and objectivity.

We have provided a detailed declaration in Appendix 2 in accordance with ISA 260.

Management representations

You are required to provide us with representations on specific matters such as your financial standing and whether the transactions within the accounts are legal and unaffected by fraud. We have provided a pro-forma of this letter to Mark Kimberley, and a draft of this is reproduced in Appendix 3. We require a signed copy of your management representations before we issue our audit opinion.

Other matters

ISA 260 requires us to communicate to you by exception 'audit matters of governance interest that arise from the audit of the financial statements'.

There are no other matters which we wish to draw to your attention in addition to those highlighted in this report relating to the audit of the Authority's 2012/13 financial statements.

Our VFM conclusion considers how the Authority secures financial resilience and challenges how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We have concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Background

Auditors are required to give their statutory VFM conclusion based on two criteria specified by the Audit Commission. These consider whether the Authority has proper arrangements in place for:

- securing financial resilience: looking at the Authority’s financial governance, financial planning and financial control processes; and
- challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness: looking at how the Authority is prioritising resources and improving efficiency and productivity.

We follow a risk based approach to focus audit effort on the areas of greatest audit risk. We consider the arrangements put in place by the Authority to mitigate these risks and plan our work accordingly. Our approach was set out in more detail in our *External Audit Plan 2012/13*.

Risk assessment

Our initial risk assessment identified the following key business risk which are also relevant to our VFM conclusion:

- Savings Plans – Gedling Borough Council faces ongoing financial pressures due to Central Government funding cuts.

We are satisfied that sufficient work in relation to this risk had been carried out by the Authority, the Audit Commission, other inspectorates or review agencies to mitigate the audit risks for our VFM conclusion. We concluded that we did not need to carry out any specific additional work ourselves.

Conclusion

We have concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

VFM criterion	Met
Securing financial resilience	✓
Securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness	✓

We have given each recommendation a risk rating and agreed what action management will need to take.

We will formally follow up these recommendations next year.

Priority rating for recommendations		
<p>1 Priority one: issues that are fundamental and material to your system of internal control. We believe that these issues might mean that you do not meet a system objective or reduce (mitigate) a risk.</p>	<p>2 Priority two: issues that have an important effect on internal controls but do not need immediate action. You may still meet a system objective in full or in part or reduce (mitigate) a risk adequately but the weakness remains in the system.</p>	<p>3 Priority three: issues that would, if corrected, improve the internal control in general but are not vital to the overall system. These are generally issues of best practice that we feel would benefit you if you introduced them.</p>

No.	Risk	Issue and recommendation	Management response
1	3	<p>Traveller Site Grant</p> <p>In 2008/09 Gedling Borough Council received a grant of £646k from the Government Office for the East Midlands to fund a Traveller site in the Borough.</p> <p>As part of our audit work we noted that the grant has yet to be utilised. Discussions with officers confirmed that it is unlikely that this grant will be utilised for its intended purpose. The Council has been unable to return the grant to the funding body, which was abolished in 2010. As a result the grant has remained on the Council's balance sheet as a capital grant received in advance for the past five years.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>The Council looks to either return the grant or seek to obtain formal approval to designate the fund for an alternative use.</p> <p>The Council could also consider releasing these funds to income during 2013/14, which would not be unusual considering the amount of time these funds have been held.</p>	<p>Agreed. The position will be reviewed during 2013/14 and an appropriate course of action concluded by 31/03/14.</p>

The Code of Audit Practice requires us to exercise our professional judgement and act independently of both the Commission and the Authority.

Requirements

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission must comply with the *Code of Audit Practice* (the Code) which states that:

“Auditors and their staff should exercise their professional judgement and act independently of both the Commission and the audited body. Auditors, or any firm with which an auditor is associated, should not carry out work for an audited body that does not relate directly to the discharge of auditors’ functions, if it would impair the auditors’ independence or might give rise to a reasonable perception that their independence could be impaired.”

In considering issues of independence and objectivity we consider relevant professional, regulatory and legal requirements and guidance, including the provisions of the Code, the detailed provisions of the Statement of Independence included within the Audit Commission’s Standing guidance for local government auditors (Audit Commission Guidance) and the requirements of APB Ethical Standard 1 *Integrity, Objectivity and Independence* (Ethical Standards).

The Code states that, in carrying out their audit of the financial statements, auditors should comply with auditing standards currently in force, and as may be amended from time to time. Audit Commission Guidance requires appointed auditors to follow the provisions of ISA (UK & I) 260 Communication of *Audit Matters with Those Charged with Governance* that are applicable to the audit of listed companies. This means that the appointed auditor must disclose in writing:

- Details of all relationships between the auditor and the client, its directors and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by the audit firm and its network to the client, its directors and senior management and its affiliates, that the auditor considers may reasonably be thought to bear on the auditor’s objectivity and independence.
- The related safeguards that are in place.

- The total amount of fees that the auditor and the auditor’s network firms have charged to the client and its affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed into appropriate categories, for example, statutory audit services, further audit services, tax advisory services and other non-audit services. For each category, the amounts of any future services which have been contracted or where a written proposal has been submitted are separately disclosed. We do this in our Annual Audit Letter.

Appointed auditors are also required to confirm in writing that they have complied with Ethical Standards and that, in the auditor’s professional judgement, the auditor is independent and the auditor’s objectivity is not compromised, or otherwise declare that the auditor has concerns that the auditor’s objectivity and independence may be compromised and explaining the actions which necessarily follow from his. These matters should be discussed with the Audit Committee.

Ethical Standards require us to communicate to those charged with governance in writing at least annually all significant facts and matters, including those related to the provision of non-audit services and the safeguards put in place that, in our professional judgement, may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and the objectivity of the Audit Partner and the audit team.

General procedures to safeguard independence and objectivity

KPMG’s reputation is built, in great part, upon the conduct of our professionals and their ability to deliver objective and independent advice and opinions. That integrity and objectivity underpins the work that KPMG performs and is important to the regulatory environments in which we operate. All partners and staff have an obligation to maintain the relevant level of required independence and to identify and evaluate circumstances and relationships that may impair that independence.

We confirm that we have complied with requirements on objectivity and independence in relation to this year's audit of the Authority's financial statements.

Acting as an auditor places specific obligations on the firm, partners and staff in order to demonstrate the firm's required independence. KPMG's policies and procedures regarding independence matters are detailed in the Ethics and Independence Manual ('the Manual'). The Manual sets out the overriding principles and summarises the policies and regulations which all partners and staff must adhere to in the area of professional conduct and in dealings with clients and others.

KPMG is committed to ensuring that all partners and staff are aware of these principles. To facilitate this, a hard copy of the Manual is provided to everyone annually. The Manual is divided into two parts. Part 1 sets out KPMG's ethics and independence policies which partners and staff must observe both in relation to their personal dealings and in relation to the professional services they provide. Part 2 of the Manual summarises the key risk management policies which partners and staff are required to follow when providing such services.

All partners and staff must understand the personal responsibilities they have towards complying with the policies outlined in the Manual and follow them at all times. To acknowledge understanding of and adherence to the policies set out in the Manual, all partners and staff are required to submit an annual Ethics and Independence Confirmation. Failure to follow these policies can result in disciplinary action.

Auditor declaration

In relation to the audit of the financial statements of Gedling Borough Council for the financial year ending 31 March 2013, we confirm that there were no relationships between KPMG LLP and Gedling Borough Council, its directors and senior management and its affiliates that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the objectivity and independence of the audit engagement lead and audit staff. We also confirm that we have complied with Ethical Standards and the Audit Commission's requirements in relation to independence and objectivity.

We ask you to provide us with representations on specific matters such as whether the transactions within the accounts are legal and unaffected by fraud.

The wording for these representations is prescribed by auditing standards.

We require a signed copy of your management representations before we issue our audit opinion.

Dear Sirs

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Gedling Borough Council (“the Authority”) for the year ended 31 March 2013, for the purpose of expressing an opinion:

- I. as to whether these financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2013 and of the Authority’s expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- II. whether the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2012/13.

These financial statements comprise the Authority Movement in Reserves Statement, the Authority Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Authority Balance Sheet, the Authority Cash Flow Statement and the related notes.

The Authority confirms that the representations it makes in this letter are in accordance with the definitions set out in the Appendix to this letter.

The Authority confirms that, to the best of its knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as it considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing itself:

Financial statements

1. The Authority has fulfilled its responsibilities, as set out in regulation 8 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, for the preparation of financial statements that:
 - Give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2013 and of the Authority’s and income for the year then ended;
 - have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2012/13.

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

2. Measurement methods and significant assumptions used by the Authority in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.
3. All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2012/13 require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.

Information provided

4. The Authority has provided you with:
 - access to all information of which it is aware, that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements, such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - additional information that you have requested from the Authority for the purpose of the audit; and
 - unrestricted access to persons within the Authority [and Group] from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
5. All transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.
6. The Authority acknowledges its responsibility for such internal control as it determines necessary for the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In particular, the Authority acknowledges its responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

The Authority has disclosed to you the results of its assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.

We ask you to provide us with representations on specific matters such as whether the transactions within the accounts are legal and unaffected by fraud.

The wording for these representations is prescribed by auditing standards.

We require a signed copy of your management representations before we issue our audit opinion.

7. The Authority has disclosed to you all information in relation to:
 - a) Fraud or suspected fraud that it is aware of and that affects the Authority and involves:
 - management;
 - employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements; and
 - b) allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.
8. The Authority has disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.
9. The Authority has disclosed to you and has appropriately accounted for and/or disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2012/13 all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.
10. The Authority has disclosed to you the identity of the Authority's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which it is aware and all related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2012/13.

Included in the Appendix to this letter are the definitions of both a related party and a related party transaction as the Authority understands them and as defined in IAS 24, except where interpretations or adaptations to fit the public sector are detailed in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2012/13.

11. On the basis of the process established by the Authority and having made appropriate enquiries, the Authority is satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme liabilities are consistent with its knowledge of the business.

The Authority further confirms that:

- a) all significant retirement benefits, including any arrangements that:
 - are statutory, contractual or implicit in the employer's actions;
 - arise in the UK and the Republic of Ireland or overseas;
 - are funded or unfunded; and
 - are approved or unapproved,have been identified and properly accounted for; and
- b) all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

This letter was tabled and agreed at the meeting of the Audit Committee on 24 September 2013.

Yours faithfully,

Chair of the Audit Committee,
Chief Financial Officer



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