

## 2020 Audit Plan – Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund

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# 2020 Audit Plan

## Summary

- 1 As your external auditor, my objective is to carry out an audit which discharges my statutory duties as Auditor General and fulfils my obligations under the Code of Audit Practice to examine and certify whether RCTPF (the Pension Fund) accounting statements are 'true and fair'.
- 2 The purpose of this plan is to set out my proposed work, when it will be undertaken, how much it will cost and who will undertake it.
- 3 My responsibilities, along with those of management and those charged with governance, are set out in **Appendix 1**.

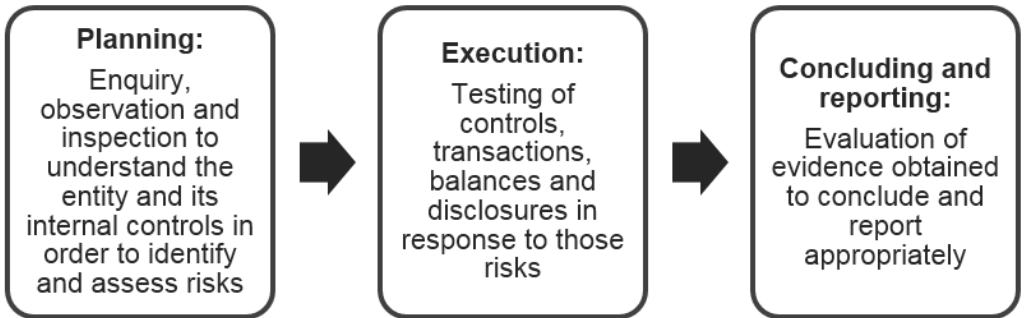
## Impact of COVID-19

- 4 The COVID-19 national emergency has had an unprecedented impact on the UK and will significantly impact on public bodies' preparation of the 2019-20 accounts and our audit work.
- 5 Due to the UK Government's restrictions on movement and anticipated sickness absence levels, I understand that many bodies will not be able to prepare accounts in line with any previously agreed timetable. As well as the delivery of the Auditor General's statutory responsibilities, the priority is to ensure the health, safety and well-being of Audit Wales staff, their families and those of our partners elsewhere in the public service at this incredibly challenging time.
- 6 In response to the government advice and subsequent restrictions, Audit Wales staff have ceased on all on-site work at audited bodies and Audit Wales offices. Staff are working from home and will continue to make whatever progress they can whilst working and engaging with you remotely.
- 7 Consequently, this audit plan does not include any details in relation to completion of my audit work. My audit team will discuss a timetable with you once the current national emergency situation is over and the Pension Fund is in a position to prepare its accounts.
- 8 I commit to ensuring that my audit team's work will not have a detrimental impact on you at a time when public bodies are stretched and focused on more important matters.

## Audit of Pension Fund accounts

- 9 The audit work I undertake to fulfil my responsibilities responds to my assessment of risks. This understanding allows us to develop an audit approach which focuses on addressing specific risks whilst providing assurance for the Pension Fund accounts as a whole. My audit approach consists of three phases as set out in **Exhibit 1**.

**Exhibit 1: my audit approach**



10 The risks of material misstatement which I consider to be significant and which therefore require special audit consideration, are set out in **Exhibit 2** along with the work I intend to undertake to address them. Also included are other key areas of audit attention my team will be focusing on.

**Exhibit 2: Financial audit risks**

Financial audit risks	Proposed audit response
<b>Significant risks</b>	
<p>The risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is viewed as a significant risk [ISA 240.31-33].</p>	<p>My audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• test the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements;</li> <li>• review accounting estimates for biases; and</li> <li>• evaluate the rationale for any significant transactions outside the normal course of business.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Triennial Valuation</b> The Pension Fund is currently finalising the valuation as at 31 March 2019 with the Actuary. There is a risk that the outcome of the valuation is not adequately disclosed in the financial statements.</p>	<p>My audit team will review the triennial valuation report and ensure that the outcomes have been adequately disclosed in the financial statements.</p>

Financial audit risks	Proposed audit response
<b>Significant risks</b>	
<p><b>McCloud Judgement</b></p> <p>In 2015 the Government introduced reforms to public sector pensions, meaning most public sector workers were moved into new pension schemes. In December 2018, the Court of Appeal ruled that the ‘transitional protection’ offered to some members of the judges’ and firefighters’ schemes, as part of the reforms, amounted to unlawful discrimination. On 15 July 2019 the Government announced that they accept that the judgement applies to all of the main public service pension schemes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of the judgement is likely to have a significant impact on the IAS19 liabilities and there is a risk that this is not adequately disclosed in the financial statements.</li> </ul>	<p>My audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the provision made by the actuary in relation to the McCloud judgement and monitor progress on the development of proposals for a remedy to be applied in the Local Government Pension Scheme; and</li> <li>• ensure that this is adequately disclosed in the financial statements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP)</b></p> <p>GMPs were the minimum pensions employers had to provide when they opted their employees out of the State Earnings Related Pensions Scheme (SERPS) between 1978 and 1997, usually through a defined benefit scheme.</p> <p>GMPs were calculated by reference to state pension age which used to be 60 for women and 65 for men. That made pension payments unequal and contravened the 1990 Barbour judgement.</p> <p>The 2018 Lloyds Banking Group judgement has provided clarification on whether and how GMPs should be equalised and creates an obligation to equalise GMPs dating back to 1990.</p> <p>There is a risk that appropriate allowances are not made in 2019-20</p>	<p>My audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review any provision made by the actuary relating to the outstanding GMP issues and monitor progress on the development of guidance and clarification of the potential impact; and</li> <li>• ensure that this is adequately disclosed in the financial statements.</li> </ul>

Financial audit risks	Proposed audit response
<b>Significant risks</b>	
pension liability calculations for the impact of GMPs.	
<p><b>Impact of COVID-19</b></p> <p>The COVID-19 national emergency will see a significant delay in the preparation and publication of accounts. There is a risk that the quality of the accounts and supporting working papers, eg around estimates and valuations, may be compromised leading to an increased incidence of errors. Quality monitoring arrangements may be compromised due to timing issues and/or resource availability.</p>	<p>My audit team will discuss your closedown process and quality monitoring arrangements with the accounts preparation team and make arrangements to monitor the accounts preparation process. The audit team will help to identify areas where there may be gaps in arrangements.</p>

- 11 I do not seek to obtain absolute assurance that the Pension Fund accounting statements are true and fair but adopt a concept of materiality. My aim is to identify material misstatements, that is, those that might result in a reader of the accounts being misled. The levels at which I judge such misstatements to be material will be reported to those charged with governance for Rhondda Cynon Taf Council (the Council), as the administering authority of the Pension Fund as a whole, prior to completion of the audit.
- 12 For reporting purposes, I will treat any misstatements below a trivial level (set at 5% of materiality as not requiring consideration by those charged with governance and, therefore, I will not report them.
- 13 My fees and planned timescales for completion of the audit are based on the following assumptions:
- the financial statements are provided in accordance with a timescale to be agreed following the end of the COVID-19 national emergency, to the quality expected and have been subject to a robust quality assurance review;
  - information provided to support the financial statements is in accordance with the agreed audit deliverables document<sup>1</sup>;
  - all appropriate officials will be available during the audit;

<sup>1</sup> The agreed audit deliverables document sets out the expected working paper requirements to support the financial statements and include timescales and responsibilities.

- you have all the necessary controls and checks in place to enable the Responsible Financial Officer to provide all the assurances that I require in the Letter of Representation addressed to me;
- Internal Audit’s planned programme of work is complete, and management has responded to issues that may have affected the financial statements; and
- all information and assurances required from third parties can be obtained.

## Statutory audit functions

- 14 In addition to the audit of the accounts, I have statutory responsibilities to receive questions and objections to the accounts from local electors. These responsibilities are set out in the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004:
- Section 30 Inspection of documents and questions at audit; and
  - Section 31 Right to make objections at audit.
- 15 Audit fees will be chargeable for work undertaken in dealing with electors’ questions and objections. Because audit work will depend upon the number and nature of any questions and objections, it is not possible to estimate an audit fee for this work.
- 16 If I do receive questions or objections, I will discuss potential audit fees at the time.

## Fee, audit team and timetable

### Fee

- 17 Your estimated fee for 2020 is set out in **Exhibit 3**. There have been some changes to my fee rate structure for 2020 however my audit teams will continue to drive efficiency in their audits to ensure any resulting increases will not be passed onto you.

#### Exhibit 3: audit fee

	Proposed fee for 2020 (£) <sup>2</sup>	Actual fee for 2019 (£)
Audit of pension fund accounts	£39,385	£39,385

- 18 Planning will be ongoing, and changes to my programme of audit work and therefore my fee, may be required if any key new risks emerge. I shall make no changes without first discussing them with the Director of Finance and Digital Services.
- 19 Further information on my [fee scales and fee setting](#) can be found on our website.

<sup>2</sup> The fees shown in this document are exclusive of VAT, which is not charged to you.



## Audit team

20 The main members of my team, together with their contact details, are summarised in **Exhibit 4**.

### Exhibit 4: my audit team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Richard Harries	Engagement Lead	02920320640	<a href="mailto:richard.harries@audit.wales">richard.harries@audit.wales</a>
Mike Jones	Audit Manager	02920320649	<a href="mailto:mike.jones@audit.wales">mike.jones@audit.wales</a>
Carwyn Rees	Audit Lead	02920829375	<a href="mailto:carwyn.rees@audit.wales">carwyn.rees@audit.wales</a>

## Timetable

- 21 My audit team will continue to undertake such remote work as is possible during the COVID-19 national emergency. However, as set out above, the audit team will not be in a position to agree a timetable with you until the COVID-19 national emergency has passed.
- 22 Therefore, I will report on a timetable for the audit work in due course.
- 23 I can confirm that my team members are all independent of the Pension Fund and its officers. In addition, I am not aware of any potential conflicts of interest that I need to bring to your attention.

## Future developments to my audit work

- 24 Details of other future developments including the Wales Audit Office's Good Practice Exchange (GPX) seminars and my planned work on the readiness of the Welsh public sector for Brexit are set out in **Appendix 2**.

# Appendix 1

## Respective responsibilities

The Council is the administering authority of the Pension Fund. This Audit Plan has been prepared to meet the requirements of auditing standards and proper audit practices. It provides the Council with an outline of the financial audit work required for the Pension Fund accounts.

As amended by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013, the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 sets out my powers and duties to undertake your financial audit. It is my responsibility to issue a certificate and report on the Pension Fund accounting statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness', providing assurance that they:

- are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error;
- comply with the statutory and other applicable requirements; and
- comply with all relevant requirements for accounting presentation and disclosure.

My audit work does not relieve management and those charged with governance of their responsibilities which include:

- the preparation of the financial statements and Annual Report in accordance with applicable accounting standards and guidance;
- the keeping of proper accounting records;
- ensuring the regularity of financial transactions; and
- securing value for money in the use of resources.

Management agrees to provide me with:

- access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- additional information that I may request from management for the purpose of the audit; and
- unrestricted access to persons within the authority from whom I determine it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

Management will need to provide me with written representations to confirm:

- that it has fulfilled its responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements;
- that all transactions have been recorded and are reflected in the financial statements;
- the completeness of the information provided to me for the purposes of the audit; and
- to support other audit evidence relevant to the financial statements or specific assertions in the financial statements if I deem it necessary or if required by ISAs.

# Appendix 2

## Other future developments

### A. Good Practice Exchange

Audit Wales' GPX helps public services improve by sharing knowledge and practices that work. Events are held where knowledge can be exchanged face to face and resources shared online. The main areas of work are regarding financial management, public-sector staff and governance. Further information, including details of forthcoming GPX events and outputs from past seminars can be found on the [GPX section of the Wales Audit Office website](#).

### B. Brexit: preparations for the United Kingdom's departure from membership of the European Union

The Auditor General has reported on preparations in Wales for a 'no-deal Brexit', publishing a report in February 2019 and a follow-up letter to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee in September 2019. At the time of reporting, there was a possibility that the UK would leave the EU without a Withdrawal Agreement in place (the no-deal scenario), which would potentially have had significant consequences for Welsh public services and the wider economy and society.

Following the general election, the United Kingdom seems set to leave membership of the European Union on 31 January 2020 under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement concluded between the EU and UK in October 2019. The next phase will involve negotiating and agreeing the future relationship between the UK and EU.

There will be a transition period to 31 December 2020, during which the UK will continue to participate in EU programmes and follow EU regulations. The Withdrawal Agreement provides for the transition period to be extended by up to two years, with the agreement of the UK and EU. The deadline for agreeing to extend the transition period is 30 June 2020. The UK Government has said that it does not intend to extend the transition period.

Despite there being an agreement on the terms of withdrawal, there remain some significant uncertainties:

- Given the very tight timetable for reaching agreement, there is a possibility of the UK leaving the transition period at the end of 2020 without an agreement about the future relationship in place. In this scenario many of the issues previously identified around a 'no-deal Brexit', such as disruption to supply chains, would arise again.
- The UK Government's position of seeking a future relationship based on a free trade agreement (rather than a closer relationship aligned to the single market) has implications that are not yet clear but which create opportunities and risks for Wales' economy, society and environment.

- There are also significant unresolved constitutional questions around how powers in areas where devolved governments were directly applying EU law, such as regional development and agriculture, will be exercised across the UK after the transition period.

In light of these uncertainties, the Auditor General will continue to keep a watching brief over developments and will make a decision later in the year as to what, if any, further work is required to look at public bodies' preparations for either a new relationship or a no-trade deal exit from the transition period.



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