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# External audit progress report and technical update

**South Holland District Council**

November 2014

This report provides the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

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

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

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

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

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# Progress report

This document provides the Audit and Governance Committee with a high level overview on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

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

### 2014/15 Audit - Summary of work planned in the next quarter

We are about to start work on planning the 2014/15 audit and our work over the coming quarter will include:

- ongoing liaison with finance staff to discuss relevant current and emerging issues in respect of the accounts and value for money;
- meeting with Executive Officers as part of the detailed planning process to better understand the current and longer term issues that the organisation is addressing;
- liaising with internal audit with a view to maximising audit efficiency (whilst recognising the differences in our roles);
- updating our audit risk assessments and developing our detailed draft Audit Plan which we expect to submit to the Audit and Governance Committee early in 2015. This will set out the scope of the audit in more detail.

At this stage our planning is likely to include particular focus on:

- the Authority's arrangements in relation to the two Audit Commission specified Value for Money criteria (that is, its arrangements for securing financial resilience and challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness);
- the impact on our audit of any changes to the accounts as a result of central guidance; and
- any learning opportunities from the 2013/14 audit which we can use to improve the process in 2014/15.



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# KPMG resources

Area	Comments
<p><b>KPMG/Shelter report: Fix the housing shortage or see house prices quadruple in 20 years</b></p>	<p>Without a radical programme of house building, average house prices in England could double in just ten years to £446,000, according to new research. In twenty years they could quadruple, with the average house price estimated to rise to over £900,000 by 2034 if current trends continue.</p> <p>The research from KPMG and Shelter also reveals that more than half of all 20-34 year olds could be living with their parents by 2040, as soaring housing costs caused by the shortage of affordable homes leave more and more people priced out of a home of their own.</p> <p>The warning comes as KPMG and Shelter launch a landmark new report, outlining how the 2015 government can turn the tide on the nation's housing shortage within a single parliament. With recent government figures showing that homeownership in England has been falling for over a decade, the consequences of our housing shortage are already being felt.</p> <p>The report sets out a blueprint for the essential reforms that will increase the supply of affordable homes and stabilise England's rollercoaster housing market. It calls on politicians to commit to an integrated range of key measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Giving planning authorities the power to create 'New Homes Zones' that would drive forward the development of new homes. Combined with infrastructure, this would be led by local authorities, the private sector and local communities, and self-financed by sharing in the rising value of the land.</li> <li>■ Unlocking stalled sites to speed up development and stop land being left dormant, by charging council tax on the homes that should have been built after a reasonable period for construction has passed.</li> <li>■ Introducing a new National Housing Investment Bank to provide low cost, long term loans for housing providers, as part of a programme of innovative ways to finance affordable house building.</li> <li>■ Helping small builders to get back into the house building market by using government guarantees to improve access to finance.</li> <li>■ Fully integrating new homes with local infrastructure and putting housing at the very centre of City Deals, to make sure towns and cities have the power to build the homes their communities need.</li> </ul> <p>To read the report, visit <a href="https://portal.ema.kworld.kpmg.com/uk/Documents/NewsroomDocs/2014/KPMG%20Shelter%20report%20FINAL.pdf">https://portal.ema.kworld.kpmg.com/uk/Documents/NewsroomDocs/2014/KPMG%20Shelter%20report%20FINAL.pdf</a>.</p> <p>For more information, please contact a member of the audit team.</p>



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# Technical update

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
<b>National Audit Office consultation: Draft Code of Audit Practice for the audit of local public bodies</b>	 <b>Medium</b>	<p>On Friday 19 September 2014 the National Audit Office (NAO) launched its consultation on the draft Code of Audit Practice for the audit of local public bodies. Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Code will take effect from 1 April 2015 for audit work relating to the 2015/16 financial year onwards.</p> <p>The NAO is seeking views and comments on the draft Code. In particular, the views of audited bodies are being sought on how valuable the work carried out each year on value-for-money arrangements is. The closing date for consultation responses is Friday 31 October 2014.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/keep-in-touch/our-surveys/consultation-code-audit-practice/">http://www.nao.org.uk/keep-in-touch/our-surveys/consultation-code-audit-practice/</a></p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to enquire of officers whether they responded to the consultation and the details of any response.</i></p>
<b>Invitation to Comment and Simplification and Streamlining the Presentation of Local Authority Financial Statements</b>	 <b>Medium</b>	<p>CIPFA and CIPFA/LASAAC have recently consulted on the simplification and streamlining of the presentation of local authority financial statements.</p> <p>The consultation focused on the reporting of local authority performance and therefore on the comprehensive income and expenditure statement, the movement in reserves statement and the segmental reporting requirements specified in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. As an important part of reporting performance, it also considered the narrative reporting requirements which would accompany the financial statements.</p> <p>The consultation closed on 19 September 2014.</p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to enquire of officers whether they responded to the consultation and the details of any response.</i></p>
<b>Audit Commission consultation: 2015/16 Proposed Work Programme and Scales of Fees</b>	 <b>Medium</b>	<p>In October the Audit Commission launched its consultation on the 2015/16 proposed work programme and scales of fees. The Commission is proposing to reduce scale fees by a further 25 per cent from 2015/16, based on the scale fees applicable for 2014/15. It does not plan to make changes to the overall work programme. The consultation period ends on Friday 6 January 2015.</p> <p>The Commission is also consulting on a small supplementary fee for the audit of the accounts from 2014/15, in relation to audit work now required on business rates. This consultation ends on 7 November 2014.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/audit-regime/audit-fees/201516propwpsf/">http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/audit-regime/audit-fees/201516propwpsf/</a></p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to enquire of officers whether they responded or are intending to respond to the consultation and the details of any response.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
<b>Audit Commission calls for improved quality and accuracy in grant and subsidy claims and returns</b>	 <b>Low</b>	<p>78 per cent of councils' claims to the grant-paying body for housing benefit subsidies for 2012/13 were challenged by the Audit Commission's appointed auditors.</p> <p>Auditors issued a qualification letter in 35 per cent (360) of the 1,023 claims and returns made by councils for 2012/13 in respect of seven schemes for grants or subsidies. 255 of the 360 (71 per cent) qualifications related to claims for housing and council tax benefit subsidy. In total, these seven schemes transfer £50.5 billion of public money from central to local government.</p> <p>The full findings in <i>Local Government Claims and Returns: Auditor's Certification Work for 2012/13</i>, also provide an overview of how local authority handling of claims and subsidies has changed since the Commission first produced a national report for the 2008/09 financial year. For example, between 2009 and 2013, auditors made amendments to about one quarter of teachers' pensions returns. 55 teachers' pensions returns (36 per cent) for 2012/13 were qualified, double that for 2011/12.</p> <p>To view the full report, visit <a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/audit-regime/certifying-claims-and-returns/">http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/audit-regime/certifying-claims-and-returns/</a></p>	<p><i>We will report the findings of our 2013/14 certification work by February 2015.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments	KPMG perspective
<p><b>2014/15 work programme and scales of fees for the National Fraud Initiative</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">● Low</p>	<p>On Monday 30 June 2014 the Audit Commission published the final 2014/15 work programme and scale of fees for National Fraud Initiative (NFI).</p> <p>The Commission has considered the small number of consultation responses received. Respondents generally supported the Commission’s decision to recognise the financial pressures that public bodies are facing in the current economic climate by keeping the scale of fees the same as for NFI 2012/13. They also raised some specific points, on which the Commission will respond directly to the organisations concerned. A summary of the consultation responses can be viewed at <a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NFI-2014-15-Work-programme-and-scale-of-fees-Consultation-Feedback.pdf">http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NFI-2014-15-Work-programme-and-scale-of-fees-Consultation-Feedback.pdf</a>.</p> <p>The final work programme and scale of fees documents for the NFI 2014/15 exercise are available on the Commission’s website <a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/national-fraud-initiative/public-sector/fees/">http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/national-fraud-initiative/public-sector/fees/</a>.</p> <p><b>Data request</b></p> <p>The NFI Team sent the formal NFI 2014/15 data request to all mandatory participant directors of finance on Monday 30 June. Directors of finance of existing voluntary participants also received an invitation to participate. The emails included links to the NFI online instructions which give details of NFI data requirements and also announce the launch of the Commission’s 2014/15 web application.</p> <p>Participants are required to submit the required data sets, through the secure NFI web application, on Monday 6 October 2014. The Commission expects to release the data matches on Thursday 29 January 2015.</p>	<p><i>The Committee may wish to confirm that the Authority has met the submission deadline.</i></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<b>Public Accounts Committee report – Local government funding: assurance to Parliament</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>The Public Accounts Committee has recently published a report on funding for local authorities. This found that whilst the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has increased flexibility for local government spending, allowing local authorities to use government funding according to local priorities, DCLG cannot be sure that the local accountability system is ensuring that local authorities are achieving value for money with their funding.</p> <p>The report can be found at <a href="http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmpubacc/456/456.pdf">http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmpubacc/456/456.pdf</a></p>
<b>Government plans to regulate public sector exit payments</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>The government has recently consulted on proposals to ensure exit payments are recovered when high earners return to the same part of the public sector within twelve months of leaving. The proposed provisions will be included in the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill.</p> <p>The consultation outlines the government's proposal to underpin exit payment recovery across the public sector. The government expects any changes brought about as part of this consultation to support existing or on-going changes to exit payment arrangements to ensure they are fair and promote value for money more widely.</p> <p>More information can be found at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/recovery-of-public-sector-exit-payments">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/recovery-of-public-sector-exit-payments</a></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<b>Consultation on Local Government Pension Scheme</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>The government has recently consulted on new governance arrangements, and sought responses from interested parties on the draft (pension) regulations which are to come into force from October 2014 onwards.</p> <p>The main provisions include a requirement for the Secretary of State to establish a national scheme advisory board to advise him on the desirability of changes to the scheme. Provision is also made for administering authorities to establish local pension boards to assist them with the effective and efficient management and administration of the scheme.</p> <p>Further information can be found at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-local-government-pension-scheme-amendment-regulations-2014-draft-regulations-on-scheme-governance">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-local-government-pension-scheme-amendment-regulations-2014-draft-regulations-on-scheme-governance</a></p>
<b>Government publishes response on local authority parking strategies</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>The government launched a consultation paper on local authority parking enforcement in 2013. The consultation closed in February 2014 and the government has now responded with a number of proposals, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ amending guidance to make it clear that motorists parking at an out-of-order meter should not be issued a penalty charge where there are no alternative ways to pay;</li> <li>■ banning the use of CCTV cameras to enforce parking contraventions in the vast majority of cases, but with some exceptions (eg restricted areas outside of schools);</li> <li>■ widening the powers of parking adjudicators. This could include, for example, measures to protect drivers where adjudicators have repeatedly identified a problem at a specific location (such as inadequate signage) and parking tickets have repeatedly been issued; and</li> <li>■ introducing a mandatory 10 minute free period at the end of paid-for on-street parking either through amendments to statutory guidance or regulations.</li> </ul> <p>Further information can be found at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-authority-parking">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-authority-parking</a></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<p><b>Update to VFM profiles</b></p>	<p>● <b>For information</b></p>	<p>The VFM profiles tool was updated in July 2014. The update includes a redesigned children and young people section based on the latest section 251 outturn data for 2012/13. This data includes the time series back to 2009/10 wherever possible, and the change brings the children and young people's section in line with the rest of the profiles where outturn data is used. The VFM profiles previously used section 251 planned budget data.</p> <p>This section is now organised into the follow areas of expenditure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ LA education services</li> <li>■ Schools and services</li> <li>■ Sure start &amp; early years</li> <li>■ Looked after children</li> <li>■ Safeguarding</li> <li>■ Youth justice</li> <li>■ Young people</li> <li>■ Other children &amp; family services</li> <li>■ Asylum seekers.</li> </ul> <p>Each section contains financial indicators from the section 251 outturn data collection and relevant performance or contextual indicators.</p>
<p><b>VFM data briefing on expenditure on looked after children</b></p>	<p>● <b>For information</b></p>	<p>The Audit Commission has published Councils' expenditure on looked after children, the latest in its series of VFM data briefings analysing data in the VFM profiles.</p> <p>The briefing reports that, although the number of looked after children increased by 12 per cent between 2008/09 and 2012/13, councils' expenditure increased by only 4 per cent. Reductions in the daily cost of care and an increase in the proportion of children receiving foster care saved a total of £239 million, partially offsetting the spending pressure arising from the increased number of children in care.</p> <p>The briefing looks in more detail at some of the factors which influence how much councils spend on foster care and encourages councils to use the VFM Profiles to compare their costs with those of similar councils.</p> <p>The briefings can be found at: <a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/information-and-analysis/value-for-money-briefings-2">http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/information-and-analysis/value-for-money-briefings-2</a></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<p>VFM data briefing on managing council property assets</p>	<p>● For information</p>	<p>On 5 June, the Audit Commission published the latest in its series of VFM briefings, <i>Managing council property assets: Using data from the VFM Profiles</i></p> <p>The briefing draws on Capital Outturn Return (COR) data in the Profiles to show trends since 2004/05 in: the net book value (NBV) of the operational and investment estates; levels of capital investment; and sources of finance for capital investment. It deals with how to release more value from the estate overall, and in particular, it addresses the need for councils to consider how they can best use or dispose of surplus assets, which had a NBV of £2.5 billion in 2012/13.</p> <p>As part of this update the following updated data has been added to the Profiles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sustainable economy section, planning – processing of planning applications – quarter 3 2012/13.</li> <li>■ Financial resilience, revenue collection services – CIPFA Revenue Collection Statistics – for 2012/13.</li> <li>■ Environmental services – ENV18 – Local authority collected waste: annual results tables, final annual results for local authority collected waste and management figures for England. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs revised this data in May 2014. The data in the VFM profiles has been updated for the total local authority collected waste and household – waste not sent for recycling.</li> <li>■ Benefits caseload – the latest available monthly data has been added, bringing the latest data to February 2014.</li> </ul> <p>For further information visit: <a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/2014/06/can-local-governments-2-5-billion-surplus-assets-be-put-to-better-use/">http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/2014/06/can-local-governments-2-5-billion-surplus-assets-be-put-to-better-use/</a></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<p><b>Tool launched to help councils compare care performance on social care</b></p>	<p>● <b>For information</b></p>	<p>The Department of Health has launched a new tool to help councils compare their performance on social care with similar areas across England. The tool groups upper tier and unitary authorities by their spending on the over-65s and working age adults with learning disabilities. The aim is to help local authorities see how they are meeting various indicators, and to identify areas for improvement by viewing the performance of their peers.</p> <p>The tool can be found at: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-efficiency-tool">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-efficiency-tool</a></p>
<p><b>Distribution of National Fraud Initiative (NFI) information packs to elected members at councils in England</b></p>	<p>● <b>For information</b></p>	<p>To complement the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) national report published in June 2014 (available at <a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/national-fraud-initiative/nfi-reports/">http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/national-fraud-initiative/nfi-reports/</a>), the Audit Commission distributed an information pack for elected members with responsibility for finance and audit at councils in England in August. A copy was also be sent to directors of finance and NFI key contacts for information.</p> <p>The information pack brings together key facts about the NFI, the council's NFI outcomes and comparisons to their CIPFA nearest neighbours. The pack links to a series of questions elected members can put to their director of finance (NFI senior responsible officer). The responses will help them understand how the NFI is being used within the council, the benefits of taking part and if they are being maximised.</p> <p>If you did not receive the information pack and would like a copy please contact via email at <a href="mailto:nfiqueries@audit-commission.gsi.gov.uk">nfiqueries@audit-commission.gsi.gov.uk</a></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<b>The NAO's role in local audit</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>The National Audit Office (NAO) is taking on new responsibilities in the new framework for the audit of local bodies. The NAO has produced a leaflet which provides information on its new role, examples of its recent value for money work focused on local services, and contact details for you to provide views and suggestions or to ask questions about its work.</p> <p>For more information, visit <a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-naos-role-in-local-audit/">http://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-naos-role-in-local-audit/</a></p>
<b>Funding healthcare: Making allocations to local areas (NAO report)</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>The National Audit Office (NAO) has recently published a report examining the extent to which £79 billion of central funding allocated to local health bodies differs from target allocations based on relative need. It finds that nearly two-fifths of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are more than five percentage points above or below their fair share of funding per person. It also finds that there is a clear relationship between the financial position of CCGs and their distance from target funding allocations, with 19 of the 20 CCGs with the tightest financial position receiving less than their target allocation, and 18 of the 20 with the largest surpluses receiving more than their target allocation.</p> <p>For more information, visit <a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/report/funding-healthcare-making-allocations-to-local-areas/">http://www.nao.org.uk/report/funding-healthcare-making-allocations-to-local-areas/</a></p>
<b>Local government funding: Assurance to Parliament (NAO report)</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>A recent NAO report examines how the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has implemented and oversees the assurance framework that enables departments to assure Parliament on funding for local authorities following the changes in the 2010 Spending Review to give local authorities more control over their funding. The report finds that under current arrangements DCLG's monitoring information gives limited insight into whether value for money is being achieved in practice. It also suggests that departments should assess whether continuing to fund local authorities through un-ringfenced targeted grants is appropriate in the context of a locally-defined approach to achieving value for money.</p> <p>To view the report, visit <a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/report/local-government-funding-assurance-to-parliament/">http://www.nao.org.uk/report/local-government-funding-assurance-to-parliament/</a></p>
<b>Maintaining strategic infrastructure: roads (NAO report)</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For information</b></p>	<p>The NAO has published a report on Maintaining strategic infrastructure: roads. This report highlights how the lack of predictability of funding for highways authorities has practical implications for the roads network and may lead to increased costs in the long term.</p> <p>Although the report focuses primarily on central government responsibilities it may be of interest to you for your highways management responsibilities.</p> <p>To read the report, visit <a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/report/maintaining-strategic-infrastructure-roads/">http://www.nao.org.uk/report/maintaining-strategic-infrastructure-roads/</a></p>

Area	Level of Impact	Comments
<p><b>Tenfold difference in outsource spending revealed (Local Government Chronicle article)</b></p>	<p>● <b>For information</b></p>	<p>“Exclusive analysis has revealed a tenfold difference in the amount councils spend per head of population on outsourced services.</p> <p>Figures from a database of councils’ published receipts for 2012-13 show a huge gulf in the amount spent by top-tier councils with organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors.</p> <p>Wigan MBC spent just £116 with outside providers per head of population, compared with over £1,000 at several London boroughs and £1,450 at Southend BC.</p> <p>The data, compiled by research firm Porge and analysed by Local Government Chronicle, presents a broad picture of the total trade top-tier councils carried out with other organisations, based on all published receipts for expenditure over £500.</p> <p>It shows councils spent £30.5bn with outside providers in 2012-13.</p> <p>Alongside classic outsourcing expenditure, such as waste contracts, this includes capital schemes such as house building and payments to financial institutions.”</p> <p>To view the full article, visit <a href="http://www.lgcplus.com/5071076.article">http://www.lgcplus.com/5071076.article</a> (subscription required)</p>



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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 – 2014/15 Audit deliverables

Deliverable	Purpose	Timing	Status
<b>Planning</b>			
Fee letter	Communicating indicative fee for the audit year	April 2014	Complete
External audit plan	Outlining our audit strategy and planned approach Identifying areas of audit focus and planned procedures	February 2015	TBC
<b>Interim</b>			
Interim review (if required)	Details and resolution of control and process issues. Identifying improvements required prior to the issue of the draft financial statements and the year-end audit. Initial VFM assessment on the Council's arrangements for securing value for money in the use of its resources.	April 2015	TBC
<b>Substantive procedures</b>			
Report to those charged with governance (ISA+260 report)	Details the resolution of key audit issues. Communication of adjusted and unadjusted audit differences. Performance improvement recommendations identified during our audit. Commentary on the Council's value for money arrangements.	September 2015	TBC
<b>Completion</b>			
Auditor's report	Providing an opinion on your accounts (including the Annual Governance Statement). Concluding on the arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources (the VFM conclusion).	September 2015	TBC
WGA	Concluding on the Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office.	September 2015	TBC
Annual Audit Letter	Summarising the outcomes and the key issues arising from our audit work for the year.	October 2015	TBC
<b>Certification of claims and returns</b>			
Certification of claims and returns report	Summarising the outcomes of certification work on your claims and returns for Government departments.	January 2016	TBC



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