

Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board

Annual Audit Plan 2021/22



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board

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Introduction

Summary of planned audit work

1. This document summarises the work plan for our 2021/22 external audit of Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board (the Joint Board). The main elements of our work include:

- an audit of the annual accounts, and provision of an Independent Auditor's Report
- an audit opinion on the other statutory information published within the annual accounts including the Management Commentary, the Annual Governance Statement, and the Remuneration Report
- consideration of the arrangements in relation to the audit dimensions: financial management, financial sustainability, governance and transparency and value for money that frame the wider scope of public sector audit

Impact of Covid-19

2. The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on public services and public finances, and the effects will be felt well into the future.

3. The Auditor General for Scotland, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland continue to assess the risks to public services and finances from Covid-19 across the full range of our audit work, including annual audits and the programme of performance audits. The well-being of audit teams and the delivery of high-quality audits remain paramount. Changes in our approach may be necessary and where this impacts on annual audits, revisions to this Annual Audit Plan may be required.

Adding value

4. We aim to add value to the Joint Board through our external audit work by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas for improvement and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In so doing, we will help the Joint Board promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making and more effective use of resources. Additionally, we attend meetings of the Joint Board and actively participate in discussions.

Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Joint Board

5. The [Code of Audit Practice \(2016\)](#) sets out in detail the respective responsibilities of the auditor and Joint Board. Key responsibilities are summarised below.

Auditor responsibilities

6. Our responsibilities as independent auditors are established the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and the [Code of Audit Practice](#) (including [supplementary guidance](#)) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

7. Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information within the annual accounts. We also review and report on the arrangements within the Joint Board to manage its performance and use of resources. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board and Treasurer responsibilities

8. The Joint Board and Treasurer are responsible for maintaining accounting records and preparing annual accounts that give a true and fair view.

9. The Joint Board and Treasurer have the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance and propriety that enable the Joint Board to deliver its objectives.

Managing the transition to 2022/23 audits

10. Audit appointments are usually for five years but were extended to six years due to Covid-19. 2021/22 is the final year of the current appointment and we will work closely with our successors to ensure a well-managed transition.

Annual accounts audit planning

Materiality

11. Materiality is an expression of the relative significance of a matter in the context of the annual accounts. We are required to plan our audit to determine with reasonable confidence whether the annual accounts are free from material misstatement. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement over both the amount and the nature of the misstatement.

Materiality levels for the 2021/22 audit

12. The materiality levels for the Joint Board are set out at [exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

2021/22 materiality levels for the Joint Board

Materiality levels	Amount
Planning materiality – This is the figure we calculate to assess the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. It has been set at 2% of gross expenditure based on the 2021/22 budgeted expenditure.	£85,000
Performance materiality – This acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality, this would indicate that further audit procedures should be considered. Using our professional judgement, we have assessed performance materiality at 75% of planning materiality.	£65,000
Reporting threshold – We are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount.	£5,000

Source: Audit Scotland

Significant risks of material misstatement to the annual accounts

13. Our risk assessment draws on our cumulative knowledge of the Joint Board, its major transaction streams, key systems of internal control and risk management processes. Also, it is informed by our discussions with management, meetings with internal audit, attendance at committees and a review of supporting information.

14. Based on our risk assessment process, we identified the following significant risks of material misstatement to the annual accounts. These are risks which have the greatest impact on our planned audit procedures. [Exhibit 2](#) summarises the

nature of the risk, the sources of assurance from management arrangements and the further audit procedures we plan to perform to gain assurance over the risk.

Exhibit 2

2021/22 significant risks of material misstatement to the annual accounts

Significant risk of material misstatement	Sources of management assurance	Planned audit response
<p>1. Risk of management override of controls</p> <p>As stated in International Standard on Auditing (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries and other adjustments. Test journals at the year-end and post-closing entries and focus on significant risk areas. Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business. We will assess any changes to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates compared to the prior year.
<p>2. Significant estimation and judgement – pension liability</p> <p>There is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and valuation of the pension liability included in the annual accounts.</p> <p>The valuation is based on specialist and management assumptions and changes in these can result in material changes to the pension liability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any significant estimates and judgements are explained in the Notes to the Accounts. Use of professional actuaries appointed by the Pension Fund to value pension liabilities. Detailed discussions between actuaries and management, including where necessary challenge by management of assumptions applied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the competence, capabilities, and objectivity of the actuary. Obtain an understanding of management's involvement in the valuation process, including the information they provide to the actuary, to assess if appropriate oversight and challenge has occurred. Critically assess the adequacy of the disclosures regarding the assumptions in relation to the valuation of the pension liability.

Source: Audit Scotland

15. Based on our assessment of the likelihood and magnitude of risk, we have assessed that there are currently no other risks of material misstatement for the

2021/22 audit of the Joint Board. We will keep this under review as our audit progresses. If our assessment of risk changes and we consider risks identified to be significant, we will communicate this to management and those charged with governance and revise our planned audit approach accordingly.

Consideration of the risks of fraud in the recognition of income and expenditure

16. As set out in International Standard on Auditing (UK) 240: *The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statement*, there is a presumed risk of fraud over the recognition of income. There is a risk that income may be misstated resulting in a material misstatement in the annual accounts. We have rebutted this risk for the Joint Board because most of the funding received is through requisitions and other income from constituent authorities or Government grants. These income streams are deemed to represent a low fraud risk.

17. In line with Practice Note 10: *Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom*, as most public-sector bodies are net spending bodies, the risk of material misstatement due to fraud related to expenditure recognition may in some cases be greater than the risk relating to income recognition. We have rebutted this risk for the Joint Board because the nature of expenditure is predominantly on staff costs, property costs and supplies and services. These expenditure streams are deemed to represent a low risk of being materially misstated due to fraud.

18. We have not, therefore, incorporated specific work into our audit plan in these areas over and above our standard audit procedures. Our audit testing will maintain an oversight of any unusual transactions or accounting entries.

Audit risk assessment process

19. Audit risk assessment is an iterative and dynamic process. Our assessment of risks set out in this plan may change as more information and evidence becomes available during the progress of the audit. Where such changes occur, we will advise management and where relevant, report them to those charged with governance.

Audit dimensions

Introduction

20. The [Code of Audit Practice](#) sets out the four dimensions that frame the wider scope of public sector audit. These are: financial management, financial sustainability, governance and transparency and value for money.

Audit dimensions

21. The Code of Audit Practice includes a provision relating to the audit of small audited bodies. In the light of the limited volume and lack of complexity of the financial transactions and its low-risk nature, we plan to apply the small audited body provision of the Code to the 2021/22 audit of the Joint Board.

22. Where the application of the full wider audit scope is judged by auditors not to be appropriate to an audited body then the annual audit work can focus on the appropriateness of the disclosures in the annual governance statement and the financial sustainability of the body and its services. We will report on these areas in our 2021/22 Annual Audit Report.

23. In addition to our work on the governance statement and financial sustainability, we will review and comment on the Joint Board's performance against service performance indicators agreed between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Assessors' Association.

Audit dimension risk

24. We have identified an audit dimension risk in the area set out in [exhibit 3](#). This exhibit sets out the risk, sources of assurance from management arrangements and the further audit procedures we plan to perform to gain assurances over the risk. The conclusions from this work will be reported in our 2021/22 Annual Audit Report.

Exhibit 3

2021/22 audit dimension risk

Audit dimension risk	Sources of management assurance	Planned audit response
<p>1. Workload demands - impact on performance</p> <p>There is a risk that there will be insufficient resources to meet the increased operational needs in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the recommendations arising from the Barclay review of non-domestic rates. potential increased workload arising from complex appeals including demands of the designated assessor responsibility in the valuation of electricity generation subjects. inability to attract suitably qualified staff due to market competition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workforce plan and resources are reviewed by management on a continuous basis. Management work closely with the Treasurer to the Board to identify any issues in both the short, medium and long term to ensure appropriate measures are taken to address these matters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of updates to the workforce plan. Ongoing discussions with key client staff. Review of key performance indicators. Consideration of the latest financial strategy

Source: Audit Scotland

Reporting arrangements, timetable, and audit fee

Reporting arrangements

25. Audit reporting is the visible output for the annual audit. All Annual Audit Plans and the outputs, as detailed in [exhibit 4](#), and any other outputs on matters of public interest, will be published on our website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk.

26. Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft management reports will be issued to the relevant officers to confirm factual accuracy.

27. We will provide an Independent Auditor's Report to the Joint Board and the Accounts Commission setting out our opinions on the annual accounts. We will provide the Joint Board and the Accounts Commission with an annual report on the audit containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit.

28. [Exhibit 4](#) outlines the target dates for our audit outputs, and we aim to issue the Independent Auditor's Report by the statutory deadline of 31 October 2022. We acknowledge this will be challenging due to the ongoing pressures and uncertainties caused by Covid-19. Due to the May 2022 Local Government elections, the board dates from June 2022 onwards are yet to be finalised. However, our audit work has been scheduled to ensure the planned statutory deadline is met.

Exhibit 4

2021/22 audit outputs

Audit Output	Audit Scotland target date	Joint Board Date
Annual Audit Plan	31 March 2022	7 March 2022
Independent Auditor's Report	31 October 2022	September 2022 – date TBC
Annual Audit Report	31 October 2022	September 2022 – date TBC

Source: Audit Scotland

Timetable



29. To support an efficient audit, it is critical that the timetable for producing the annual accounts for audit is achieved. We have included a proposed timetable for the audit at [exhibit 5](#) that has been discussed with management.

30. Covid-19 has had a considerable impact on the conduct and timeliness of the audit. We recognise that it is in the best interests of public accountability to get the reporting of audited accounts back to pre-pandemic timelines. To this end, 2021/22 is a transition year with the reporting deadline brought forward by one month relative to the two prior years. We are identifying ways to work more efficiently to expedite the 2021/22 audits whilst at the same time maintaining high standards of quality.

31. We will continue to work in close partnership with management with clarity over timescales and the requirement for high quality unaudited accounts and supporting working papers. Progress will be discussed with management and finance officers over the course of the audit.

Exhibit 5

Proposed annual accounts timetable

 Key stage	 Provisional Date
Consideration of the unaudited annual accounts by those charged with governance	By 30 June 2022
Latest submission date for the receipt of the unaudited annual accounts with complete working papers package.	By 30 June 2022
Latest date for final clearance meeting with the Treasurer	Date TBC
Issue of Letter of Representation and proposed Independent Auditor's Report	Date TBC
Agreement of audited and unsigned annual accounts	Date TBC
Issue of Annual Audit Report to those charged with governance.	Date TBC
Signed Independent Auditor's Report	By 31 October 2022

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

32. The proposed audit fee for the 2021/22 audit of Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board is £7,820 (2020/21: £7,610). In determining the audit fee, we have taken

account of the risk exposure of the Joint Board, the planned management assurances in place.

33. Where our audit cannot proceed as planned through, for example, late receipt of unaudited annual accounts, the absence of adequate supporting working papers, a supplementary fee may be levied. An additional fee may also be required in relation to any work or other significant exercises out with our planned audit activity.

Other matters

Internal audit

34. The Joint Board has a service level agreement with the internal audit function of the host authority, South Lanarkshire Council. The external auditor of the council has completed their assessment of the internal audit function. They found that the internal audit service operates in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and has sound documentation standards and reporting procedures in place.

35. We do not plan to place formal reliance on internal audit's work for our financial statements' responsibilities. However, to inform our audit dimensions work we will consider the findings of internal audit.

Independence and objectivity

36. Auditors appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland or Accounts Commission must comply with the [Code of Audit Practice](#) and relevant supporting guidance. When auditing the annual accounts, auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council and those of the professional accountancy bodies. These standards impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with these standards including an annual '*fit and proper*' declaration for all members of staff. The arrangements are overseen by the Director of Audit Services, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

37. The engagement lead (i.e. appointed auditor) for Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board is Andrew Kerr, Senior Audit Manager. Auditing and ethical standards require the appointed auditor to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of audit staff. We are not aware of any such relationships pertaining to the audit of the Joint Board.

Quality control

38. International Standard on Quality Control (UK) 1 (ISQC1) requires a system of quality control to be established, as part of financial audit procedures, to provide reasonable assurance that professional standards and regulatory and legal requirements are being complied with and that the independent auditor's report or opinion is appropriate in the circumstances.

39. The foundation of our quality framework is our Audit Guide, which incorporates the application of professional auditing, quality and ethical standards and the [Code of Audit Practice](#) (and supporting guidance) issued by Audit Scotland and approved by the Auditor General for Scotland. To ensure that we achieve the required quality standards, Audit Scotland conducts peer reviews and

internal quality reviews. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) have been commissioned to carry out external quality reviews.

40. As part of our commitment to quality and continuous improvement, Audit Scotland will periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. We welcome feedback at any time, and this may be directed to the engagement lead.

Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board

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