

Audit and Governance Committee
30 May 2019

PLANNED AUDIT FEE FOR ST HELENS COUNCIL 2019/20

Attached is a copy of a recent Grant Thornton fee letter in connection with the planned audit fee for the financial year 2019/20.

The scale fee covers:

- audit of the financial statements;
- work to reach a conclusion on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources (the value for money conclusion); and
- work on the whole of government accounts return.

Members are asked to formally note the letter.

Cath Fogarty
Strategic Director of Corporate Services

The Contact Officer for this report is Cath Fogarty, Corporate Services Department,
Town Hall, Victoria Square, St Helens, WA10 1HP
Telephone (01744) 673201

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following list of documents was used to complete this report and they are available for public inspection for four years from the date of the meeting, from the Contact Officer named above:

None

Our ref: 19-20 St Helens Council fees

Cath Fogarty
Strategic Director of Corporate Services
St Helens Council
Town Hall
Victoria Square
ST HELENS
Merseyside
WA10 1HP

Grant Thornton UK LLP
4 Hardman Square
Spinningfields
Manchester M3 3EB
T +44 (0)161 953 6900
F +44 (0)161 953 6901
www.grant-thornton.co.uk

18 April 2019

Dear Cath

Planned audit fee for 2019/20

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act) provides the framework for local public audit. Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) has been specified as an appointing person under the Act and the Local Authority (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 and had the power to make auditor appointments for audits of opted- in local government bodies from 2018/19.

For opted- in bodies PSAA's responsibilities also include setting fees and monitoring the quality of auditors' work. Further information on PSAA and its responsibilities are available on the [PSAA website](#).

All grant work, including housing benefit certification, falls outside the PSAA contract, as PSAA no longer has the power to make appointments for assurance on grant claims and returns. Any assurance engagements will therefore be subject to separate engagements agreed between the grant-paying body, the Council and ourselves and separate fees agreed with the Council.

Scale fee

PSAA published the 2019/20 scale fees for opted-in bodies at the end of March 2019, following a consultation process. Individual scale fees have been maintained at the same level as in 2018/19, unless there were specific circumstances which required otherwise. Further details are set out on the [PSAA website](#). The Council's scale fee for 2019/20 has been set by PSAA at £80,932, which is the same as in 2018/19.

PSAA prescribes that 'scale fees are based on the expectation that audited bodies are able to provide the auditor with complete and materially accurate financial statements, with supporting working papers, within agreed timeframes'.

The audit planning process for 2019/20, including the risk assessment, will continue as the year progresses and fees will be reviewed and updated as necessary as our work progresses.

Scope of the audit fee

There are no changes to the overall work programme for audits of local government audited bodies for 2019/20. Under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office (NAO) is responsible for publishing the statutory Code of Audit Practice and guidance for auditors. Audits of the accounts for 2019/20 will be undertaken under this Code. Further information on the NAO Code and guidance is available on the [NAO website](#).

The scale fee covers:

- our audit of your financial statements;
-

- our work to reach a conclusion on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources (the value for money conclusion); and
- our work on your whole of government accounts return.

PSAA will agree fees for considering objections from the point at which auditors accept an objection as valid, or any special investigations, as a variation to the scale fee.

Value for Money conclusion

The Code requires us to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VfM) conclusion.

The NAO issued its latest guidance for auditors on value for money work in November 2017. The guidance states that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has put proper arrangements in place.

The NAO guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

Billing schedule

Fees will be billed as follows:

| Main Audit fee | £ |
|----------------|---------------|
| September 2019 | 20,233 |
| December 2019 | 20,233 |
| March 2020 | 20,233 |
| June 2020 | 20,233 |
| Total | 80,932 |

Outline audit timetable

We will undertake our audit planning and interim audit procedures from November 2019 to March 2020. Upon completion of this phase of our work we will issue a detailed audit plan setting out our findings and details of our audit approach. Our final accounts audit and work on the VfM conclusion will be completed during June and July 2020 and work on the whole of government accounts return in August 2020.

| Phase of work | Timing | Outputs | Comments |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--|--|
| Audit planning and interim audit | Nov 19 to Mar 20 | Audit plan | The plan summarises the findings of our audit planning and our approach to the audit of the Council's accounts and VfM. |
| Final accounts audit | June to July 20 | Audit Findings (Report to those charged with governance) | This report sets out the findings of our accounts audit and VfM work for the consideration of those charged with governance. |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--|--|
| VfM conclusion | Nov 19 to July 20 | Audit Findings (Report to those charged with governance) | As above |
| Whole of government accounts | July/August 20 | Opinion on the WGA return | This work will be completed alongside the accounts audit. |
| Annual audit letter | September 20 | Annual audit letter to the Council | The letter will summarise the findings of all aspects of our work. |

Our team

The key members of the audit team for 2019/20 are:

| | Name | Phone Number | E-mail |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Engagement Lead | Mark Heap | 07880 456204 | mark.r.heap@uk.gt.com |
| Engagement Manager | Helen Stevenson | 07880 456209 | helen.l.stevenson@uk.gt.com |
| In Charge Auditor | Dianne Webster | 0161 214 6364 | dianne.m.webster@uk.gt.com |

Additional work

The scale fee excludes any work requested by the Council that we may agree to undertake outside of our Code audit. Each additional piece of work will be separately agreed, and a detailed project specification and fee agreed with the Council.

Quality assurance

We are committed to providing you with a high quality service. If you are in any way dissatisfied or would like to discuss how we can improve our service, please contact me in the first instance. Alternatively, you may wish to contact Sarah Howard, our Public Sector Assurance regional lead partner, via sarah.howard@uk.gt.com.

Yours sincerely

Mark Heap

Mark Heap
Engagement Lead
Grant Thornton UK LLP