

Middlesbrough Council Audit Results Report

Year ended 31 March 2018

Updated September 2018

The EY logo consists of the letters 'EY' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A yellow triangle is positioned above the 'Y', pointing downwards towards the top right corner of the logo.

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September 2018

Dear Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee Members

We are pleased to attach our updated Audit Results Report for the forthcoming meeting of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee. This report summarises our conclusions in relation to the audit of Middlesbrough Council ("the Council") for 2017/18.

We completed our financial statements audit of the Council for the year ended 31 March 2018, and reported on this to the meeting held on 26 July 2018. We also completed our value for money testing in relation to the significant risk that was set out in our Audit Planning Report, presented to the March 2018 meeting, and reported on this to the meeting held on 26 July 2018. As previously communicated, we received new information relating to other arrangements at the Council and therefore we were unable to fully conclude our value for money procedures at that time. We have now completed our considerations, and have included some recommendations relating to governance procedures within Section 5 of this report.

This report is intended solely for the use of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee, other members of the Council, and senior management. It should not be used for any other purpose or given to any other party without obtaining our written consent.

We would like to thank your staff for their help during the engagement.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee meeting on 26 September 2018.

Yours faithfully



Nicola Wright
Associate Partner
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
Encl

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In April 2015, Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (“PSAA”) issued the “Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies”. It is available from the PSAA website (www.PSAA.co.uk). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas. The “Terms of Appointment (updated February 2017)” issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (“the Code”) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature. This report is made solely to the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee and management of Middlesbrough Council in accordance with the Statement of Responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee and management of Middlesbrough Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee and management of Middlesbrough Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01 Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Scope update

In our Audit Planning Report presented at the 22 March 2018 Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee meeting, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements.

We updated our planning materiality assessment using the draft 2017/18 financial statements and have also reconsidered our risk assessment. Based on our materiality measure of gross expenditure on provision of services, we have updated our overall materiality assessment to £9m (Audit Planning Report £10.4m). This results in updated performance materiality, at 75% of overall materiality, of £3.9m, and an updated threshold for reporting of £0.45m.

Status of the financial statements audit

We completed our audit of the Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2018 and performed the procedures outlined in our Audit Planning Report. We issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements in the form which appears in Section 3.

Audit differences

There were no unadjusted audit differences arising from our audit. There were some changes made to the draft financial statements and we summarise these in Section 4 of this report.

Objections

We have received no objections to the 2017/18 accounts from members of the public.

Control observations

We have adopted a fully substantive approach, so have not tested the operation of controls. Through our audit work, we have identified three control improvement areas in relation to the governance arrangements for asset disposals and other governance matters. These are set out in more detail in Section 7.

Executive Summary

Areas of audit focus

Our Audit Planning Report identified key areas of focus for our audit of the Council's financial statements. This report sets out our observations and conclusions, including our views on areas which might be conservative, and where there is potential risk and exposure. We summarise our consideration of these matters, and any others identified, in Section 2 of this report.

We ask you to review these and any other matters in this report to ensure:

- There are no other considerations or matters that could have an impact on these issues;
- You agree with the resolution of the issue; and
- There are no other significant issues to be considered.

There are no matters, apart from those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee.

Value for money

We have considered your arrangements to take informed decisions; deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and work with partners and other third parties. In our Audit Planning Report, we identified one significant risk in relation to property disposal governance arrangements.

Based on the work performed, we have no matters to report in relation to your property disposal governance arrangements. We also considered additional information submitted to us in relation to other arrangements at the Council. As a result, we have made some recommendations around governance matters within Section 5 of this report. We propose to issue an unmodified value for money conclusion, but draw the attention of the Committee to these recommendations.

Other reporting issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement for consistency with our knowledge of the Council. We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement complies with guidance and is consistent with other information from our audit of the financial statements. We have however suggested some updates to the wording including in the Annual Governance Statement which has been actioned by Management. We therefore do not have any other matters to report.

We are required to perform procedures required by the National Audit Office ("NAO") on the Whole of Government Accounts submission. This work is ongoing at the time of writing this report.

We have no other matters to report.

Independence

Please refer to Section 9 for our update on Independence.



02

Areas of Audit Focus



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition

What is the risk?

Under ISA 240, there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to balance their annual budget and are operating in a financially challenged environment with reducing levels of government funding and increasing demand for services. Achievement of budget is critical to minimising the impact and usage of the Council's usable reserves and provides a basis for the following year's budget. Any deficit outturn against the budget is therefore not a desirable outcome for the Council and management, and therefore this desire to achieve budget increases the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated.

What judgements are we focused on?

The main judgements we focussed on were:

- Completeness of provisions in the accounts;
- Sundry creditors including year end accruals totalling £38.433m; and
- Valuation of short term debtors, including income accruals of £37.888m

What did we do?

- We reviewed and tested revenue and expenditure recognition policies;
- We reviewed, discussed with management, and tested (where appropriate) any accounting estimates on revenue or expenditure recognition for evidence of bias;
- We tested material revenue and expenditure streams, including testing revenue and capital expenditure to ensure it has been correctly classified; and
- We reviewed a sample of transactions recorded in the ledger and payments made from the bank account post year-end and confirmed that the associated income and expenditure has been recorded in the correct period.

What are our conclusions?

Our testing has not identified any material misstatements relating to revenue and expenditure recognition.

We did not identify any areas of significant estimation or judgement as part of our audit work in these areas.



Significant risk

Misstatements due to fraud or error

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.

As identified in ISA 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What judgements are we focused on?

Our work in this area focussed on reviewing manual journal entries, through the use of our data analytics tools, as this is the way in management would most easily be able to manipulate accounting records.

What did we do?

- We identified fraud risks during the planning stage of our audit;
- We inquired of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks;
- We developed our understanding of the oversight given by those charged with governance over management's processes over fraud;
- We considered the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud;
- We determined an appropriate strategy to address those identified risks of fraud; and
- We performed mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments in the preparation of the financial statements.

What are our conclusions?

We did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside of the Council's normal course of business.

We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied.

We did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the Council's normal course of business.





Areas of Audit Focus

Other Area of Audit Focus

Valuation of land and buildings

What is the risk?

The fair value of Property, Plant and Equipment (“PPE”) represents a significant balance in the Council’s accounts and is subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges.

Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.

What judgements are we focused on?

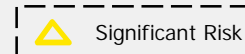
Our work in this area focussed on ensuring that the assumptions used by the property valuers in relation to the value of PPE were free from material misstatement.

What did we do?

- We have considered the work performed by the Council’s valuer, Kier, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work;
- We have sample tested key asset information used by the valuers in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support valuations based on price per square metre);
- We have considered the annual cycle of valuations to ensure that assets have been valued within a five year rolling programme as required by the CIPFA Code;
- We have reviewed assets not subject to valuation in 2017/18 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated;
- We have considered changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation; and
- We have tested accounting entries to ensure they have been correctly processed in the financial statements.

What are our conclusions?

We have no matters to bring to your attention relating to the valuation of land, building and investment properties.





Areas of Audit Focus

Other Area of Audit Focus

Pension Liability Valuation

What is the risk?

The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme. The Council's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet.

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the Council. Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

What did we do?

- We have liaised with the auditor for Teesside Pension Fund, Mazars, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to the Council.
- We have assessed the work of the Pension Fund actuary (AON) including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PwC – Consulting Actuaries commissioned by PSAA for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team; and
- Reviewed and tested the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

What are our conclusions?

We have no matters to bring to your attention relating to the valuation of the pension liability.



Areas of Audit Focus

Other matters

IFRS 15 – Revenue From Contracts With Customers

- The applicable accounting framework is CIPFA's annual Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (which is IFRS based as adapted for Local Authorities). The 2018/19 Code will apply to accounting periods starting on or after 1 April 2018. The 2018/19 Code will determine how IFRS 15 Revenue from Customers with Contracts will be adopted by local government bodies.
- It is our view, that IFRS 15 will not have a material impact on this Council's financial statements. The vast majority of the Council's income streams are taxation or grant based. The following income streams which are within the scope of IFRS 15 are immaterial to the Council:
 - fees and charges for services under statutory requirements;
 - sale of goods provided by the Council; and
 - charges for services provided by a local authority.
- We look forward to working with management to ensure any relevant changes in requirements are considered and dealt with effectively.



03 Audit Report



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Middlesbrough Council for the year ended 31 March 2018 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The financial statements comprise the:

- Movement in Reserves Statement;
- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Balance Sheet;
- Cash Flow Statement;
- Expenditure and Funding Statement;
- Expenditure and Funding Analysed by Nature;
- Notes to the Core Financial Statements 1 to 46;
- Collection Fund Statement and the related notes 1 to 4;

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Middlesbrough Council as at 31 March 2018 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the Group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) AGN01, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the Group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) AGN01, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the Chief Finance Officer's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Chief Finance Officer has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Council's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Narrative Report by the Chief Finance Officer set out on pages 4-17, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the other information.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of the other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in November 2017, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, Middlesbrough Council put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2018.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- in our opinion the Annual Governance Statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Council;
- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We have nothing to report in these respects

Responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities set out on page 18, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Council either intends to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in November 2017, as to whether Middlesbrough Council had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined this criterion as that necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether Middlesbrough Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2018.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, Middlesbrough Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) requires us to report to you our conclusion relating to proper arrangements.

We report if significant matters have come to our attention which prevent us from concluding that the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts of Middlesbrough Council in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Middlesbrough Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Council and the Council's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Nicola Wright (Key Audit Partner)
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)
Newcastle upon Tyne

The maintenance and integrity of the Middlesbrough Council web site is the responsibility of the directors; the work carried out by the auditors does not involve consideration of these matters and, accordingly, the auditors accept no responsibility for any changes that may have occurred to the financial statements since they were initially presented on the web site.

Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions



04 Audit Differences





Audit Differences

In the normal course of any audit, we identify misstatements between amounts we believe should be recorded in the financial statements and the disclosures and amounts actually recorded. These differences are classified as “known” or “judgemental”. Known differences represent items that can be accurately quantified and relate to a definite set of facts or circumstances. Judgemental differences generally involve estimation and relate to facts or circumstances that are uncertain or open to interpretation.

Summary of adjusted differences

Corrected misstatements

We highlight the following misstatements in the disclosures identified during the audit. These have been corrected by management:

- Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park (TAMP) Capital Grant – The Council received a capital grant of £7.2m from the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to support the development of the TAMP. TVCA applied a number of conditions to the grant, which mean that until these conditions are met the grant can not be recognised. As at 31 March 2018 conditions for £3.7m of the grant had not been met and as a result this should not be recognised as income in the year. However, in the draft accounts the Council had included this £3.7m as grant income in year and therefore this incorrect treatment required amendment. This has been agreed with management who have amended the financial statements.
- Note 36 – Officers’ Remuneration – Two inconsistencies were identified between payroll records and the disclosure. These have been agreed with management who have amended the financial statements.
- Note 36 – Officers’ Remuneration – Exit Packages – One error has been identified in the exit packages disclosure. The value of this error was £9k and relates to the employee’s redundancy payment being incorrectly split into two amounts in the note. Overall the total value of the exit package was correct but the banding included in the note was wrong. We subsequently extended our exit packages sample and identified no further errors. This has been amended by management.
- Accruals de-minimis level – The Council have introduced a £10k accruals de-minimis level, which means that the Council now only accrues for expenditure above £10k. However, this policy was not included in the draft financial statements. This has been discussed with management who have agreed to amend the financial statements to include this policy.
- There have been a number of typographical and consistency errors included in the financial statements. All differences have been amended by management.

No unadjusted misstatements have been identified.



05

Value for Money Risks





Background

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as our value for money conclusion.

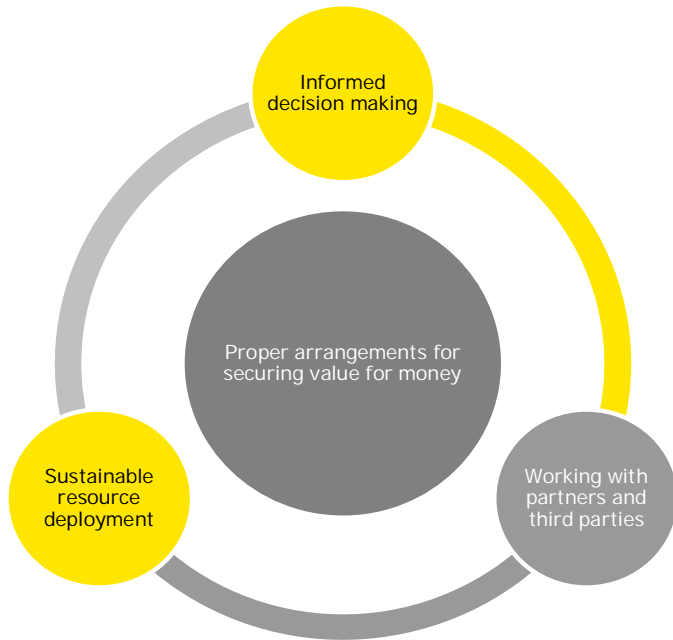
For 2017/18 this is based on the overall evaluation criterion:

"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"

Proper arrangements are defined by statutory guidance issued by the National Audit Office. They comprise your arrangements to:

- Take informed decisions;
- Deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and
- Work with partners and other third parties.

In considering your proper arrangements, we will draw on the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for local government to ensure that our assessment is made against a framework that you are already required to have in place and to report on through documents such as your annual governance statement.



Overall conclusion

We identified one significant risk around the value for money arrangements as part of our audit planning work. The tables on the following pages present our findings in response to the risk in our Audit Planning Report and any other significant weaknesses or issues we want to bring to your attention.

Based on the work performed, we have no matters to report about your arrangements in relation to the significant risk highlighted in our Audit Planning Report.

During the year, we also received additional information in relation to other arrangements at the Council. We have now completed our review of this information and have identified two recommendations for the Council to implement, which are detailed on page 24.

We would also like to draw the attention of the Committee to a further matter of note. We have observed a growing level of tension between some Councillors and senior officers, that has the potential to seriously impact upon governance arrangements at the Council going forward. We have provided further detail in relation to this issue, as well as a recommendation for the Council to consider on page 25.

Following the conclusion of our procedures above, we expect to issue an unmodified value for money conclusion.



Value for Money Risks

We are only required to determine whether there are any risks that we consider significant within the Code of Audit Practice, where risk is defined as:

“A matter is significant if, in the auditor’s professional view, it is reasonable to conclude that the matter would be of interest to the audited body or the wider public”

Our risk assessment supports the planning of enough work to deliver a safe conclusion on your arrangements to secure value for money, and enables us to determine the nature and extent of any further work needed. If we do not identify a significant risk we do not need to carry out further work.

The table below presents the findings of our work in response to the risks areas in our Audit Planning Report.

What is the significant value for money risk?	What arrangements did the risk affect?	What are our findings?
<p>Property Disposal Governance Arrangements - During 2016/17, the Council introduced a new property disposal policy, to resolve weaknesses that had been identified in relation to property disposal governance arrangements in previous years.</p> <p>Our testing of this policy in 2016/17 identified that improvements had been made. However, as at 31 March 2017, these improvements were not sufficiently embedded, which resulted in us issuing the Council with an ‘except for’ VFM conclusion.</p> <p>Due to the ‘except for’ conclusion in the prior year, we included this area as a significant risk in 2017/18 and have performed additional work to establish whether the property disposal policy is now sufficiently embedded.</p>	<p>Take informed decisions</p>	<p>We completed the following work in this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We reviewed the Asset Disposal Policy presented to the Executive Sub Committee for Property on 7 December 2016. We then requested further information to support compliance with specific areas of the policy; • We selected a sample of eight active and eight pipeline disposals and tested these assets to ensure that the process undertaken so far by the Council was in line with the Asset Disposal Policy; and • We considered Internal Audit’s findings in relation to asset disposal governance arrangements at the Council. <p>Our testing of the arrangements identified one recommendation. This relates to establishing a clear definition of the difference between active and pipeline disposals in the Asset Disposal Policy. Further details regarding this control recommendation can be viewed at Section 7 of the report.</p> <p>From the testing performed, no further material weaknesses were identified. As a result, we are satisfied that there is no impact upon our VFM conclusion from this risk.</p>



Value for Money Risks – Other matters

In June 2018, we received additional information relating to the governance arrangements at the Council. Following review of the additional information received, we have identified the following areas where we believe improvements are required in the Council’s governance arrangements.

What are our findings?	What arrangements did the risk affect?	Recommendation
<p>Due diligence procedures - Concerns were highlighted regarding the due diligence procedures performed by the Council when entering into new arrangements during 2017/18.</p> <p>We tested two new arrangements that the Council entered into during 2017/18 and identified that the Council completed credit checks for the new parties. However, we identified that there is no “standard” due diligence policy or procedures.</p>	<p>Take informed decisions</p>	<p>We recommend that the Council introduce a standard approach to due diligence that details the minimum due diligence procedures that the Council is expected to complete, as well as who is required to review and approve the due diligence procedures that have been completed and how these are communicated as part of the formal reporting process.</p>
<p>One stop shop - The One Stop Shop system is used by the Council, so that Councillors can request further information or action from officers. Concerns were highlighted that some of the requests raised by Councillors are not responded to. In order to verify if this was the case, we performed the following procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We obtained copies of the Members’ Handbook setting out how the One Stop Shop operates; • For the One Stop Shop requests highlighted in the information provided, we verified with officers if responses had been provided; and • We obtained details of the number of One Stop Shop requests made during 2017/18. <p>From our testing, we identified that there is a system to ensure that all requests are responded to. However, due to the volume of requests, officers stated that it can be challenging to keep track of the responses provided. This is exacerbated by a large volume of requests from individual Councillors, and follow up queries where officers may consider that the query has been closed, but this has not been clearly communicated. As a result some queries are not formally responded to via the One Stop Shop system.</p>	<p>Take informed decisions</p>	<p>We recommend that the Council undertakes an Internal Audit of the One Stop Shop process in order to identify improvements in the controls and processes. It is our view that the performance of this review will strengthen the processes, helping to ensure that no requests go unanswered, and also providing assurance on the operation of the system.</p> <p>This review should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response times and how these are monitored; • Monitoring of unanswered requests; and • Processes where information is not provided and documentation of why this has occurred, ensuring an audit trail is kept.



Value for Money Risks – Other matters

During the 2017/18 audit cycle, we received a high volume of correspondence from Councillors, highlighting governance concerns at the Council. We assessed all information received and, where necessary, completed additional testing in order to assess any impact upon our value for money conclusion. The information received highlighted that the working relationship between some Councillors and senior officers is strained and we have commented on this further below.

What are our findings?	What arrangements did the risk affect?	Recommendation
<p>Councillor and Senior Officer relationships - Based on our review and testing of the information provided during 2017/18, as well as our attendance at Council meetings during the year, we have observed that the relationship between some Councillors and senior officers is strained.</p> <p>This appears to be due to a mutual level of mistrust. Officers consider that the level of challenge provided by some Councillors is excessive. Officers have also noted that they are required to spend disproportionate amounts of time on issues that, in their opinion, have been previously addressed. We note that concerns about the style of communication between members and officers have also been expressed that have resulted in Standards Committee action.</p> <p>In contrast, some members consider that the information provided by officers, in relation to their challenge, is in some cases not adequate or is deliberately withheld, and as a result they are unable to make informed decisions. This has also led to members sharing concerns directly with internal and external audit regarding ongoing matters as a way to address their concerns, rather than being confident to address matters with the responsible statutory officers and ultimately the head of paid service.</p> <p>We have assessed the concerns of both the members and officers and have not identified any material governance failings that impact upon our 2017/18 value for money conclusion. However, we have observed and consider that the level of mistrust is directly impacting upon the efficient operation of the Council, and in our opinion a resolution to these differences is urgently required, to reduce the potential for such failings in the future. This will involve action from both members and officers.</p>	<p>Take informed decisions</p>	<p>We recommend that an action plan is developed to address the cultural and relationship issues that exist. It is for the parties involved to decide how they wish to proceed, however we recommend externally facilitated sessions with experts in conflict management, where the concerns of both parties can be discussed and resolutions identified.</p>



06 Other reporting issues



Other reporting issues

Consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement

We must give an opinion on the consistency of the financial and non-financial information in Narrative Report by the Chief Finance Officer with the audited financial statements. We are satisfied that the Narrative Report is consistent with the audited financial statements.

We must also review the Annual Governance Statement for completeness of disclosures, consistency with other information from our work, and whether it complies with relevant guidance. We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement complies with guidance and is consistent with other information from our audit of the financial statements. We have suggested some updates to the wording including in the Annual Governance Statement which has been actioned by Management. We therefore do not have any other matters to report.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of our review, and the nature of our report, is specified by the National Audit Office.

Our work in this area is ongoing.

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Council to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. "a report in the public interest"). We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

We also have a duty to make written recommendations to the Council, copied to the Secretary of State, and take action in accordance with our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. We did not identify any issues.

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Council's financial reporting process. We have nothing to report to you in relation this this



07

Assessment of Control Environment



Assessment of Control Environment

Assessment of Control Environment

It is the responsibility of the Council to develop and implement systems of internal financial control and to put in place proper arrangements to monitor their adequacy and effectiveness in practice. Our responsibility as your auditor is to consider whether the Council has put adequate arrangements in place to satisfy itself that the systems of internal financial control are both adequate and effective in practice.

Financial Statements audit

As part of our audit of the financial statements, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. As we have adopted a fully substantive approach, we have therefore not tested the operation of controls.

Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control.

We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements of which you are not aware.

Value for Money audit

In our Audit Planning Report, which was presented at the March 2018 Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee, we highlighted one significant risk in relation to property disposal governance arrangements at the Council. As a result, we performed additional testing to gain assurance that the governance arrangements in place were adequate. The results of our testing can be viewed in Section 5 of this report.

After the completion of our testing, we have identified one control recommendation. This relates to the Council developing clear definitions of what active and pipeline disposals are and then including these definitions in the Asset Disposal Policy.

This recommendation has been raised as during our testing we selected a sample of active and pipeline disposals and found a lack of clarity in relation to how some disposals were classified. Nevertheless, we are satisfied that the Council followed the Asset Disposal Policy, but feel that this additional clarification would help the process in the future.



08 Data Analytics



Use of Data Analytics in the Audit

Analytics Driven Audit

Data analytics

We used our data analysers to enable us to capture entire populations of your financial data. These analysers:

- Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be the focus of our substantive audit tests; and
- Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than traditional, random sampling techniques.

In 2017/18, our use of these analysers in the Council's audit included testing journal entries and employee related expenses, to identify and focus our testing on those entries we deem to have the highest inherent risk to the audit.

We capture the data through our formal data requests and the data transfer takes place on a secured EY website. These are in line with our EY data protection policies which are designed to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of business and personal information.

Journal Entry Analysis

We obtain downloads of all the Council's financial ledger transactions posted in the year. We perform completeness analysis over the data, reconciling the sum of transactions to the movement in the trial balances and financial statements to ensure we have captured all data. Our analysers then review and sort transactions, allowing us to more effectively identify and test journals that we consider to be higher risk, as identified in our audit planning report.

Payroll Analysis

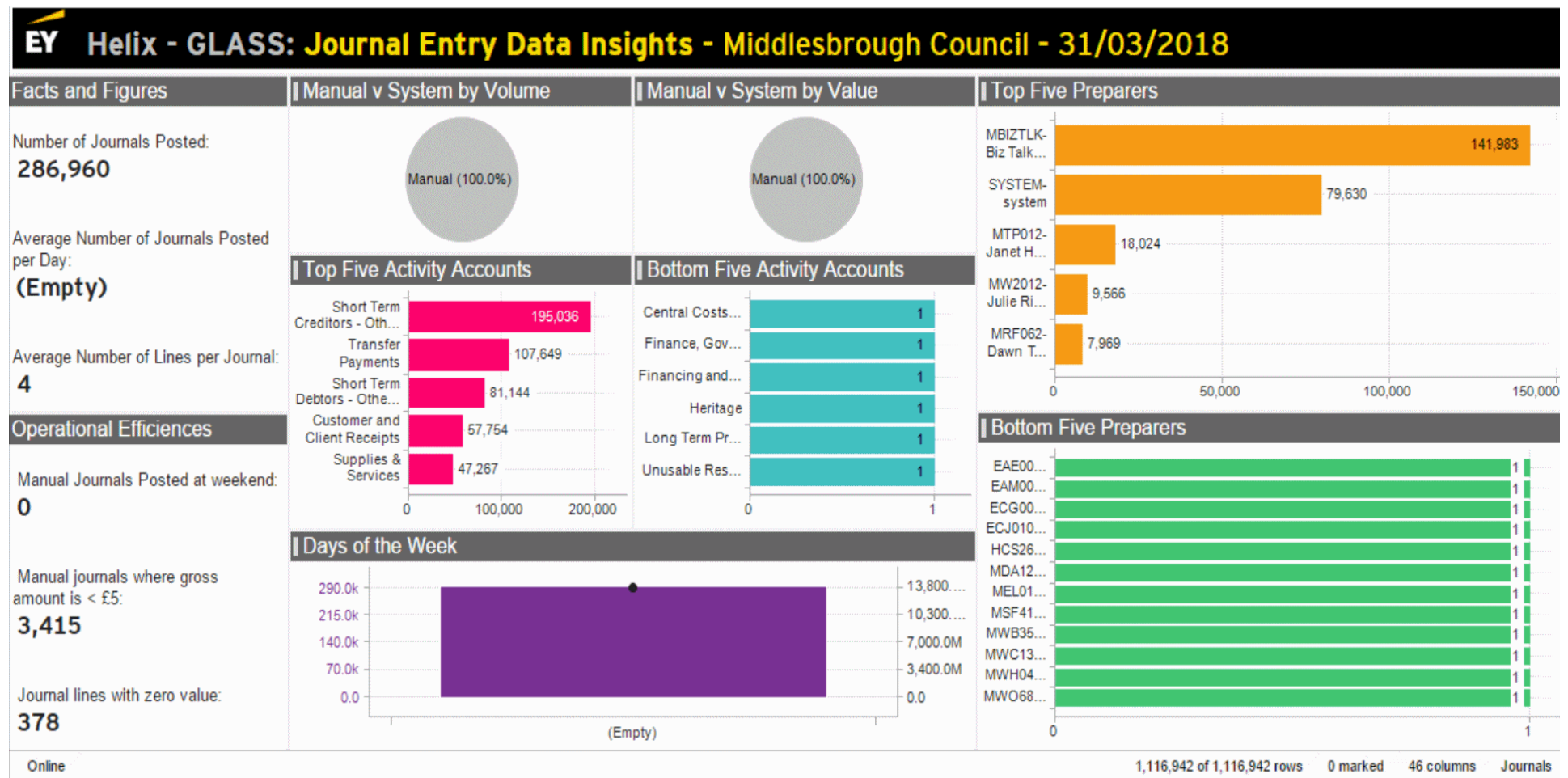
We also use our analysers in our payroll testing. We obtain all payroll transactions posted in the year from the payroll system and perform completeness analysis over the data, including reconciling the total amount to the General Ledger trial balance. We then analyse the data against a number of specifically designed procedures. These include analysis of payroll costs by month to identify any variances from established expectations, as well as more detailed transactional interrogation.



Data Analytics

Journal Entry Data Insights

The graphic outlined below summarises the Council's journal population for 2017/18. We review journals by certain risk based criteria to focus on higher risk transactions, such as journals posted manually by management, those posted around the year-end, those with unusual debit and credit relationships, and those posted by individuals we would not expect to be entering transactions. The purpose of this approach is to provide a more effective, risk focused approach to auditing journal entries, minimising the burden of compliance on management by minimising randomly selected samples.





Journal Entry Testing

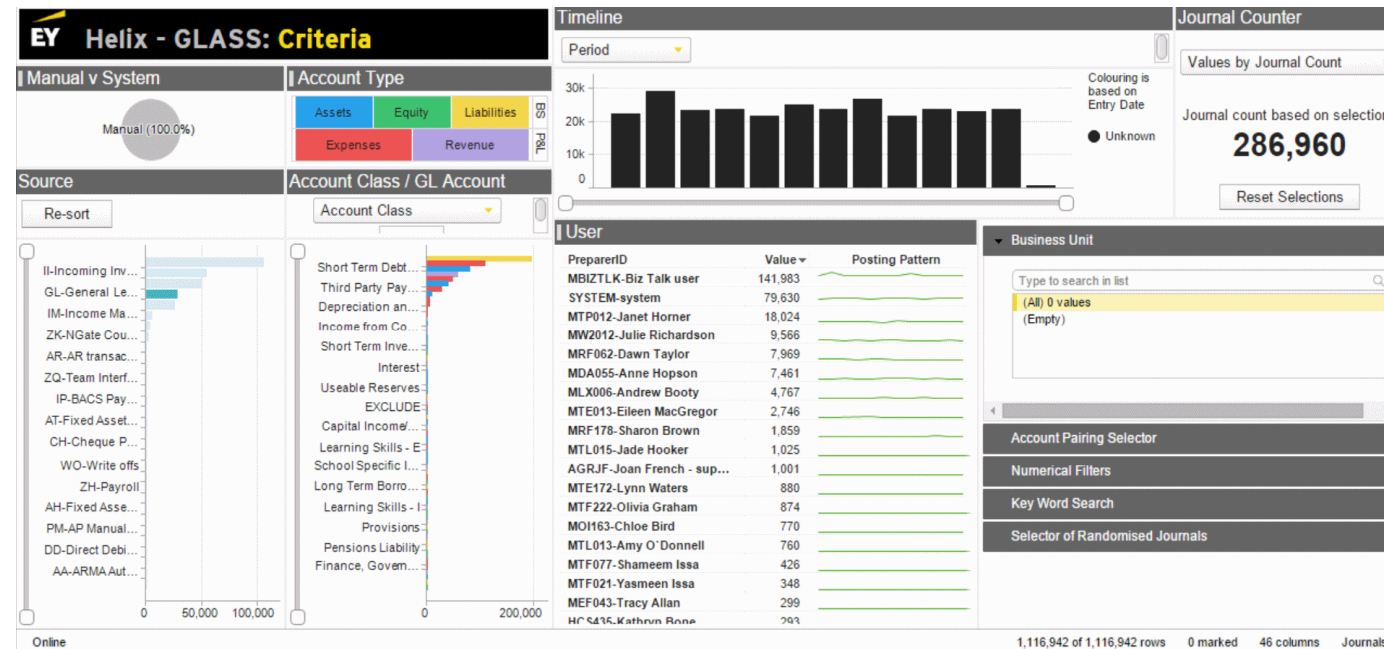
What is the risk?

In line with ISA 240 we are required to test the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements.

What judgements are we focused on?

Using our analysers we are able to take a risk based approach to identify journals with a higher risk of management override, as outlined in our audit planning report.

Journal entry data criteria – Middlesbrough Council – 31 March 2018



What did we do?

We obtained general ledger journal data for the period and have used our analysers to identify characteristics typically associated with inappropriate journal entries or adjustments, and journals entries that are subject to a higher risk of management override.

We then performed tests on the journals identified to determine if they were appropriate and reasonable.

What are our conclusions?

We isolated a sub set of journals for further investigation and obtained supporting evidence to verify the posting of these transactions and concluded that they were appropriately stated.



09

Independence

Confirmation

We confirm that there are no changes in our assessment of independence since our confirmation in our Audit Planning Report presented in March 2018.

We complied with the FRC's Ethical Standards and the requirements of the PSAA's Terms of Appointment. In our professional judgement the firm is independent and the objectivity of the audit engagement associate partner and audit staff has not been compromised within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements.

We consider that our independence in this context is a matter which you should review, as well as us. It is important that you and your Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee consider the facts known to you and come to a view. If you would like to discuss any matters concerning our independence, we will be pleased to do this at the meeting of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee on 26 July 2018.

Fee analysis

As part of our reporting on our independence, we set out below a summary of the fees paid for the year ended 31 March 2018.

	Planned fee 2017/18	Scale fee 2017/18	Final Fee 2016/17
	£	£	£
Fee - Code work	115,037	115,037	115,037
Additional Fee - VFM extended procedures	25,000*	-	50,000
Fee - Housing Benefit certification work	10,571	10,571	10,335
Additional Fee - Housing Benefit certification work	TBC	-	3,600
Total audit	145,608	125,608	178,972
Non audit work - other certification work	4,000	-	4,000
Total fees	149,608	125,608	182,972

* We are in the process of requesting a scale fee variation for the additional work undertaken in respect of the Value for Money risks in 2017/18. This fee has been agreed with officers and we are in the process of informing the PSAA.







10 Appendices

Appendix A

Required communications with the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee




There are certain communications that we must provide to the Audit Committees of UK clients. We have detailed these here together with a reference of when and where they were covered:

 Our Reporting to you		
Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter.	Audit Planning Report – presented March 2018
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified.	Audit Planning Report – presented March 2018
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures • Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit • Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management • Written representations that we are seeking • Expected modifications to the audit report • Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit Planning Report – presented March 2018

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty • Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements • The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	No conditions or events were identified, either individually or together to raise any doubt about Middlesbrough Council's ability to continue for the 12 months from the date of our report.
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion • The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods • A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected • Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit Results Report - July 2018
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiry of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial 	Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee - July 2018
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiries of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the Council • Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist • Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the Council, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements. • The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected • Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee responsibility. 	<p>Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee - July 2018</p> <p>Audit Results Report - July 2018</p>

Appendix A

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the Council’s related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-disclosure by management • Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions • Disagreement over disclosures • Non-compliance with laws and regulations • Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the Council 	Audit Results Report – July 2018
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY’s, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner’s consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principal threats • Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness • An overall assessment of threats and safeguards • Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communications whenever significant judgments are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of any inconsistencies between the Ethical Standard and Council’s policy for the provision of non-audit services, and any apparent breach of that policy • Details of any contingent fee arrangements for non-audit services • Where EY has determined it is appropriate to apply more restrictive rules than permitted under the Ethical Standard • The Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee should also be provided an opportunity to discuss matters affecting auditor independence 	<p>Audit Planning Report – presented March 2018</p> <p>Audit Results Report – July 2018</p>

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management's refusal for us to request confirmations Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures. 	We have received all requested confirmations.
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur Enquiry of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee may be aware of 	We have asked management and those charged with governance. We have not identified any material instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations.
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit. 	Audit Results Report – July 2018
Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance 	Audit Results Report – July 2018
Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise 	Audit Results Report – July 2018

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit Results Report - July 2018
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakdown of fee information when the audit planning report is agreed Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit Any non-audit work 	Audit Planning Report - presented March 2018 Audit Results Report - July 2018
Certification work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of certification work 	Certification Report - later in 2018

Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter

Ernst & Young LLP
Citygate
St James' Boulevard
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8HW

Dear Sirs

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Middlesbrough Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2018. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as of 31 March 2018 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Council in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18. We have approved the financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Council, we believe that the Council has a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18, that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
5. There are no unadjusted audit differences identified during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented.

Management representation letter

Management representation letter

B. Non-Compliance with Law and Regulations, including Fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the Council's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible to identify and address any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.

3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.

4. We have disclosed to you, and provided you full access to information and any internal investigations relating to all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud, known to us that may have affected the Council (regardless of the source or form and including, without limitation, allegations by "whistleblowers") including non-compliance matters:

- involving financial statements;
- related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the Council's financial statements;
- related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Council's activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;

- involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or
- in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:

- a) access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- b) additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
- c) unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Council and committees (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: [date]

Management representation letter

Management representation letter

4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the period end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.

5. We believe that the significant assumptions we used in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.

6. We have disclosed to you, and the Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the financial statements.

2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.

3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and confirm that we have not given any guarantees to third parties.

E. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events subsequent to the period end which require adjustment of, or disclosure in, the financial statements or notes thereto.

F. Other Information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the Narrative Statement by the Finance Director.

2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Financial Officer

Chair of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee

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ED None

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