

Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Shared Assurance Services	Governance Committee	21st June 2017

COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL AUDITING STANDARDS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Governance Committee, as “those charged with governance” and the Chief Executive on behalf of “management” to provide a range of assurances being sought by the external auditors – Grant Thornton as part of their audit of the Council’s 2016/17 accounts. The specific assurances being sought by Grant Thornton are set out in the two letters appended to this report.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That, subject to consideration by the Committee, the Chairman of the Governance Committee and the Chief Executive be enabled to sign the assurance letters requested by Grant Thornton.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. Grant Thornton recently wrote to the Chief Executive (Appendix A) and the Chair of the Governance Committee (Appendix B) requesting information to assist with their audit of the Council’s 2016/17 financial statements. Given that the assurances requested were similar to the evidence being collated by Internal Audit to support the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and in the interests of transparency, it was agreed with Grant Thornton that responses to their letters would be provided following consideration at this meeting.
4. Similar requests for assurance were made in respect of the 2015/16 financial statements and therefore the information provided in this year’s responses is in effect an update of the information which was supplied last year.
5. Having reviewed the specific information being sought, Internal Audit is satisfied that the Council’s arrangements are such that positive assurances can be given. Principally, this conclusion is arrived at through the:
 - comprehensive assurance and evidence gathered in compiling the AGS;
 - ongoing work of the Governance Committee and Internal Audit scrutinising and challenging the Council’s arrangements;
 - the work of the Chief Financial Officer and the financial arrangements and controls, including financial regulations, that have been adopted; and
 - the work of the Monitoring Officer and the Legal Team.
6. Further detailed information to support Internal Audit’s review and conclusions can be found in the tables at Appendices C and D.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

7. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	X

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

8. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area	X	Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

9. The analysis of actions in response to the standards indicate that the Council has in my view met its obligations and dealt with any reporting items as required.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

10. The responses outlined in the relies to External Audit's questions and requests for information accurately reflect the Council's policies and procedures and are a correct statement of the Council's approach to Governance.

GARRY BARCLAY
HEAD OF SHARED ASSURANCE SERVICES

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
International Auditing Standards Annual Governance Statement Service Assurance Statements Evidence collated by Internal Audit to support responses.	June 2017	Shared Assurance Services	Civic Centre South Ribble BC
Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Dawn Highton Garry Barclay	5468 01772 625272	22 nd May 2017	IAS report



Mr Gary Hall
Chief Executive
Chorley Borough Council
Town Hall
Market St
Chorley
PR7 1DP

Date 31 March 2017

Dear Gary

**Chorley Borough Council Financial Statements for the year end 31
March 2017**

As you will be aware each year, as your external auditor, we contact you to comply with International Auditing Standards to gain an understanding of the Council's management processes in place to prevent and detect fraud and to ensure compliance with law and regulations. International Auditing Standards also place certain obligations on auditors to document Management's view on some key areas affecting the financial statements.

To assist us in meeting these requirements, I would be grateful if you would consider and formally respond to the matters set out in the enclosed schedule. In completing this task, you may wish to take into account the views of other directors where you think appropriate. The schedule relates to operational issues as well as the financial statements.

In addition to our request to management, we also will need to gain an understanding of how the Governance Committee maintains oversight of the above processes. I have also enclosed, for your information, a copy of the letter that I intend to send to the Chair of the Governance Committee. We suggest that it may be useful to co-ordinate your response with the response from the Chair of the Governance Committee

In preparing your responses it would also be helpful if you could include a summary of evidence you have relied on to inform your responses. If you are in agreement, I would be grateful for your formal response by 1st May 2017. Please note that your response should cover the full twelve month period ending 31st March 2017.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss anything in relation to this request.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hardman
Manager
For Grant Thornton UK LLP T 07880
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Cllr Paul Leadbetter
Governance Committee Chair
Chorley Borough Council
Town Hall
Market St
Chorley
PR7 1DP

Date: 31 March 2017

Dear Cllr Leadbetter

**Chorley Borough Council Financial Statements for the year end 31 March 2017 -
Understanding how the Governance Committee gains assurance from management**

As you will be aware, each year as your external auditor, we contact you to comply with International Auditing Standards to establish an understanding of how the Governance Committee gains assurance over management processes and arrangements.

I am contacting you in your role as the Chair of the Governance Committee, to ask for your responses to the following questions.

- 1 How does the Governance Committee oversee management's processes in relation to:
 - carrying out an assessment of the risk the financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud or error
 - identifying and responding to the risk of breaches of internal control
 - identifying and responding to risks of fraud in the organisation (including any specific risks of fraud which management have identified or that have been brought to its attention, or classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosure for which a risk of fraud is likely to exist)
 - communicating to employees its views on appropriate business practice and ethical behaviour (for example by updating, communicating and monitoring against the codes of conduct)?
 - how will the Governance Committee satisfy itself that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements?

- 2 Do you have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged frauds? If so, please provide details.
- 3 How does the Governance Committee gain assurance that all relevant laws and regulations have been complied with by the Council?
- 4 Are you aware of any actual or potential litigation or claims that would affect the financial statements?

I have attached a schedule that will help summarise your responses to some of the questions

For information, we are also required to make enquiries of management and recently sent a letter and schedule of questions to the Chief Executive, (the schedule of questions is also enclosed). We suggest that it may be useful to co-ordinate your response with that of management.

If you are in agreement I would be grateful for your formal response by 1st May 2017 to cover the full twelve month period ending 31st March 2017.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss anything in relation to this request.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hardman
Manager
For Grant Thornton UK LLP T
07880 456202
E simon.hardman@uk.gt.com

21st June 2017

Simon Hardman
Grant Thornton UK LLP
1 Hardman Square
Spinningfields
Manchester
M3 3EB

Dear Simon

Audit of Chorley Borough Council Financial Statements – Compliance with International Auditing Standards

With reference to your letter dated 31ST March 2017 in respect of the above, I have now commissioned a review of the management processes that are in place within the Council which address the specific questions you raised.

These are contained in the attached table which was formally reported to and discussed by the Governance Committee on 21st June 2017. I trust that this provides you with the necessary assurances that the Council's arrangements are effective and that there are no specific concerns or issues to report.

Yours sincerely

Gary Hall
Chief Executive
Chorley Borough Council
Town Hall
Market Street
Chorley
PR7 1DP

Responses from Management:

Auditor question	Response
What do you regard as the key events or issues that will have a significant impact on the financial statements for 2016/17 and which we should consider as part of our audit approach?	The Council undertook a large land swap with the HCA on 31 st March 2017
Have you considered the appropriateness of the accounting policies adopted by the Authority? Have there been any events or transactions that may cause you to change or adopt new accounting policies?	The Council has considered the appropriateness of the accounting policies. The Council's statement of accounts are prepared in compliance with the Code of Practice 2016/17. The code is prepared under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) which have been adopted as the basis for public sector accounting in the UK. The Code specifies the principles and practices of accounting required to prepare a Statement of Accounts There have not been any events or transactions that may cause CBC to change or adopt new accounting policies.
Are you aware of any changes to the regulatory environment that may have a significant impact on the Authority's financial statements?	No - The Council has the following arrangements in place to advise officers: Monitoring Officer and team of qualified lawyers; Governance Group; Compliance with the CIPFA Code of Conduct for Finance Officers; Standing Orders and Financial Procedure Rules.
How would you assess the quality of the Authority's internal control processes?	The Council has the following robust measures in place: Internal Audit Service compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards; Annual assessment against the Local Code of Governance (updated 2016). Annually completed Service Assurance Statements. Independent sources of assurance obtained from service areas.
How would you assess the process for reviewing the effectiveness of internal control?	Highlighted areas for improvement included within the Annual Governance Statement. Annual and interim Internal Audit reports to the Governance Committee
How the Authority's risk management do processes link to financial reporting?	Key financial systems reviewed annually by Internal Audit. No significant control weaknesses identified. The introduction of the GRACE risk management software will further strengthen the RM processes.

<p>How would you assess the Authority's arrangements for identifying and responding to the risk of fraud?</p>	<p>Would assess as sound as the following arrangements are in place: Internal Audit Risk Assessment updated over the course of the year. Internal Audit Annual Plan approved by SMT and Governance Committee. Monitoring of management actions by Internal Audit and reporting to Governance Committee. A range of probity policies are in place including: Whistle-Blowing, Anti-Fraud & Corruption, Fraud Response and Anti-Money Laundering policies. Arrangements for responding to fraud are detailed in the Fraud Response Plan (available on the loop).</p>
<p>What has been the outcome of these arrangements so far this year?</p>	<p>Internal Audit Annual Plan completed. Governance Committee fully informed. The Council has also recently carried out a review of its arrangements against the Fighting Fraud & Corruption Locally – The Local Government Counter Fraud & Corruption Strategy 2016-2019 with the outcome reported to Governance Committee.</p>
<p>What have you determined to be the classes of accounts, transactions and disclosures most at risk to fraud?</p>	<p>All key financial systems reviewed annually by Internal Audit. No significant control weaknesses identified.</p>
<p>Are you aware of any potential whistle blowing matters or complaints by potential whistle blowers? If so, what has been your response?</p>	<p>None for 2016-17</p>
<p>Have any reports been made under the Bribery Act?</p>	<p>None for 2016-17</p>
<p>As a management team, how do you communicate risk issues (including fraud) to those charged with governance?</p>	<p>Annual and interim reports Internal Audit reports to Governance Committee. External Audit assurance. On-going monitoring and reporting of the Strategic Risk Register to Governance Committee.</p>
<p>As a management team, how do you communicate to employees your views on business practices and ethical behaviour?</p>	<p>The availability of policies and procedures on the loop and promotion through the use of core briefs.</p>
<p>What are your policies and procedures for identifying, assessing and accounting for litigation and claims?</p>	<p>Very little litigation against this Council for uninsured risks. All claims are initially served on the Council's Monitoring Officer who will then advise relevant other officers / members depending on the size and nature of the claim.</p>
<p>Is there any use of financial instruments, including derivatives?</p>	<p>The Council discloses movements in financial instruments in note 16 to the Statement of Accounts. The financial instruments include borrowing, investments, debtors and creditors, all relating to the normal course of business.</p>

Are you aware of any significant transactions outside the normal course of business?	No
Are you aware of any changes in circumstances that would lead to impairment of non-current assets?	We are expecting an impairment to the Leigh Arms/Station House due to the work being carried out for the Chorley Youth Zone
Are you aware of any guarantee contracts?	No
Are you aware of allegations of fraud, errors, or other irregularities during the period?	None for 2016-17
Are you aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws or regulations or is the Authority on notice of any such possible instances of non-compliance?	<p>There have been issues of self reporting to ICO concerning potential breaches of obligations under DPA – no action taken by ICO.</p> <p>Disputed application of a Ministerial Statement concerning tariff based section 106 contributions for public open space and affordable housing. Council treated as a material planning consideration that could be overcome by local policies until second statement clarifying status of changes came into force.</p>
Have there been any examinations, investigations or inquiries by any licensing or authorising bodies or the tax and customs authorities?	No
Are you aware of any transactions, events and conditions (or changes in these) that may give rise to recognition or disclosure of significant accounting estimates that require significant judgement?	<p>Yes- estimate of BRR RV appeals</p> <p>Yes – accruals for S106 contributions not yet invoiced</p>
Where the financial statements include amounts based on significant estimates, how have the accounting estimates been made, what is the nature of the data used, and the degree of estimate uncertainty inherent in the estimate?	<p>Data from the VOA regarding the settlement of historical appeals and forecasting outcomes on past trend data</p> <p>S106 accruals calculated using</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • figures regarding the occupation of dwellings provided by, developers, Strategic Housing, Council Tax and Waste Management teams. • inflation figures from ONS or other indices specified in S106 agreements, e.g. BCIS Regional Tender Price Index (North West) <p>the S106 agreement was used to calculate the final accrual based on the information above.</p>
What is the status of contingent assets and liabilities reported in prior years?	<p>The contingent liabilities outlined in the 2016/17 statement of accounts remain the same.</p> <p>The contingent assets outlined in the</p>

	2016/17 statement of accounts remain the same.
Are you aware of the existence of loss contingencies and/or un-asserted claims that may affect the financial statements?	On 16 March 2016 a second levy of 10% was introduced which increased the cumulative levy payable by the Council to 25% for all future claims settlements. The Council paid £10,564 in 16/17 representing the additional 10% levy on total claims of £105,646. In total, the Council has been liable for net payments of £16,424 in 16/17 under the MMI scheme of arrangement.
Has the management team carried out an assessment of the going concern basis for preparing the financial statements? What was the outcome of that assessment?	Preparation of a 3 year budget projection included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to identify any financial risks facing the council. Level of un-committed reserves to be increased to £4m by 2018/19
Can you provide details of those solicitors utilised by the Authority during the year. Please indicate where they are working on open litigation or contingencies from prior years?	Weightmans – MMI scheme. Bevan Brittan LLP Solicitors – Property Searches litigation.(joint appointment through the LGA) Landmark Chambers – legal advice on Market Walk extension. Kings Chambers Ltd – legal advice relating to land and trespass issues. Forbes Solicitors – landslip claim. Legal Costs Negotiators Ltd – Community Infrastructure Levy. Landmark Chambers – legal advice on land issues. Hill Dickinson – Market Walk redevelopment. Messers Forbes Solicitors – Employment Law Advice.
Can you provide details of other advisors consulted during the year and the issue on which they were consulted?	WYG Environment Planning Transport Limited provided Highways Consultancy for Planning Appeal LG Futures provided NNDR revaluation modelling and public service reform financial modelling The Networking People (NorthWest) Ltd T/a TNP Ltd - consultancy to review network and develop recommendations ADAS UK Limited - Provisional Agriculture Planning Advice FPCR Environment and Design Limited - Phase III, Clayton Le Woods - Fee for landscape and masterplanning consultancy services Valuation Office Agency - Asset Valuations for Chorley Borough Council Grant Thornton UK LLP - Income Generation - Independent review Whittle and Draper Fine Art – curatorial

	consultancy services at Astley Hall
Have any of the Authority service providers reported any items of fraud, non-compliance with laws and regulations or uncorrected misstatements which would affect the financial statements?	None that we are aware of
How have any key issues identified in the prior year as internal control deficiencies been addressed?	Implementation of agreed management actions.

21st June 2017

Simon Hardman
Grant Thornton UK LLP
4 Hardman Square
Spinningfields
Manchester
M3 3EB

Dear Simon

Audit of Chorley Borough Council Financial Statements - Compliance with International Auditing Standards

Further to your letter dated 31st March 2017 in respect of the above, please find attached a table providing you with the necessary information that you seek in relation to the specific issues you raised to assist with planning for the 2016/17 financial statements audit:

The attachment was formally reported to and discussed by the Governance Committee on 21st June 2017 and I trust that this provides you with the necessary assurances that the Council's arrangements are effective and that there are no specific concerns or issues to report.

Yours sincerely

Councillor P Leadbetter
Chair of the Governance Committee
Chorley Borough Council
Town Hall
Market Street
Chorley
PR7 1DP

Response from Governance Committee Chair

Fraud risk assessment

Issues	How the Governance Committee demonstrates that it secures the relevant assurances
<p>How does the Governance Committee oversee management's processes in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out an assessment of the risk the financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud or error • Identifying and responding to the risk of breaches of internal control • identifying and responding to risks of fraud in the organisation (including any specific risks of fraud which management have identified or that have been brought to its attention, or classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosure for which a risk of fraud is likely to exist) • Communicating to employees its views on appropriate business practice and ethical behavior (for example by updating, communicating and monitoring against the codes of conduct)? • How will the Governance Committee satisfy itself that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements? 	<p>Receipt of Internal Audit's Annual Report including audit opinion from the Head of Shared Assurance Receipt of assurance from Internal Audit following the review of key financial systems on an annual basis Receipt of Annual Governance Statement Promotion of core values Publicity of Codes of Conduct Approval of the Whistle-Blowing, Anti-Fraud & Corruption, Fraud Response and Anti-Money Laundering polices.</p>
<p>Do you have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged frauds? If so, please provide details</p>	<p>No - receipt of quarterly Internal Audit reports.</p>
<p>How does the Governance Committee gain assurance that all relevant laws and regulations have been complied with by the Council?</p>	<p>Requirement for the Monitoring Officer to comment on all council and executive decisions. Monitoring Officer attends Governance Committee.</p>
<p>Are you aware of any actual or potential litigation or claims that would affect the financial statements?</p>	<p>Litigation against all local authorities by property search companies in relation to personal search fees. This however has minimal impact as claims now largely settled.</p>

Auditor Question	Response
Has the Authority assessed the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements due to fraud?	Fraud risks are considered as part of the Council's risk management arrangements and high risk areas are considered in the Internal Audit risk assessment and Internal Audit plan.
What are the results of this process?	No significant weaknesses identified. The Council also undertook a self assessment against Fighting Fraud & Corruption Locally – The Local Government Counter Fraud & Corruption Strategy 2016-2019 with the outcome reported to Governance Committee.
What processes does the Authority have in place to identify and respond to risks of fraud?	Internal Audit risk assessment annually updated. Internal Audit Annual Plan approved by Governance Committee Promotion of core values. Publicity of Codes of Conduct Whistle-Blowing, Anti-Fraud & Corruption, Fraud Response and Anti-Money Laundering policies. Arrangements for responding to fraud are detailed in the Fraud Response Plan (available on the loop)
Have any specific fraud risks, or areas with a high risk of fraud, been identified and what has been done to mitigate these risks?	No - we do not currently have any concerns and / or suspect fraud. Fraud risks are considered as part of the Council's risk management arrangements and high risk areas are considered in the Internal Audit risk assessment and Internal Audit plan
Are internal controls, including segregation of duties, in place and operating effectively?	The opinion of the Head of Shared Assurance in the 2016/2017 Internal Audit Annual Report is that the Council continues to operate within a strong internal control environment
If not, where are the risk areas and what mitigating actions have been taken?	All areas considered within the Internal Audit Risk Assessment
Are there any areas where there is a potential for override of controls or inappropriate influence over the financial reporting process (for example because of undue pressure to achieve financial targets)?	No
Are there any areas where there is a potential for misreporting?	No
How does the Authority exercise oversight over management's processes for identifying and responding to risks of fraud?	Internal Audit risk assessment Internal Audit Annual Plan agreed by SMT and Governance Committee.

	Monitoring of management actions by Internal Audit and reporting to Governance Committee.
What arrangements are in place to report fraud issues and risks to the Authority?	Annual and interim reports Internal Audit reports to Governance Committee. External Audit assurance On-going monitoring and reporting of the Strategic Risk Register to Governance Committee.
How does the Authority communicate and encourage ethical behaviour of its staff and contractors?	On-going promotion of core values Register of interests / gifts and hospitality Adherence to Codes of Conduct Ethical guidance / policies on the need to know section of the intranet Zero tolerance of fraud. Local Code of Corporate Governance Compliance with corporate policies relating to Whistle Blowing, Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Anti money laundering Internal Audit has time dedicated to fraud awareness / anti-fraud and corruption in the annual plan. Contract Procedure Rules require contractors to have policies that mirror the Councils or use Council policies.
How do you encourage staff to report their concerns about fraud? Have any significant issues been reported?	Governance documents including the Whistleblowing Policy, Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Fraud Response Plan are all available on the intranet. No significant issues reported.
Are you aware of any related party relationships or transactions that could give rise to risks of fraud?	We do checks every year as part of closure of accounts process and run extracts from CRs to test
Are you aware of any instances of actual, suspected or alleged, fraud, either within the Authority as a whole or within specific departments since 1 April 2016?	No