

The Audit Findings for Preston City Council

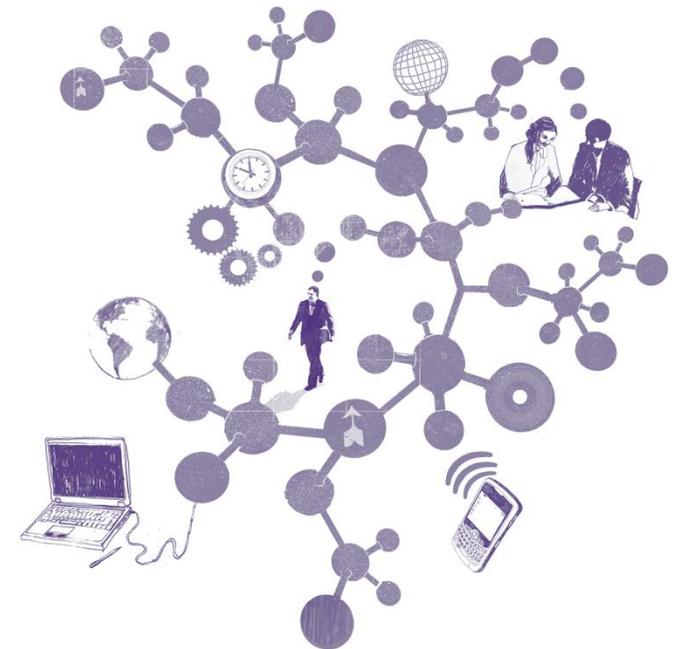
Year ended 31 March 2016

September 2016

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21 September 2016

Dear Members of the Audit Committee

Audit Findings for Preston City Council for the year ending 31 March 2016

This Audit Findings report highlights the key findings arising from the audit for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Preston City Council, the Audit Committee), as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice. Its contents have been discussed with the City Treasurer.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed primarily for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements and giving a value for money conclusion. Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose defalcations or other irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the kind assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Yours sincerely

Karen Murray
Engagement lead

Chartered Accountants

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Section 1: Executive summary

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Purpose of this report

This report highlights the key issues affecting the results of Preston City Council ('the Council') and the preparation of the [group and] Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016. It is also used to report our audit findings to management and those charged with governance in accordance with the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, and the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act').

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion, the Council's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year and whether they have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. .

We are also required consider other information published together with the audited financial statements, whether it is consistent with the financial statements and in line with required guidance.

We are required to carry out sufficient work to satisfy ourselves on whether the Council has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources ('the value for money (VFM) conclusion').

Auditor Guidance Note 7 (AGN07) clarifies our reporting requirements in the Code and the Act. We are required to provide a conclusion whether in all significant respects, the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The Act also details the following additional powers and duties for local government auditors, which we are required to report to you if applied:

- a public interest report if we identify any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit that in our opinion should be considered by the Council or brought to the public's attention (section 24 of the Act);

- written recommendations which should be considered by the Council and responded to publicly (section 24 of the Act);
- application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law (section 28 of the Act);
- issue of an advisory notice (section 29 of the Act); and
- application for judicial review (section 31 of the Act)

We are also required to give electors the opportunity to raise questions about the accounts and consider and decide upon objections received in relation to the accounts under sections 26 and 27 of the Act.

Introduction

In the conduct of our audit we have not had to alter or change our audit approach, which we communicated to you in our Audit Plan dated April 2016. At the time of the plan, we considered "the expenditure cycle includes fraudulent expenditure" to be a significant risk. We have subsequently determined that this is not a significant risk. There have been no other changes to our audit approach.

Our audit is substantially complete although we are finalising our procedures in the following areas:

- queries in respect of PPE and financial instruments
- our internal file review procedures
- review of the final version of the financial statements
- obtaining and reviewing the management letter of representation
- review of revised versions of the Annual Governance Statement and
- updating our post balance sheet events review, to the date of signing the opinion
- Whole of Government Accounts

We received draft financial statements and accompanying working papers at the commencement of our work, in accordance with the agreed timetable.

Key audit and financial reporting issues

Financial statements opinion

We have identified no adjustments affecting the Council's reported financial position. The draft financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 recorded total comprehensive income and expenditure of £26,561k; and an increase in the general fund balance at the end of the financial year of £936k. There have been no amendments to the accounts which affect these figures.

The key messages arising from our audit of the Council's financial statements are:

- the draft accounts and working papers were of good quality, and finance staff responded promptly to all audit queries
- the audit has not identified any material misstatements
- we have agreed some minor amendments to disclosures within the accounts the most significant of which relate to new requirements introduced by the change to the CIPFA Code following the introduction of IFRS13 and its impact on surplus assets and investment properties.

Further details are set out in section two of this report.

We anticipate providing an unqualified audit opinion in respect of the financial statements (see Appendix B).

Other financial statement responsibilities

As well as an opinion on the financial statements, we are required to give an opinion on whether other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements. This includes:

- if the Annual Governance Statement does not meet the disclosure requirements set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit.

Controls

Roles and responsibilities

The Council's management is responsible for the identification, assessment, management and monitoring of risk, and for developing, operating and monitoring the system of internal control.

Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we report these to the Council.

Findings

Our work has not identified any control weaknesses which we wish to highlight for your attention.

Value for Money

Based on our review, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Further detail of our work on Value for Money are set out in section three of this report.

Other statutory powers and duties

We have not identified any issues that have required us to apply our statutory powers and duties under the Act.

Grant certification

In addition to our responsibilities under the Code, we are required to certify the Council's Housing Benefit subsidy claim on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. At present our work on this claim is in progress and is not due to be finalised until 30 November 2016. We will report the outcome of this certification work through a separate report to the Audit Committee once this work is complete.

The way forward

Matters arising from the financial statements audit and our review of the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources have been discussed with the City Treasurer.

As the national deadlines for the preparation and audit of Local Government Accounts are coming forward, the Council should look to agree earlier reporting deadlines for 2016/17, including changes to the committee timetables which will be required to support this. We look forward to working with you to achieve this.

As with most authorities, the Council continues to face challenging financial targets over the next few years, but we consider that there are good arrangements in place to achieve them.

Acknowledgement

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Grant Thornton UK LLP
September 2016

Section 2: Audit findings

01. Executive summary

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Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit. The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As we reported in our audit plan, we determined overall materiality to be £1.781m (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure). We have considered whether this level remained appropriate during the course of the audit and have made no changes to our overall materiality. We also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulated effect of such amounts would have a material impact on the financial statements. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £89,000. This remains the same as reported in our audit plan.

As we reported in our audit plan, we identified the following items where we decided that separate materiality levels were appropriate.

Balance/transaction/disclosure	Explanation
Disclosures of officers' remuneration, salary bandings and exit packages in notes to the statements	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.
Disclosure of auditors' remuneration in notes to the statements	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.
Disclosure of related party transactions and balances	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.

Audit findings against significant risks

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty" (ISA (UK&I) 315).

In this section we detail our response to the significant risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. As we noted in our plan, there are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards.

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
1.	<p>The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams Preston City Council, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited; and • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Preston City Council, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of revenue recognition.</p>
2.	<p>Management over-ride of controls</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 it is presumed that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completed testing of journal entries • reviewed accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management • Reviewed any of unusual significant transactions. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any evidence of management over-ride of controls. In particular the findings of our review of journal controls and testing of journal entries has not identified any significant issues.</p> <p>We set out later in this section of the report our work and findings on key accounting estimates and judgements.</p>

Audit findings against significant risks continued

We have also identified the following significant risks of material misstatement from our understanding of the entity. We set out below the work we have completed to address these risks.

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
3.	<p>Valuation of surplus assets and investment property</p> <p>The CIPFA Code of Practice has implemented IFRS 13 for the 2015/16 financial statements. The Council is required to include surplus assets within property, plant and equipment in its financial statements at fair value, as defined by IFRS13.</p> <p>The basis on which fair value is defined for investment property is also different to that used in previous years. This represents a significant change in the basis for estimation of these balances in the financial statements. There are also extensive disclosure requirements under IFRS 13 which the Council needs to comply with.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate. • Review of the competence, expertise and objectivity of any management experts used. • Review of the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work • Discussions with the Council about the basis on which the valuation was carried out, challenging the key assumptions. • Review and challenge of the information used by the valuer to ensure it was robust and consistent with our understanding. • Testing of revaluations made during the year to ensure they were input correctly into the Council's asset register • Review of the disclosures made by the Council in its financial statements to ensure they are in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice and IFRS13. 	<p>Our work has provided us with assurance that the Council has complied with the new requirements.</p> <p>We have recommended and the Council has agreed to make some minor improvements to the relevant disclosures .</p>

Audit findings against significant risks continued

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
6.	<p>Valuation of pension fund net liability</p> <p>The Council's pension fund asset and liability as reflected in its balance sheet represent significant estimates in the financial statements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of the key controls that were put in place by management to ensure that the pension fund liability was not materially misstated. • Walkthrough of the key controls to assess whether they were implemented as expected and mitigate the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements. • Review of the competence, expertise and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the Council's pension fund valuation. • Gaining an understanding of the basis on which the IAS 19 valuation was carried out, undertaking procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made. • Review of the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in notes to the financial statements with the actuarial report from your actuary. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of the pension fund net liability.</p>

Audit findings against other risks

In this section we detail our response to the other risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan.

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
<p>Employee remuneration</p>	<p>Employee remuneration accruals understated (Remuneration expenses not correct)</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle • undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding • Sample testing of employee remuneration payments to ensure employees exist, payments are correctly calculated and recorded correctly in the ledger • Tested the monthly payroll reconciliation to confirm that payroll totals are accurately and completely recorded in the general ledger. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p>
<p>Operating expenses</p>	<p>Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period (Operating expenses understated)</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle • undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding • Sample testing of operating expenses and year end payables/accruals to obtain assurance over validity of expenditure, categorisation and that they were accounted for in the correct period. • Searched for unrecorded liabilities by performing cut-off testing on post year end payments. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p>

Accounting policies, estimates and judgements

In this section we report on our consideration of accounting policies, in particular revenue recognition policies, and key estimates and judgements made and included with the Council's financial statements.

Accounting area	Summary of policy	Comments	Assessment
Revenue recognition	<p>The Council prepares its financial statements on an accruals basis recognising income when it is probable that economic benefits will flow to the Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's policy is appropriate and consistent with the relevant accounting framework – The CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (the CIPFA Code). • The main elements of the Council's revenue are predictable meaning there is minimal judgement required from the Council in identifying when to recognise income. • The accounting policy is appropriately disclosed within the statement of accounts. 	●
Judgements and estimates	<p>Key estimates and judgements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuation of non-current assets • Valuation of the pension fund net liability • Provision for NNDR appeals 	<p>The Council's policies on estimates and judgements are reasonable and appropriately disclosed. The Council relies on qualified experts where appropriate.</p> <p>We have reported separately at pages 11-12 our work and findings in relation to the valuation of the pension fund net liability and non-current assets more generally and not identified any significant issues.</p> <p>Our review of the Council's calculation of the provision for NNDR appeals has provided us with assurance that the methodology is logical, the assumptions are reasonable and that it is based on reliable data.</p>	●

Assessment

Accounting policies, estimates and judgements continued

Accounting area	Summary of policy	Comments	Assessment
Going concern	The City Treasurer s151 officer has a reasonable expectation that the services provided by the Council will continue for the foreseeable future. Members concur with this view. For this reason, the Council continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.	We have reviewed the Council's assessment and are satisfied with management's assessment that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2015/16 financial statements.	
Other accounting policies		We have reviewed the Council's policies against the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice. The Council's accounting policies are appropriate and consistent with previous years.	

Assessment

Other communication requirements

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by auditing standards and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

	Issue	Commentary
1.	Matters in relation to fraud	We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with the Audit Committee. We have been made aware of a loss of funds in relation to housing benefit payments. We have not been made aware of any other incidents in the period. No other issues have been identified during the course of our audit procedures.
2.	Matters in relation to related parties	From the work we carried out, we have not identified any related party transactions which have not been disclosed.
3.	Matters in relation to laws and regulations	You have not made us aware of any significant incidences of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations and we have not identified any incidences from our audit work.
4.	Written representations	A standard letter of representation has been requested from the Council.
5.	Confirmation requests from third parties	We requested from management permission to send confirmation requests to third parties with whom the Council has bank deposits and investments. This permission was granted and the requests were sent. All of these requests were returned with positive confirmation.
6.	Disclosures	Our review found no material omissions in the financial statements.

Other communication requirements continued

	Issue	Commentary
7.	Matters on which we report by exception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are required to report on a number of matters by exception in a number of areas: We have not identified any issues we would be required to report by exception in the following areas • If the Annual Governance Statement does not meet the disclosure requirements set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit • The information in the Narrative Report is materially inconsistent with the information in the audited financial statements or our knowledge of the Council acquired in the course of performing our audit, or otherwise misleading.
8.	Specified procedures for Whole of Government Accounts	<p>We are required to carry out specified procedures (on behalf of the NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) consolidation pack under WGA group audit instructions where Council balances or expenditure exceed the specified threshold.</p> <p>Detailed work is not required as the Council does not exceed the threshold.</p>

Internal controls

The purpose of an audit is to express an opinion on the financial statements.

Our audit included consideration of internal controls relevant to the preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control. We considered and walked through the internal controls for Employee Remuneration and Operating Expenses as set out on above.

The controls were found to be operating effectively and we have no matters to report to the Audit Committee.

Adjusted misstatements

A number of adjustments to the draft accounts have been identified during the audit process. We are required to report all non trivial misstatements to those charged with governance, whether or not the accounts have been adjusted by management. The table below summarises the adjustments arising from the audit which have been processed by management.

Impact of adjusted misstatements

All adjusted misstatements are set out in detail below along with the impact on the key statements and the reported net expenditure for the year.

Detail	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000	Balance Sheet £'000	Impact on total net expenditure £000
There are no misstatements			

Unadjusted misstatements

The table below provides details of adjustments identified during the audit which have not been made within the final set of financial statements. The [ABC] Committee is required to approve management's proposed treatment of all items recorded within the table below:

Detail	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000	Balance Sheet £'000	Reason for not adjusting
None identified			

Misclassifications and disclosure changes

The table below provides details of misclassification and disclosure changes identified during the audit which have been made in the final set of financial statements.

Adjustment type	Value £'000	Account balance	Impact on the financial statements
1 Misclassification	2,124	Note 26 Reconciliation to the Subjective Analysis	Income from council tax and retained business rates income included £2,145k interest income. This has now been amended. The disclosure affects the note only.
2 Disclosure	Various	Notes to the accounts	<p>We have agreed a number of small amendments to the notes to the accounts to correct minor errors and improve the overall disclosure within the financial statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced disclosures regarding IFRS13 valuations for investments and surplus assets • New disclosure note for unapplied grants account • Other minor corrections.

Section 3: Value for Money

01. Executive summary

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05. Fees, non-audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Background

We are required by section 21 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act') and the NAO Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') to satisfy ourselves that the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VFM) conclusion.

We are required to carry out sufficient work to satisfy ourselves that proper arrangements are in place at the Council. The Act and NAO guidance state that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Council has put proper arrangements in place.

In carrying out this work, we are required to follow the NAO's Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03) issued in November 2015. AGN 03 identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

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

AGN03 provides examples of proper arrangements against three sub-criteria but specifically states that these are not separate criteria for assessment purposes and that auditors are not required to reach a distinct judgement against each of these.

Risk assessment

We carried out an initial risk assessment in June 2016 and identified the following significant risks, which we communicated to you in our audit update report dated June 2016.

We identified risks in respect of specific areas of proper arrangements using the guidance contained in AGN03.

We have continued our review of relevant documents up to the date of giving our report, and have not identified any further significant risks where we need to perform further work.

We carried out further work only in respect of the significant risks we identified from our initial and ongoing risk assessment. Where our consideration of the significant risks determined that arrangements were not operating effectively, we have used the examples of proper arrangements from AGN 03 to explain the gaps in proper arrangements that we have reported in our VFM conclusion.

Significant qualitative aspects

AGN 03 requires us to disclose our views on significant qualitative aspects of the Council's arrangements for delivering economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have focused our work on the significant risks that we identified in the Council's arrangements. In arriving at our conclusion, our main considerations were:

- The Council has identified that the financial position will continue to be challenging with significant savings required over the medium term.
- A key focus for the Council is regenerating the city centre and ensuring that the benefits of this are felt widely by improving the quality of housing and employment opportunities in the City Centre
- We have set out more detail on the risks we identified, the results of the work we performed and the conclusions we drew from this work later in this section.

Overall conclusion

Based on the work we performed to address the significant risks, we concluded that:

- the Council had proper arrangements in all significant respects to ensure it delivered value for money in its use of resources. The text of our report, which confirms this can be found at Appendix A.

Key findings

We set out below our key findings against the significant risks we identified through our initial risk assessment and further risks identified through our ongoing review of documents.

Significant risk	Work to address	Findings and conclusions
<p>Financial position The Council has historically managed its finances well and has consistently achieved savings targets. It is on course to achieve a balanced budget for 2015/16. However, the financial position over the medium term means the Council now faces significant challenges. Reviewing and updating the medium term financial plan has meant critically appraising the assumptions made around future income and expenditure levels. This includes continually reassessing the assumptions made in respect of business rates retention and the impact of changes to New Homes Bonus on the Council's plans. The Council will need to make some difficult decisions about the provision of services. This may include changes to the scope and scale of services and the delivery models used.</p>	<p>We reviewed the outturn position for 2015/16 and the budget plans for 2016/17 and 2017/18 and have reviewed the Council's progress in updating its medium term financial strategy</p>	<p>The Council had already achieved significant savings and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is based on realistic assumptions. When updating the MTFS the Council has thought about the impact of changes to central government funding over the next few years and this has been factored into the Council plans.</p> <p>The 2015/16 outturn confirms that there was an underspend of £1.4m in 2015/16. Of this £900k is recognised as expenditure which will now be incurred in a future year and this has been carried forward from 2015/16 into 2016/17 as an earmarked reserve. The remaining £546k related to underspends. As a result, the closing General Fund balance is £6.78m, compared to the City Treasurer's assessment of a minimum £1.1m balance.</p> <p>As part of the annual budget setting process the Council has updated its medium term financial strategy to cover the period until 2019/20. This sets out that, to ensure the Council has a general fund balance of not less than £1.1m at the end of 2019/20, it will have to identify and deliver savings of £1m in 2017/18, £2m in 2018/19 and £3m in 2019/20. The update to the plan sets out the planned use of reserves over the medium term.</p> <p>The Council has considered the income available to it. Assumptions have been made about the level of available but the uncertainties around future levels of funding, for example around business rates and new homes bonus have also been made clear.</p>

Key findings

Significant risk	Work to address	Findings and conclusions
<p>City Centre regeneration The Council is developing plans to support the regeneration of the city centre, which represent a significant investment in Preston.</p> <p>This represents risks and opportunities for the Council.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the progress is being made to drive forward development.</p> <p>We have reviewed the governance arrangements to ensure that risks and opportunities are managed appropriately.</p>	<p>The Council is driving forward regeneration of the city centre, with a significant capital programme planned to support the necessary investment. The impact of this is taken into account in the overall medium term financial strategy.</p> <p>The Council has identified that there are some risks identified to the financial forecast arising from any changes to the timing of plans. For example, the investment in the markets quarter has been included as a significant element of the capital programme. Other key elements of the schemes to improve the city centre are being considered by officers and members.</p> <p>The Council understands the need to work in partnership with others to deliver it's ambitious plans around City Centre regeneration. This forms part of a wider understanding of the need to work collaboratively and it is working with other councils in the area to deliver the City Deal, moving towards a combined authority for Lancashire, and working as part of the City Centre Collaboration Board to develop and deliver key projects.</p> <p>There is an action plan in place to support the Council in delivering on it's challenges including the need to support investment and business growth in the area, and to develop community resilience. The action plan also supports a reassessment of the organisational capacity to deliver.</p>

Significant difficulties in undertaking our work

We did not identify any significant difficulties in undertaking our work on your arrangements which we wish to draw to your attention.

Significant matters discussed with management

There were no matters where no other evidence was available or matters of such significance to our conclusion or that we required written representation from management or those charged with governance.

Any other matters

There were no other matters from our work which were significant to our consideration of your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources.

Section 4: Fees, non-audit services and independence

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We confirm below our final fees charged for the audit and confirm there were no fees for the provision of non audit services.

Fees

	Proposed fee £	Final fee £
Council audit	60,627	60,627
Grant certification	14,850	14,850
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	75,477	75,477

The proposed fees for the year were in line with the scale fee set by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA)

Grant certification

Our fees for grant certification cover only housing benefit subsidy certification, which falls under the remit of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited.

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
Audit related services	NIL
Non-audit services	NIL

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Section 5: Communication of audit matters

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Fees, non audit services and independence

05. Communication of audit matters

Communication to those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing ISA (UK&I) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

The Audit Plan outlined our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while this Audit Findings report presents the key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

Respective responsibilities

The Audit Findings Report has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Council's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to auditor's report		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓

Appendices

Appendix A: Audit opinion

We anticipate we will provide the Group/Council with an unmodified audit report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF PRESTON CITY COUNCIL

We have audited the financial statements of Preston City Council (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2016 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Collection Fund and the related notes. 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 2015/16.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's 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 Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the City Treasurer and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of the City Treasurer Responsibilities, the City Treasurer 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 2015/16, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the City Treasurer; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Opinion on financial statements

In our opinion the financial statements:
present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2016 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 2015/16 and applicable law.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited financial statements in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement is consistent with the audited financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required to report to you if:
in our opinion the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with the guidance included in 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: a Framework' published by CIPFA/SOLACE in June 2007; or
we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Act; or
we make a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Act; or
we exercise any other special powers of the auditor under the Act.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources

Respective responsibilities of the Authority and auditor

The Authority 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.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Act to be satisfied that the Authority has made 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 Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Scope of the review of the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General as required by the Act (the "Code"), having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2015, as to whether the Authority 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 these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code in satisfying ourselves whether the Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through the economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether in all significant respects the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources.

Conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2015, we are satisfied that in all significant respects *the Authority* has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts of the Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Code.

Karen Murray

Karen Murray

4 Hardman Square
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 Manchester
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 22 September 2016



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