

A&I Plan

June 2008



Audit and Inspection Plan

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Audit 2008/09

External audit is an essential element in the process of accountability for public money and makes an important contribution to the stewardship of public resources and the corporate governance of public services.

Audit in the public sector is underpinned by three fundamental principles.

- Auditors are appointed independently from the bodies being audited.
- The scope of auditors' work is extended to cover not only the audit of financial statements but also value for money and the conduct of public business.
- Auditors may report aspects of their work widely to the public and other key stakeholders.

The duties and powers of auditors appointed by the Audit Commission are set out in the Audit Commission Act 1998, and the Local Government Act 1999 and the Commission's statutory Code of Audit Practice. Under the Code of Audit Practice, appointed auditors are also required to comply with the current professional standards issued by the independent Auditing Practices Board.

Appointed auditors act quite separately from the Commission and in meeting their statutory responsibilities are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of both the Commission and the audited body.

Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
- any third party.

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Introduction

- 1 This plan sets out the audit and inspection work that we propose to undertake for the 2008/09 financial year. The plan is based on the Audit Commission's risk-based approach to audit planning and the requirements of moving towards Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). It reflects:
 - audit and inspection work specified by the Audit Commission for 2008/09;
 - current national risks relevant to your local circumstances; and
 - your local risks and improvement priorities.
- 2 During 2008/09, the role of Relationship Manager was replaced by the post of Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead (CAAL). The CAAL will provide the focal point for the Commission's work in your local area, lead the CAA process, and ensure that the combined inspection programme across all inspectorates is tailored to the level and nature of risk for the area and its constituent public bodies. The Commission has become the statutory gatekeeper of all inspection activity involving local authorities.
- 3 As I have not yet completed my audit for 2007/08, the audit planning process for 2008/09, including the risk assessment, will continue as the year progresses, and the information and fees in this plan will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

Responsibilities

- 4 The Audit Commission complies with the statutory requirements governing our audit and inspection work, in particular:
 - the Audit Commission Act 1998;
 - the Local Government Act 1999; and
 - the Code of Audit Practice.
- 5 The Code of Audit Practice (the Code) defines auditors' responsibilities in relation to:
 - the financial statements (including the annual governance statement); and
 - the audited body's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- 6 The Audit Commission's Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies (from April 2008) sets out the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Council. The Audit Commission has issued a copy of the Statement to every audited body.
- 7 The Statement summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body begin and end, and audit work is undertaken in the context of these responsibilities.

Fees

- 8 The details of the structure of scale fees are set out in the Audit Commission's work programme and fee scales 2008/09. Scale fees are based on a number of variables, including the type, size and location of the audited body.
- 9 The total indicative fee for the audit and inspection work included in this audit and inspection plan for 2008/09 is for £429,045, which compares to the planned fee of £426,000 for 2007/08.
- 10 A summary of this is shown in the table below. The fee is determined by audit risks identified, mandated work and basic assumptions. A detailed breakdown of the audit and inspection fee is included in Appendix 2.

Table 1 Audit and Inspection fee

Audit area	Planned fee 2008/09	Planned fee 2007/08
Total audit fee	£406,650	£380,200
Total inspection fee	£ 22,395	£ 45,800
Total audit & inspection fee	£429,045	£426,000
Certification of claims and returns	£137,000	£145,000

- 11 The Audit Commission scale fee for Wirral Council's total audit fee, based on an estimated gross expenditure of £890m, is £360,100. The fee proposed for 2008/09 is +13 per cent compared to the scale fee and is within the normal level of variation specified by the Commission.
- 12 In setting the fee, we have assumed that:
 - the level of risk in relation to the audit of the financial statements is not significantly different from that identified to 2007/08;
 - internal audit undertakes appropriate work on all systems; and
 - good quality working papers and records will be provided to support the financial statements in line with agreed timescales.

Further details of the assumptions are outlined in Appendix 2.

- 13 The Audit Commission has the power to determine the fee above or below the scale fee where it considers that substantially more or less work is required than envisaged by the scale fee. The Audit Commission may, therefore, adjust the scale fee to reflect the actual work that needs to be carried out to meet the auditor's statutory responsibilities, on the basis of the auditor's assessment of risk and complexity at a particular body.

- 14 It is a matter for the auditor to determine the work necessary to complete the audit and, subject to approval by the Audit Commission, to seek to agree an appropriate variation to the scale fee with the Council. The Audit Commission expects normally to vary the scale fee by no more than 30 per cent (upwards or downwards). This fee then becomes payable.

Specific actions Wirral Council could take to reduce its audit fees

- 15 The Audit Commission requires its auditors to inform a council of specific actions it could take to reduce its audit fees.
- 16 I have identified the following actions Wirral Council could take.
- The Director of Finance should further build on progress made last year and strengthen the overall internal qualitative review of the financial statements and working papers prior submission for audit in respect of debtors, creditors, reserves and provisions.
 - Officers should document the control environment for each grant claim and provide evidence that the controls operated throughout the year.
- 17 As in previous years, we will work with the Council to identify any further specific actions that the Council could take and to provide ongoing audit support.

Process for agreeing any changes in audit fees

- 18 As set out in paragraph 4, I expect that the initial risk assessment may change as the year progress. Where this is the case, I will discuss this in the first instance with the Chief Executive and Director of Finance. Supplements to the plan will be issued to record revisions to the risk and the impact on the fee.

Auditor's report on the financial statements

- 19 I am required to issue an audit report giving my:
- opinion on whether the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2009; and
 - conclusion on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Financial statements

- 20 I have not undertaken a risk assessment for the audit of the financial statements as many of the specific risks which may become apparent after I have completed the 2007/08 audit. A separate opinion plan for the audit for the financial statements will be issued in December 2008.
- 21 At this stage I am aware of the following risks that are likely to impact on our audit of the financial statements.
- Ensuring that potential changes in the financial arrangements for the Community Fund are in accordance with the stock transfer agreement and appropriately accounted for.
 - Responding to new requirements in the Statement of Recommended Practice and changes in grant funding such as the Local Housing Allowance and Area Based Grant.

Pension fund

- 22 I am carrying out a separate audit of the pension fund scheme and have therefore issued a separate audit plan. A separate report will be issued to those charged with governance. A detailed opinion plan will be issued in November 2008.

VFM conclusion

- 23 In reaching my conclusion I will review evidence that is relevant to the Council's performance management and financial management arrangements.
- 24 The key risks highlighted from the planning are summarised in the table below with details of planned work to mitigate the risks. Full details of the risk assessment are outlined in Appendix 3.

Table 2 Key risks identified

Key risks identified	Planned work to address the risk
Councils face continued pressure to ensure strong financial management and financial standing, including the need to deliver savings targets and address funding pressures in Adult Social Services.	Update our assessment of the financial management and financial standing of the Council as part of our 2009 Use of Resources assessment.
Efficient and effective procurement and commissioning arrangements are key to ensuring Councils meet financial targets and achieve value for money.	Review Use of Resources KLOEs for procurement and commissioning with reference to a small number of major procurement exercises, such as the new Highways contract and aspects of joint commissioning with the PCT.
Our Annual Audit & Inspection Letter highlighted areas where the Council can strengthen its performance management arrangements.	Update our assessment of the Council's performance management arrangements. Review to include follow-up of recommendations made in the recent Corporate & Service planning and Local Area Agreement reports, issues highlighted in the AAIL and links to the Council's complaints procedures.
Key aspects of the Council's arrangements that come within the new Use of Resources KLOEs include governance, partnerships, workforce planning, access to services, health inequalities, good conduct and anti-fraud, service resilience and sustainability.	Use of Resources work will include updating our risk assessment or conducting brief overviews in these and other areas covered by the new KLOEs, subject to their final confirmation. Planned overview of sustainability issues at the Council and other local bodies in the LSP area, subject to confirmation of Use of Resources KLOEs for 2009.

Use of resources 2007/08

- 25 This audit plan covers the last year of the current regime for the use of resources assessment as part of the CPA framework. The work required to arrive at the 2007/08 use of resources assessment is fully aligned to that required to arrive at the auditor's 2007/08 value for money conclusion.
- 26 Appendix 1 outlines the criteria and scoring.
- 27 The initial risk assessment for use of resources work is shown in Appendix 3. This will be updated through the continuous planning process as the year progresses.

Use of resources 2008/09

- 28 The Audit Commission has specified that auditors will complete a use of resources assessment for 2008/09. This will be a new assessment forming part of the CAA framework for 2009.
- 29 The Commission proposes that the approach to the new use of resources assessment will be focussed on three themes with the detailed Key Lines of Enquiry to be confirmed. For each of the significant risks identified in relation to the use of resources work, I consider the arrangements put in place by the Council to mitigate the risk, and plan the work accordingly.
- 30 The initial risk assessment for use of resources work is shown in Appendix 3. This will be updated through the continuous planning process as the year progresses.

Mandated work

31 As part of the audit, the mandated work programme comprises:

- data quality for 2007/08; and
- whole of government accounts.

Appendix 1 highlights the work to be undertaken.

CPA and inspection

- 32 From April 2009, the Audit Commission, jointly with the other public service inspectorates, will be implementing Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Therefore, 2008/09 is the last year in which corporate assessments and programme service inspections will be undertaken as part of the CPA framework.
- 33 The Audit Commission's CPA and inspection activity is underpinned by the principle of targeting our work where it will have the greatest effect, based upon assessments of risk and performance.
- 34 The Council's CPA category is, therefore, a key driver in the Commission's inspection planning process. For CPA 2007, the Council was categorised as two stars.
- 35 I have applied the principles set out in the CPA framework, '*CPA - The Harder Test*', recognising the key strengths and areas for improvement in the Council's performance.
- 36 Strengths in the Council's performance include:
- services for Children and Young People are good and improving;
 - the Council provides good and improving support and care for vulnerable adults;
 - BFI assessed Wirral as providing excellent benefit services;
 - good progress is being made in investing in the future economic development of Wirral; and
 - the Council and its partners are performing well in relation to making Wirral safer.
- 37 Areas for improvement in the Council's performance include:
- improving performance management arrangements. Specific areas include streetscene, planning performance, reducing the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training and road safety and continuing to develop and refine scrutiny arrangements;
 - working with partners to complete the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Area Agreement, so that priorities for the area are clear, and strengthening arrangements for managing underperformance;
 - ensuring the Corporate Plan clearly informs and directs service and financial planning for 2008/09 and future years;
 - improving asset management;

- ensuring revised change management arrangements are implemented effectively, and for example, the key project reviews outlined in the Council's change programme are successfully delivered; and
- continuing to improve financial management and financial standing in line with the medium term financial strategy and underlying budgetary pressures, whilst demonstrating the impact of the improved arrangements that have been put in place for delivering better value for money.

38 On the basis of the planning process I have identified where inspection activity will be focused for 2008/09 as follows.

Table 3 Summary of inspection activity

Inspection activity	Reason/impact
CAAL	To act as the Commission's primary point of contact with the Council and the interface at the local level between the Commission and the other inspectorates, government offices and other key stakeholders.
Direction of Travel (DoT) assessment	An annual assessment, carried out by the CAAL, of how well the Council is securing continuous improvement. The DoT statement will be reported in the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. The DoT assessment summary will be published on the Commission's website.

Advice and assistance

- 39 Under paragraph 9 of Schedule 2A of the Audit Commission Act 1998 we have powers to provide 'advice and assistance' (A&A) to another public body where this is requested.
- 40 If you wish the Commission to provide additional services under these powers, please contact Liz Temple-Murray.

The audit and inspection team

- 41 The key members of the audit and inspection team for the 2008/09 audit are shown in the table below.

Table 4 Audit and inspection team

Name	Contact details	Responsibilities
Peter Forrester Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead (CAAL)	p-forrester@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 3567	The primary point of contact with the Council and the interface at the local level between the Commission and the other inspectorates, government offices and other key stakeholders.
Mike Thomas District Auditor	m-thomas@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 7043	Responsible for the overall delivery of the audit including the quality of outputs, signing the opinion and conclusion, and liaison with the Chief Executive, other chief officers and members.
Liz Temple-Murray Audit Manager	l-temple-murray@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 4838	Manages and coordinates the different elements of the audit work. Key point of contact for the Director of Finance and the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
Performance Manager	to be notified	

Quality of service

- 42 I am committed to providing you with a high quality service. If you are in any way dissatisfied, or would like to discuss how we can improve our service, please contact me in the first instance. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the North West Sub-regional Head of Operations.
- 43 If I am unable to satisfy your concerns, you have the right to make a formal complaint to the Audit Commission. The complaints procedure is set out in the leaflet '*Something to Complain About*', which is available from the Commission's website or on request.

Planned outputs

- 44 Reports will be discussed and agreed with the appropriate officers before being issued to the appropriate Member committee.

Table 5 **Planned outputs**

Planned output	Indicative date
Opinion Audit Plan	31 December 2008
Annual governance report	30 September 2009
Auditor's report giving an opinion on the financial statements and the value for money conclusion	30 September 2009
Whole of Government Accounts certified return	October 2009
Final accounts memorandum	30 November 2009
Use of resources report *	31 October 2008
Data quality report *	30 November 2008
Performance reports	TBC
Direction of Travel summary for Audit Commission website	TBC
Annual Audit and Inspection Letter	TBC

Note: * Reports in respect of 2007/08 year.

Appendix 1 – Elements of our work

Financial statements

- 1 I will carry out the audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB).
- 2 I am required to issue an opinion on whether the financial statements present fairly, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2008, the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2009 and its income and expenditure for the year.
- 3 I am also required to review whether the Annual Governance Statement has been presented in accordance with relevant requirements, and to report if it does not meet these requirements or if the Annual Governance Statement is misleading or inconsistent with our knowledge of the Council.

Value for money conclusion

- 4 The Code requires us to issue a conclusion on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the value for money conclusion. The Code also requires me to have regard to a standard set of relevant criteria, issued by the Audit Commission, in arriving at my conclusion.
- 5 In meeting this responsibility, I will review evidence that is relevant to the Council's corporate performance management and financial management arrangements. Where relevant work has been undertaken by other regulators, we will normally place reliance on their reported results to inform our work.
- 6 I will also follow up audit work from previous years to assess progress in implementing agreed recommendations.

Use of resources assessment 2007/08

- 7 The use of resources themes and KLOEs are outlined below.
- 8 We will arrive at a score of 1 to 4, based on the underlying key line of enquiry, for each of the following themes.

Table 1

Theme	Description
Financial reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of financial statements • External reporting
Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-term financial strategy • Budget monitoring • Asset management
Financial standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing spending within available resources
Internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management • System of internal control • Probity and propriety
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving value for money • Managing and improving value for money

- 9 We will report details of the scores and judgements made to the Council. The scores will be accompanied, where appropriate, by recommendations of what the Council needs to improve.
- 10 The auditor's scores are reported to the Commission and are used as the basis for its overall use of resources judgement for the purposes of the CPA.

Use of resources assessment 2008/09

- 11 The Commission has now consulted on its proposals for the 2008/09 Use of Resources assessment. It proposes that the work required to arrive at the 2008/09 use of resources assessment is fully aligned with that required to arrive at the auditor's 2008/09 value for money conclusion.
- 12 The Commission proposes that the assessment will be based upon the evidence from three themes:
 - managing money;
 - managing the business; and
 - managing other resources.
- 13 The Commission proposes that Data Quality will become an element of the Use of Resources framework from 2008/09.

Data quality 2007/08

- 14 This plan covers the 2007/08 data quality work. This is based on a three-stage approach covering:
 - Stage 1 – management arrangements;
 - Stage 2 – analytical review; and
 - Stage 3 – risk-based data quality spot checks of a sample of 2007/08 performance indicators.
- 15 Work will be focused on the 2007/08 overall arrangements for data quality, particularly on the responsibility of the Council to manage the quality of its data including data from partners where relevant.
- 16 Our fee estimate reflects an assessment of risk in relation to the Council's data quality arrangements and performance indicators. This risk assessment may change depending on our assessment of your overall management arrangements at stage 1 and we will update our plan accordingly, including any impact on the fee.

Whole of government accounts

- 17 I will be required to review and report on your WGA consolidation pack in accordance with the approach agreed with HM Treasury and the National Audit Office.

National Fraud Initiative

- 18 From 2008/09 work relating to the National Fraud Initiative will be carried out directly by the Commission under its new data matching powers under the Serious Crime Act 2007. The Commission will be consulting audited bodies on the work programme and fee scales for the National Fraud Initiative later this year.

Certification of grant claims and returns

- 19 I will continue to certify the Council's claims and returns on the following basis.
- Claims below £100,000 will not be subject to certification.
 - Claims between £100,000 and £500,000 will be subject to a reduced, light-touch certification.
 - Claims over £500,000 will be subject to a certification approach relevant to the auditor's assessment of the control environment and management preparation of claims. A robust control environment would lead to a reduced certification approach for these claims.

Appendix 2 – Basis for fee

- 1 The Audit Commission is committed to targeting its work where it will have the greatest effect, based upon assessments of risk and performance. This means planning work to address areas of risk relevant to our audit responsibilities and reflecting this in the audit fees. It also means making sure that our work is coordinated with the work of other regulators, and that our work helps you to improve.
- 2 The risk assessment process starts with the identification of the significant financial and operational risks applying at the Council with reference to:
 - our cumulative knowledge of the Council;
 - planning guidance issued by the Audit Commission;
 - the specific results of previous and ongoing audit work;
 - interviews with Council officers;
 - liaison with internal audit; and
 - the results of other review agencies' work where relevant.

Assumptions

- 3 In setting the fee, I have assumed that:
 - the level of risk in relation to the audit of the financial statements is not significantly different from that identified for 2007/08;
 - you will inform us of significant developments impacting on the audit;
 - internal audit meets the appropriate professional standards;
 - internal audit undertakes appropriate work on all systems that provide material figures in the financial statements sufficient that we can place reliance for the purposes of our audit;
 - good quality working papers and records will be provided to support the financial statements in line with agreed timescales;
 - requested information will be provided within agreed timescales; and
 - prompt responses will be provided to draft reports; and
 - additional work will not be required to address questions or objections raised by local government electors.
- 4 Where these assumptions are not met, I will be required to undertake additional work which is likely to result in an increased audit fee. The fee for the audit of the financial statements will be re-visited when we issue the opinion audit plan.

- 5 Changes to the plan will be agreed with you. These may be required if:
 - new residual audit risks emerge;
 - additional work is required by the Audit Commission or other regulators; or
 - additional work is required as a result of changes in legislation, professional standards or as a result of changes in financial reporting.
- 6 Below is a detailed breakdown of the audit and inspection fee for 2008/09.
- 7 The fee (plus VAT) will be charged in 12 equal instalments from April 2008 to March 2009.

Table 1 Detailed audit and inspection fee

Audit area	Planned fee 2008/09	Planned/Actual fee 2007/08	Page
Audit (excluding the Pension Fund)			
Financial statements*	271,900	257,300	
Use of resources 2007/08	47,850	86,900 (2006/07)	
Use of resources 2008/09	53,600		
Data quality 2007/08	30,900	32,400 (incl BVPP)	
Whole of government accounts	2,400	2,400	
National Fraud Initiative		1,200	
Total audit fee	406,650	£380,200	
Inspection			
Relationship management	14,930	14,700	
Direction of Travel	14,930	14,800	
Service inspection		31,600	
Less ODPM Grant	7,465	15,300	
Total inspection fee	22,395	45,800	
Total audit and inspection fee	429,045	426,000	
Certification of claims and returns	£136,960	£145,000	

* Includes planning and control.

Appendix 3 – Initial risk assessment – Use of resources and VFM conclusion

Significant risks identified	Mitigating action by audited body	Residual audit risk	Action in response to residual audit risk	Link to auditor's responsibilities
Councils face continued pressure to ensure strong financial management and financial standing, including the need to deliver savings targets and address funding pressures in Adult Social Services.	A range of monitoring arrangements are in place at officer level, with regular reporting to Members.	Yes	Update our assessment of the financial management and financial standing of the Council as part of our 2009 Use of Resources assessment.	Use of Resources – Managing the Money theme. Related VFM conclusion criteria.
Efficient and effective procurement and commissioning arrangements are key to ensuring Councils meet financial targets and achieve value for money.	Corporate procurement team. Use of Gateway Review.	Yes	Review Use of Resources KLOEs for procurement and commissioning with reference to a small number of major procurement exercises, such as the new Highways contract and aspects of joint commissioning with the PCT.	Use of Resources – Managing the Business theme. Related VFM conclusion criteria.
Our Annual Audit & Inspection Letter highlighted areas where the Council can strengthen its performance management arrangements.	Corporate plan recently agreed. New arrangements for integrating corporate performance and financial reporting.	Yes	Update our assessment of the Council's performance management arrangements. Review to include follow-up of recommendations made in the recent Corporate & Service planning and Local Area Agreement reports, issues highlighted in the AAIL and links to the Council's complaints procedures.	Use of Resources – Managing the Business and Managing other Resources themes. Related VFM conclusion criteria.
Other key aspects of the Council's arrangements that come within the new Use of Resources KLOEs include asset management, governance, partnerships, workforce planning, access to services, health inequalities, good conduct and anti-fraud, service resilience and sustainability.	In some of these areas reviews have recently been undertaken by the Audit Commission and / or other agencies.	Yes	Use of Resources work will include updating our risk assessment or conducting brief overviews in these and other areas covered by the new KLOEs, subject to their final confirmation. Planned overview of sustainability issues at the Council and other local bodies in the LSP area, subject to confirmation of Use of Resources KLOEs for 2009.	Use of Resources – Managing the Business and Managing Other Resources themes. Related VFM conclusion criteria.

Appendix 4 – Independence and objectivity

- 1 I am not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the District Auditor and the audit staff, which we are required by auditing and ethical standards to communicate to you.
- 2 I comply with the ethical standards issued by the APB and with the Commission's requirements in respect of independence and objectivity as summarised below.
- 3 Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission are required to comply with the Commission's Code of Audit Practice and Standing Guidance for Auditors, which defines the terms of the appointment. When auditing the financial statements, auditors are also required to comply with auditing standards and ethical standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB).
- 4 The main requirements of the Code of Audit Practice, Standing Guidance for Auditors and the standards are summarised below.
- 5 International Standard on Auditing (UK and Ireland) 260 (Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance) requires that the appointed auditor:
 - discloses in writing all relationships that may bear on the auditor's objectivity and independence, the related safeguards put in place to protect against these threats and the total amount of fee that the auditor has charged the client; and
 - confirms in writing that the APB's ethical standards are complied with and that, in the auditor's professional judgement, they are independent and their objectivity is not compromised.
- 6 The standard defines 'those charged with governance' as 'those persons entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of an entity'. In your case, the appropriate addressee of communications from the auditor to those charged with governance is the Audit & Risk Management Committee. The auditor reserves the right, however, to communicate directly with the Council on matters which are considered to be of sufficient importance.
- 7 The Commission's Code of Audit Practice has an overriding general requirement that appointed auditors carry out their work independently and objectively, and ensure that they do not act in any way that might give rise to, or could reasonably be perceived to give rise to, a conflict of interest. In particular, appointed auditors and their staff should avoid entering into any official, professional or personal relationships which may, or could reasonably be perceived to, cause them inappropriately or unjustifiably to limit the scope, extent or rigour of their work or impair the objectivity of their judgement.

- 8 The Standing Guidance for Auditors includes a number of specific rules. The key rules relevant to this audit appointment are as follows.
- Appointed auditors should not perform additional work for an audited body (ie work over and above the minimum required to meet their statutory responsibilities) if it would compromise their independence or might give rise to a reasonable perception that their independence could be compromised. Where the audited body invites the auditor to carry out risk-based work in a particular area that cannot otherwise be justified as necessary to support the auditor's opinion and conclusions, it should be clearly differentiated within the Audit and Inspection Plan as being 'additional work' and charged for separately from the normal audit fee.
 - Auditors should not accept engagements that involve commenting on the performance of other auditors appointed by the Commission on Commission work without first consulting the Commission.
 - The District Auditor responsible for the audit should, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, be changed at least once every five years.
 - The District Auditor and senior members of the audit team are prevented from taking part in political activity on behalf of a political party, or special interest group, whose activities relate directly to the functions of local government or NHS bodies in general, or to a particular local government or NHS body.
 - The District Auditor and members of the audit team must abide by the Commission's policy on gifts, hospitality and entertainment.

Appendix 5 – Working together

Meetings

- 1 The audit team will maintain knowledge of your issues to inform our risk-based audit through regular liaison with key officers.
- 2 Our proposal for the meetings is as follows.

Table 1 Proposed meetings with officers

Council officers	Audit Commission staff	Timing	Purpose
Chief Executive	District Auditor (DA) Audit Manager (AM)	May, September, October, March.	General update and to discuss Audit & Inspection Plan, Governance report, Use of Resources report, Annual Audit & Inspection Letter.
Deputy Chief Executive, with Head of Policy as appropriate.	District Auditor (DA) Audit Manager (AM)	Quarterly	General update, including progress with audit/Use of Resources reviews.
Director of Finance	District Auditor (DA) Audit Manager (AM)	Quarterly	General update, including progress with audit/Use of Resources reviews
Assistant Director of Finance (Accountancy)	AM and TL	Quarterly, and more frequently during accounts audit.	Update on audit and opinion issues
Chief Internal Auditor	AM and Team Leader (TL)	Quarterly	Update on audit progress and issues
Audit and Risk Management Committee	DA and AM, with TL as appropriate	Quarterly	Formal reporting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and Inspection Plan; • Annual Governance report; • Annual Audit and Inspection Letter; and • Use of Resources reports, and other reports and issues as appropriate.

Sustainability

- 3 The Audit Commission is committed to promoting sustainability in our working practices and we will actively consider opportunities to reduce our impact on the environment. This will include:
 - reducing paper flow by encouraging you to submit documentation and working papers electronically;
 - use of video and telephone conferencing for meetings as appropriate; and
 - reducing travel.