



# Annual Audit Letter

West Yorkshire Combined Authority  
Year ending 31 March 2018





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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose of the Annual Audit Letter

Our Annual Audit Letter summarises the work we have undertaken as the auditor for West Yorkshire Combined Authority (the Authority) for the year ended 31 March 2018. Although this letter is addressed to the Authority, it is designed to be read by a wider audience including members of the public and other external stakeholders.

Our responsibilities are defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (the NAO). The detailed sections of this letter provide details on those responsibilities, the work we have done to discharge them, and the key findings arising from our work. These are summarised below.

Area of responsibility	Summary
Audit of the financial statements	<p>Our report, issued on the 31 July 2018, included our opinion that the financial statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• give a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position as at 31 March 2018 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and</li><li>• have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18.</li></ul>
Other information published alongside the audited financial statements	<p>Our report issued on 31 July 2018 included our opinion that the other information in the Statement of Accounts is consistent with the audited financial statements.</p>
Value for Money conclusion	<p>Our report concluded that we are satisfied that in all significant respects, the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2018.</p>
Reporting to the group auditor	<p>We reported to the group auditor in line with the requirements applicable to the Authority's WGA return.</p>
Statutory reporting	<p>Our report confirmed that we did not use our powers under section 24 of the 2014 Act to issue a report in the public interest or to make written recommendations to the Authority.</p> <p>The report also confirmed that we did not exercise any other special powers of the auditor under sections 28, 29 or 31 of the 2014 Act.</p>

## 2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Opinion on the financial statements

Unqualified

### The scope of our audit and the results of our work

The purpose of our audit is to provide reasonable assurance to users that the financial statements are free from material error. We do this by expressing an opinion on whether the statements are prepared, in all material respects, in line with the financial reporting framework applicable to the Authority and whether they give a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position as at 31 March 2018 and of its financial performance for the year then ended.

Our audit was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice issued by the NAO, and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). These require us to consider whether:

- the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed;
- the significant accounting estimates made by management in the preparation of the financial statements are reasonable; and
- the overall presentation of the financial statements provides a true and fair view.

### Our approach to materiality

We apply the concept of materiality when planning and performing our audit, and when evaluating the effect of misstatements identified as part of our work. We consider materiality at numerous stages throughout the audit process, in particular when determining the nature, timing and extent of our audit procedures, and when evaluating the effect of uncorrected misstatements. An item is considered material if its misstatement or omission could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users of the financial statements.

Judgements about materiality are made in the light of surrounding circumstances and are affected by both qualitative and quantitative factors. As a result we have set materiality for the financial statements as a whole (financial statement materiality) and a lower level of materiality for specific items of account (specific materiality) due to the nature of these items or because they attract public interest. We also set a threshold for reporting identified misstatements to the Governance and Audit Committee. We call this our trivial threshold.

The table below provides details of the materiality levels applied for the year ended 31 March 2018:

Financial statement materiality	Our financial statement materiality is based on 1.75% of gross revenue expenditure.	£5m
Trivial threshold	Our trivial threshold is based on 3% of financial statement materiality.	£150k

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## 2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Our response to significant risks

As part of our continuous planning procedures we considered whether there were risks of material misstatement in the Authority's financial statements that required special audit consideration. We reported significant risks identified at the planning stage to the Governance and Audit Committee within our Audit Strategy Memorandum and provided details of how we responded to those risks in our Audit Completion Report. The table below outlines the identified significant risks, the work we carried out on those risks and our conclusions.

Identified significant risk	Our response	Our findings and conclusions
<p><b>Management override of controls</b> In all entities, management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Because of the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, we consider there to be a risk of material misstatement due to fraud and thus a significant risk on all audits.</p>	<p>We addressed this risk through performing audit work over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accounting estimates impacting on amounts included in the financial statements;</li> <li>• consideration of identified significant transactions outside the normal course of business; and</li> <li>• journals recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in preparation of the financial statements.</li> </ul>	<p>Our audit work provided the assurance we sought and did not highlight any indication of management override of controls.</p>
<p><b>Revenue recognition – fees and charges</b> In accordance with international standards on auditing (ISA 240) we presume there is a risk of fraud in respect of the recognition of revenue because of the potential for inappropriate recording of transactions in the wrong period. ISA 240 allows the presumption to be rebutted but, given the Authority's range of revenue sources, we concluded that there are insufficient grounds for rebuttal in 2017/18. We identified income from fees and charges as the key areas of audit testing. This does not imply that we suspect actual or intended manipulation but that we continue to deliver our audit work with appropriate professional scepticism.</p>	<p>We evaluated the design and implementation of controls to mitigate the risk of income being recognised in the wrong period. In addition we undertook a range of substantive procedures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• testing receipts in March, April and May 2018 to ensure they were recognised in the right year;</li> <li>• testing material year end receivables;</li> <li>• testing adjustment journals; and</li> <li>• obtaining direct confirmation of year-end bank balances and testing the reconciliations to the ledger.</li> </ul>	<p>Our audit work provided the assurance we sought and did not identify any indication of revenue being recognised in the wrong year.</p>

## 2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Our response to significant risks (continued)

Identified significant risk	Our response	Our findings and conclusions
<p><b>Property, plant and equipment (PPE) valuation</b></p> <p>The financial statements contain material entries on the Balance Sheet as well as material disclosure notes. The Authority employs an external valuation expert, Lambert Smith and Hampton, to provide information on valuations. As with many other bodies, there remains a high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with the valuation of PPE due to the significant judgements and number of variables involved in providing valuations. We therefore identified the valuation of PPE to be an area of audit risk.</p>	<p>We evaluated the design and implementation of controls to mitigate the risk. We reviewed the scope and terms of the engagement with the Authority's valuer and how management used the valuers report to value land and buildings in the financial statements. We also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assessed the competence, skills and experience of the Authority's valuer;</li> <li>considered regional valuation trends (provided by our valuation expert) to assess the reasonableness of the movement in valuations; and</li> <li>where necessary performed further audit procedures on individual assets to ensure that the basis and level of valuation is appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>There were no significant findings arising from our work on the valuation of PPE.</p>
<p><b>Defined benefit liability valuation</b></p> <p>The financial statements contain material pension entries in respect of retirement benefits. The calculation of these pension figures, both assets and liabilities, can be subject to significant volatility and includes estimates based upon a complex interaction of actuarial assumptions. This results in an increased risk of material misstatement.</p>	<p>We discussed with key contacts any significant changes to the pension estimates prior to the preparation of the financial statements. In addition to our standard programme of work in this area, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluated the management controls you have in place to assess the reasonableness of the figures provided by the Actuary; and</li> <li>considered the reasonableness of the Actuary's output, referring to an expert's report on all actuaries nationally which is commissioned annually by the NAO.</li> </ul>	<p>Our audit work provided the assurance we sought and did not identify any indication of material estimation error in respect of the defined benefit liability valuation.</p>



## 2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Internal control recommendations

As part of our audit we considered the internal controls in place that are relevant to the preparation of the financial statements. We did this to design audit procedures that allow us to express our opinion on the financial statements, but this did not extend to us expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal controls. We identified the following deficiencies in internal control as part of our audit.

Priority ranking	Description	Number of issues
1 (high)	In our view, there is potential for financial loss, damage to reputation or loss of information. This may have implications for the achievement of business strategic objectives. The recommendation should be taken into consideration by management immediately.	None
2 (medium)	In our view, there is a need to strengthen internal control or enhance business efficiency. The recommendations should be actioned in the near future.	Two
3 (low)	In our view, internal control should be strengthened in these additional areas when practicable.	One

### Deficiencies in internal control – Level 2

<b>Description of deficiency</b>	IT user access testing for leavers identified that for a sample of 14 leavers, 1 had not had system access terminated on departure.  Testing was extended to cover all leavers in year. Of the additional sample of 55, 1 had not had system access terminated. Additional procedures were also carried out to check the last log on date. All accounts had not been accessed since the employee had left.
<b>Potential effects</b>	Leavers are not deactivated in a timely manner, meaning that inappropriate access to business critical systems would be possible.
<b>Recommendation</b>	In order to avoid unauthorised access to the Authority's network and programs, the Authority should ensure that formal access disabling requests are issued for all leavers before their leaving date.
<b>Management response</b>	A revised leavers procedure for the ICT service desk will be in place by 20 July 2018. This will confirm the requirements for leaving dates to be notified to the ICT Service Desk to ensure that from the following day the leaver will not have access to the system or their data.  A revised ICT security policy is being drafted. It will include specific reference to leavers and the revised policy will be in place by 31 October 2018.

## 2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Internal control recommendations (continued)

#### Deficiencies in internal control – Level 2

<b>Description of deficiency</b>	The Authority's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Accounts and Password Policy requires administrative privileges to be set up and assigned via an administration account.  Administrative privileges are currently set up and assigned on users main accounts.
<b>Potential effects</b>	Appropriate segregation of duties may not be maintained when making administrative changes to systems. There is a risk that administrative privileges are not subject to adequate control.
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Authority should ensure ICT policies in relation to administrative accounts and privileges are adhered to.
<b>Management response</b>	Accepted. This will be completed no later than May 2019 as part of the Corporate Technology Programme through the Active Directory redesign workstream.

#### Deficiencies in internal control – Level 3

<b>Description of deficiency</b>	There are opportunities to improve the Authority's ICT Change Management procedure to ensure that it provides more comprehensive guidance to users.
<b>Potential effects</b>	Users may not follow best practice in relation to change management.
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Change Management procedure should be reviewed and updated to ensure that it includes comprehensive guidance with regards to change management procedures.
<b>Management response</b>	ICT Services have had a Change Management process for the last three years. The process is being updated, re-communicated to all staff and will be implemented next week.  Test environments are in place for six key systems (five of which are business critical). Although other systems do not have a test environment, the Change Management process means that roll back plans are submitted and approval by a manager is needed before changes are implemented.  The balance of risk is considered low for systems without a test environment. Every test environment incurs licence costs and staff time to keep it updated.



### 3. VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION

Value for money conclusion

Unqualified

#### Our audit approach

We are required to consider whether the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out in order to form our conclusion, and sets out the criterion and sub-criteria that we are required to consider.

The overall criterion is that, 'in all significant respects, 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.' To assist auditors in reaching a conclusion on this overall criterion, the following sub-criteria are set out by the NAO:

- informed decision making;
- sustainable resource deployment;
- working with partners and other third parties.

Our auditor's report, issued to the Authority on 31 July 2018, stated that, in all significant respects, the Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2018.

Sub-criteria	Commentary	Arrangements in place?
Informed decision making	<p>The Combined Authority has a clear governance structure which is described on its website and includes the expected features of an effective governance framework within local government.</p> <p>During the year the Combined Authority has continued its 'One Organisation' Programme designed to put in place the right structures, processes and people to deliver the Authority's objectives and priorities.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan sets out the Combined Authority's priorities and is closely aligned to the overarching aims of the Strategic Economic Plan. Clear and measurable targets and outcomes for key priorities have been identified and included in the Corporate Plan with key performance targets being measured regularly. The Corporate Plan is supported by revenue and capital budgets.</p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy which is reviewed and refreshed annually reflects strategic objectives and allocates resources to priority areas. In addition, regular financial reporting takes place through the Organisational Management Team and Leadership Team, with regular reporting to the Combined Authority.</p> <p>Over the last year, Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) panels (with their public and private sector representation) have been integrated within the Authority's decision-making structure as advisory committees, improving transparency and accountability.</p> <p>There is a Risk Manual which sets out the risk management strategy and the way risks are identified, recorded and monitored. Management have agreed to implement Internal Audit recommendations to strengthen risk management arrangements.</p> <p>The Authority continues to develop and refine its project management framework to ensure that there is greater accountability and improved governance with regard to the management and delivery of projects.</p> <p>The system of internal control is subject to Internal Audit and for 2017/18, the Authority's internal auditors, provided an overall opinion of reasonable assurance.</p>	Yes

(continued overleaf)



### 3. VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION

Sub-criteria	Commentary	Arrangements in place?
Informed decision making (continued)	A Governance and Audit Committee is in place to oversee the governance framework including the work of internal audit and approval of the Authority's financial statements. In accordance with changes in legislation and to strengthen arrangements an independent member was appointed to the Committee during 2017/18.	Yes
Sustainable resource deployment	<p>The Combined Authority has made good progress in addressing the financial challenges from public sector austerity and has a proven track record of strong budget management and delivering planned budget reductions.</p> <p>The Combined Authority delivered financial outturn for 2017/18 £1.6 million better than originally planned. This reflects additional operational savings mainly attributable to the managed staff vacancy and recruitment position in the second half of the year.</p> <p>A balanced budget has been set for 2018/19 with the use of £1.4m of reserves consistent with the three year Medium Term Financial Strategy covering the years 2018/19 to 2020/21.</p> <p>The Combined Authority has also recognised the significant financial challenge facing the districts and has agreed to ongoing reductions in the transport levy.</p> <p>The capital programme reflects priorities set out in the Corporate Plan flowing from the Strategic Economic Plan.</p>	Yes
Working with partners and other third parties	<p>The Combined Authority plays an important and active role in providing the vehicle for closer partnership working between the local authorities of West Yorkshire and York and the LEP in order to ensure improved economic outcomes for local people. It focuses on the areas that make the most sense to deliver at the city region level.</p> <p>The Authority has clearly defined its ambitions to work with its partners across the region to effect economic growth in the Leeds City Region and these ambitions are set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). The SEP is kept under review to ensure it continues to align with the region's needs and recognises relationships with new and emerging strategies such as the Industrial Strategy for example. The SEP provides a framework for engagement with others within the City Region and beyond across private, public and third sectors to deliver good growth.</p> <p>The Combined Authority is an active participant in sub-regional networks and works with 'Transport for the North' on a range of transport related matters. It responds to and leads on transport consultations for the region for example with stakeholders through the District Consultation Sub-Committees and Operator Groups. Consultation events have taken place during the year on the Strategic Economic Plan, the Single Transport Plan, major schemes and the bus area network reviews which have successfully sought to contain costs but retain accessibility for bus users. In addition the Authority is building in youth engagement as it develops its bus and transport strategy.</p> <p>Up to date procurement arrangements are in place to secure cost effective purchasing.</p>	Yes

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### 3. VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION

#### Significant audit risks

The NAO's guidance requires us to carry out work to identify whether or not a risk to our conclusion exists. Risk, in the context of our work, is the risk that we come to an incorrect conclusion rather than the risk of the arrangements in place at the Authority being inadequate. In our Audit Strategy Memorandum, we reported that we had identified one significant audit risk. The work we carried out in relation to this risk is outlined below.

Risk	Work undertaken	Conclusion
<p><b>Sustainable resource deployment</b></p> <p>Our audit work in previous years has concluded that the Authority has appropriate arrangements in place for Medium Term Financial Planning. The Authority continues to face financial pressures including a reduction in the transport levy by £1m for 2017/18 and by £2m for 2018/19 to 2019/20. A reduction of £1m equates to a circa 2% saving requirement in discretionary expenditure. The Authority has recently updated its medium term financial strategy (MTFS).</p> <p>We needed to ensure our knowledge of the Authority's MTFS arrangements and its monitoring of the planned delivery of a balanced budget and related savings, remains up to date in order to ensure we give the correct conclusion.</p>	<p>Building on our work in previous years, our work included reviewing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Authority's updated 2018 MTFS to ensure it reflects the latest income projections and funding position from the transport levy; and</li> <li>the arrangements the Authority has in place to monitor progress in delivering a balanced budget and related savings plans.</li> </ul>	<p>The Authority has revised its MTFS for 2018/19 to 2020/21 to provide a longer term view of the financial challenges it faces. This is based on appropriate income, funding, pay and non-pay assumptions and recognises the risks associated with these assumptions.</p> <p>A balanced budget has been set for 2018/19 with the use of £1.4m of reserves consistent with the three year MTFS.</p> <p>The MTFS and balanced budget for 2018/19 have been subject to appropriate scrutiny and challenge via established governance and reporting arrangements within the Combined Authority.</p> <p>Arrangements for monitoring progress in delivering a balanced budget and related savings plans have been enhanced in year. Including for example the extension of regular and routine financial reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (since May 2017), to the Combined Authority (from December 2017) and to senior management team meetings.</p> <p>It is noted that the Authority has a good track record of achieving its financial plans and the required savings. For 2016/17 and 2017/18 the Authority secured the planned savings plus additional savings of £1.4m and £1.6m respectively.</p> <p>There are no matters which give rise to reporting issues for 2017/18.</p>

## 4. OTHER REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Exercise of statutory reporting powers	No matters to report
Completion of group audit reporting requirements	Below testing threshold
Other information published alongside the audited financial statements	Consistent

The NAO's Code of Audit Practice and the 2014 Act place wider reporting responsibilities on us, as the Authority's external auditor. We set out below, the context of these reporting responsibilities and our findings for each.

### Matters which we report by exception

The 2014 Act provides us with specific powers where matters come to our attention that, in our judgement, require reporting action to be taken. We have the power to:

- issue a report in the public interest;
- make statutory recommendations that must be considered and responded to publicly;
- apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law; and
- issue an advisory notice under schedule 8 of the 2014 Act.

We have not exercised any of these statutory reporting powers.

The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account. We did not receive any such objections or questions.

### Reporting to the NAO in respect of Whole of Government Accounts consolidation data

The NAO, as group auditor, requires us to complete the WGA Assurance Statement in respect of its consolidation data. We submitted this information to the NAO on 31 July 2018.

### Other information published alongside the financial statements

The Code of Audit Practice requires us to consider whether information published alongside the financial statements is consistent with those statements and our knowledge and understanding of the Authority. In our opinion, the other information in the Statement of Accounts is consistent with the audited financial statements.

## 5. OUR FEES

### Fees for work as the Authority's auditor

We reported our proposed fees for the delivery of our work in the Audit Strategy Memorandum, presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in February 2018.

Having completed our work for the 2017/18 financial year, we can confirm that our final fees are as follows:

Area of work	2017/18 proposed fee	2017/18 final fee
Delivery of audit work under the NAO Code of Audit Practice	£33,720	£33,720

### Fees for other work

We confirm that we have not undertaken any non-audit services for the Authority in the year.

## 6. FORWARD LOOK

### Financial outlook

The Combined Authority has made good progress in addressing its challenges to date and has a proven track record of budget management and delivering planned budget reductions. In common with most authorities, the Combined Authority faces a continuing financial challenge to maintain services at a time of unprecedented reductions in local government funding.

The revenue funding for many of the Combined Authority's activities comes mainly from the transport levy (£95 million) on West Yorkshire local authorities, with further contributions from them and the other City Region authorities for economic activities. The financial pressures facing these authorities will continue to impact on future levy levels. The Combined Authority's scope for savings is constrained by the high proportion of non-discretionary expenditure such as £43 million from the transport levy spent on the statutory English National Concessionary Scheme.

The budget for 2018/19 includes funding from government and other agencies for business and skills activities although much of the funding is non-recurrent and there is no certainty that further funds will be secured for 2019/20 and beyond. Overall the Combined Authority faces a funding gap of £1.2 million as it develops its budget for 2019/20 and there is little scope to use reserves to close this gap. The Combined Authority is working hard on a range of options to make further savings and improve efficiency.

### Operational challenges

An important focus of the Combined Authority's work over the next year and beyond will be to ensure it prioritises the right issues to enable the region to meet the opportunities and challenges of the coming years head-on. This includes:

- boosting business productivity, innovation and growth, creating thousands more skilled jobs;
- being a leader in promoting inclusive economic growth that benefits everyone;
- delivering 21st Century transport through major transport schemes such as HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and improvements to the Trans-Pennine and East Coast main lines benefiting all parts of the region;
- continuing to support local politicians' efforts to secure a devolution deal that enables the region to continue to invest in those issues that make peoples lives better;
- continuing to deliver the £1bn growth deal and £1bn Transport Fund, ensuring the right projects are delivered on time and on budget; and
- continuing to modernise the organisation, ensuring it is in the best possible place to respond to the opportunity of devolution and save money through innovative new approaches to delivering services.

### Next year's audit and how we will work with the Authority

We will focus our work on the risks that your challenges present to your financial statements and your ability to maintain proper arrangements for securing value for money.

In the coming year we will continue to support the Authority by:

- continued liaison with the Authority's Internal Auditors to minimise duplication of work;
- attending Governance and Audit Committee meetings and presenting an Audit Progress Report including updates on regional and national developments; and
- hosting events for staff, such as our Local Government Accounts workshop.

We will meet with the Authority to identify any learning from the 2017/18 audit and will continue to share our insights from across local government and relevant knowledge from the wider public and private sector.

In terms of the technical challenges that officers face around the production of the statement of accounts, we will continue to work with them to share our knowledge of new accounting developments and we will be on hand to discuss any issues as and when they arise.

The Authority has taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit and we wish to thank the Combined Authority, Governance and Audit Committee, and Authority staff for their support and co-operation during our audit in the past year.

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