



Northern Ireland Audit Office

Our purpose ...

Promoting better use of public money, through independent professional scrutiny, underpinned by our commitment to:

- Integrity
- Equality
- Openness
- Innovation

To make a difference for the people of Northern Ireland.

The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (the Order) provides that the Department of the Environment (DOE) may, with the consent of the Comptroller and Auditor General, designate persons who are members of staff of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) as Local Government Auditors. Once designated, auditors carry out their statutory and other responsibilities, and exercise their professional judgement, independently of the DOE and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

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Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council AUDIT OF 2015-2016

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

DRAFT AUDIT STRATEGY

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1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Local Government Auditor is the independent external auditor of the financial statements of Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council (the Council) under the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (the Order). Our audit is designed to allow the Local Government Auditor to give an opinion on whether:
- the financial statements are 'true and fair', in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (the Code);
 - the information given in certain sections of the Statement of Accounts is consistent with the financial statements; and
 - a number of further matters on which she reports by exception, including whether or not adequate accounting records have been maintained or if the Annual Governance Statement does not reflect Department of the Environment guidance or compliance with the Code.
- 1.2. The purpose of this document is to highlight to the Chief Financial Officer and Audit Committee of the Council:
- how we plan to audit the financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2016, including how we will be addressing significant risks of material misstatement to transactions and balances;
 - matters of interest and developments in financial reporting and legislation;
 - the planned timetable, fees and audit team; and
 - matters which we are required to communicate to you under International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) (ISAs), including the scope of the audit, our respective responsibilities, and how we maintain independence and objectivity (**Annex 1**).

Actions for those charged with governance

- 1.3. Those charged with governance are invited to consider and discuss:
- whether our assessment of the potential risks of material misstatement to the financial statements is complete;
 - whether management's responses to these risks are adequate;
 - our proposed audit plan to address these risks; and
 - whether the financial statements could be materially misstated due to fraud and communicate any areas of concern to management and the audit team.
- 1.4. Those charged with governance, in order to comply with best practice, should also review the accounting policies adopted by the organisation and consider whether they remain appropriate to the organisation's circumstances and comply with the Code and relevant guidance issued by Department of the Environment.

2 Our Audit approach

- 2.1. Our approach to the audit of financial statements uses a range of techniques to obtain audit evidence and assurance and is based on a thorough understanding of the business.
- 2.2. This understanding allows us to develop an audit strategy which focuses on addressing specific risks whilst providing an acceptable level of assurance across the financial statements as a whole.

Outline of our general audit approach

- 2.3. The NIAO audit approach is risk-based, informed by a good understanding of the operations of Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council and an assessment of the risks associated with the financial statements and the regularity of underlying transactions.
- 2.4. Our initial assessment of Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council's operations and control environment has identified areas of significant risk which require a specific audit response. These are listed below in section 3. Against each risk we have provided a preliminary audit response. On completion of our audit we will provide a further update on each of these risks in our Report to those charged with Governance.
- 2.5. For all significant audit areas, we will use a variety of audit techniques, including analytical procedures and sampling of transactions.
- 2.6. We will review other accounting systems and management controls operated by the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council only to the extent we consider necessary for the effective performance of the audit. As a result, our review may not detect all weaknesses that exist or all improvements that could be made. Where we do uncover any significant deficiency weaknesses we will report these to you, with our recommendations for improvements.

Using the work of others

- 2.7. We continue to liaise closely with Internal Audit and seek to take assurance from their work where their objectives cover areas of joint interest. We also carry out a review of the Internal Audit structure and function in accordance with ISA 610: *Using the work of internal auditors*.
- 2.8. We intend to place reliance on:
 - The work of the actuary in respect of the valuation of the pension liability in the financial statements.
 - Land and Property Services in respect of providing estimations of property values.
 - Civil Engineering Experts and NIEA re the provision for landfill site closure and aftercare costs.

Materiality

- 2.9. The concept of materiality recognises that financial statements are rarely absolutely correct, and that an audit is designed to provide reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement.
- 2.10. For the purposes of determining whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement or irregularity we consider whether the following would influence the users of the accounts:
 - the magnitude of misstatement; or
 - the nature and cause of misstatements (e.g. because of the sensitivity of specific disclosure or regularity requirements).
- 2.11. In line with generally accepted practice, we have set our quantitative materiality threshold as approximately 1.5% of expenditure, which equates to £935,000.

- 2.12. Other elements of the financial statements that we consider to be more sensitive to users of the accounts will be assessed using a lower qualitative materiality threshold. These elements include the remuneration report disclosures; our audit fee and related party transactions.
- 2.13. We apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing our audit and in evaluating the effect of misstatements on our audit and on the financial statements. As the audit progresses our assessment of both quantitative and qualitative materiality may change.

Error Reporting Threshold

- 2.14. For reporting purposes, we will treat any misstatements below £9,000 as “trivial” and therefore not requiring consideration by the Audit Committee.
- 2.15. Please note that this is a separate threshold to our consideration of materiality as described above. It is materiality, not the error reporting threshold, which is used in forming our audit opinion.

3 Significant Risks

Risks of material misstatement in the financial statements

- 3.1. As part of our work to develop the audit plan, we have identified the following significant risks of material misstatement. A significant risk is an identified and assessed risk of material misstatement that, in the auditor’s judgement, requires special audit consideration.

Significant Risk	Audit Response
<p>Reorganisation - Council has undergone organisational change during the year which impacts upon its financial results including opening balances and transferred functions.</p>	<p>We will consider how council has gained assurance over these changes and we will test accordingly.</p> <p>We will further consider any changes which may impact upon the financial accounts and the local government auditors opinion.</p>
<p>Landfill Provision - there is an existing provision in the accounts relating to the landfill sites within the Council area. The two closed landfill sites are subject to compliance notices from the NIEA. Until NIEA are fully satisfied as to closure arrangements for these two ‘dilute and disperse’ sites there remains some uncertainty as to the adequacy of the landfill provision.</p>	<p>We will review the basis of the provision and the relevant supporting documentation, including any correspondence from the NIEA.</p>
<p>Bank Reconciliations – the completion of timely and accurate bank reconciliations is a key internal control for all organisations. An unreconciled difference in the initial accounts provided by one of the legacy Council’s resulted in a certification delay of that Council’s accounts in 2014/15. With significant structural changes in 2015/16, bank reconciliations procedures have not yet been fully embedded within the new Council e.g. we understand bank reconciliations have now only been performed to May 2015.</p>	<p>We will review bank reconciliations completed in year and test the year end bank reconciliations on a sample basis.</p>

- 3.2. Under ISA 240, there is a presumed significant risk of material misstatement owing to fraud arising from management override of controls. We will address this risk through our testing of journals, estimates and through a review of any significant or unusual transactions in the year.
- 3.3. There is also a presumed risk of fraud in revenue recognition, albeit rebuttable. We will review the areas where we consider there could potentially be a risk of fraud in revenue recognition. This will include identifying which income streams are received in the form of cash, the controls in place over cash and cyclical audit testing of the main income areas.

Other risk factors

- 3.4. In addition to the significant risks we have identified above, we have also identified another risk factors. We do not consider these to represent a significant risk of material misstatement in the financial statements but are matters which we will continue to monitor and respond to as appropriate throughout the audit. This includes:

Procurement - The rules and regulations governing how goods/services are procured are complex. There is a risk that these rules could be misinterpreted resulting in legal challenge from unsuccessful bidders, fines imposed by EU authorities and poor value for money. In order to obtain assurance that proper procurement procedures have been adhered to we will select a sample of procurement exercises carried out throughout the year and test to ensure that monies have been spent in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.

4 Further matters of interest

- 4.1. The paragraphs below identify some areas impacted by new guidance and other issues for noting. Councils should be aware of these matters as they may affect the preparation of your financial statements and our audit plan.

Remuneration Report

- 4.2. The Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 is effective for 2015-16 financial statements. A key change is the requirement for large local government bodies to produce a Remuneration Report. Guidance on the format of this report has been issued by the Department.

Audit Certification Deadline

- 4.3 The Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 also change the audit certification timetable. The audit deadline for certifying local government bodies' accounts is now 30 September. This should be taken into consideration when setting dates for meetings to approve the accounts as further audit procedures are required once the final signed accounts are received by the Local Government Auditor.
- 4.4 It should also be noted that the 2015 Regulations require approval of the financial statements by the committee to be on audited rather than unaudited financial statements.

Performance Improvement

- 4.5 The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 prescribes new responsibilities for the Local Government Auditor regarding the audit and assessment of performance improvement arrangements in Councils. The scope of this work is communicated to Councils separately in line with the timetable set out in legislation.

Proper Arrangements

- 4.6 In addition to the audit of the financial statements, the Local Government Auditor has a duty under the 2005 Order to be satisfied that Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council have made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The annual financial audit and improvement audit and assessment work will feed into the risk assessment and conclusions of arrangements in place. Some additional work will be performed to enable the Local Government Auditor to satisfy herself that such arrangements are in place. Conclusions regarding proper arrangements will be noted in the Annual Audit Letter and any recommendations for improvement will be included in the Report to those Charged with Governance.

5 Audit timetable, staffing and fees

Timetable and fees

- 5.1. Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council is required to comply with the legislative timetable for producing and publishing audited financial statements.
- 5.2. Key target dates are:

Event	Date Agreed
Interim audit testing to commence	18 th January 2016
Submission of Chief Financial Officer approved accounts	30 th June 2016
Final audit testing to commence	25 th July 2016
Draft Report to those charged with governance	14 th September 2016
Audit [Panel/Committee] meeting	TBC
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council provides signed Financial Statements and Letter of Representation	23 rd September 2016
Financial Statements to be certified	30 th September 2016
Final Report to those charged with Governance issued	24 th October 2016
Annual Audit Letter	24 th October 2016

- 5.3. The estimated audit fee for the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council account is £63,000-68,000.
- 5.4. Completion of our audit in line with the timetable and fee is dependent upon:
- Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council delivering on 30th June 2016 a complete Statement of Accounts of sufficient quality that have been subject to appropriate internal review.
 - Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council delivering good quality supporting documentation and evidence, within the agreed timetable; and
 - Appropriate client staff being available during the audit.

Staffing

- 5.5. The following NIAO staff will be involved in the audit:

TITLE	NAME	RESPONSIBILITIES
Assignment Director	Colette Kane	Overall responsibility for the audit
Assignment Manager	Stephen Knox	Day to day responsibility of the audit and the audit team
Lead Auditor	Caroline Laird	Detailed planning, conduct and supervision of the audit testing
Team members	Aileen Ruddy John Heron	Audit testing

Scope of the audit

1. Our audit of the financial statements will be carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISAs) issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB), taking into account the UK Auditing Practice Board's Practice Note 10 (Revised): *Audit of Financial Statements in Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (Revised)*. These standards represent best practice in auditing and aim to promote uniformity of practice throughout the world, thereby increasing public confidence in the audit process.
2. Our audit procedures are designed primarily to provide an opinion on whether the financial statements provide a true and fair view of the position at 31st March 2016 and the activities reported for the year then ended.
3. In addition we have a professional responsibility to report if the financial statements do not comply in any material respect with the Code and the Accounts Direction and other relevant guidance issued by the Department of the Environment. We therefore review the quality, effectiveness and transparency of the accounting practices and financial reporting. This includes consideration of the appropriateness of accounting policies, accounting estimates and judgements and the adequacy of disclosures affected by unusual or non-recurring transactions recognised during the period.
4. As part of our audit we will review the information contained in the Explanatory Forward. Certain information given in the Explanatory Forward and parts of the Remuneration Report are subject to our audit opinion. Other information in the Explanatory Forward is reviewed only to the extent that we confirm that it is consistent with the financial statements and our understanding of the business. We also review the overall balance and clarity of information contained in the Explanatory Forward.
5. Legislation requires the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council to give notice, by publication on its website, of the date from which the accounts and other documents are available for public inspection and the date from which the exercise of rights under Article 17 and 18 of the Order may be exercised. We will hear and carefully consider representations by, and objections from, interested parties concerning the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council's accounts. In conducting our audit, when appropriate, we will consider the lawfulness of items of account, the conduct of members and officers, instances where it appears a loss may have arisen and our other statutory duties as Local Government Auditor.
6. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the Local Government Auditor extends to not only the audit of financial statements but also to aspects of financial and corporate arrangements to secure the economic, efficient and effective use of resources. The Code can be viewed on the NIAO website (www.niauditoffice.gov.uk).
7. We will provide the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council with a Report to those Charged with Governance containing observations and recommendations on significant matters that have arisen in the course of the audit. After the completion of the audit we will issue an Annual Audit Letter to the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.

Governance Statement

8. We will also review the Governance Statement to ensure it complies with the Code and Department of the Environment guidance and that the statement fairly reflects our understanding of the state of internal control systems within the entity during the year.

Respective Responsibilities

9. In line with Auditing Standards we are required to agree the respective responsibilities of the Local Government Auditor, the Council's Chief Financial Officer and the NIAO. These responsibilities are set out in the Statement of Responsibilities of Local Government Auditors

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and Local Government Bodies issued by the Local Government Auditor. The Statement of Responsibilities can be viewed on the NIAO website (www.niauditoffice.gov.uk).

10. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

Preparation of the financial statements

11. In line with Auditing Standards we are required to agree the respective responsibilities of the Local Government Auditor, the Council's Chief Financial Officer and the NIAO. These responsibilities are set out in the Statement of Responsibilities of Local Government Auditors and Local Government Bodies issued by the Local Government Auditor.
12. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

Legal requirements under Accounts and Audit Regulations

13. The main requirements under the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (NI) 2015 are included in the Guidance on the Regulations issued by the Department of Environment in LG 30/15.

Supporting Records

14. All relevant general ledger transactions should be processed to allow trial balances to be made available for audit purposes with the draft financial statements. Any amendments made to the trial balances after the close of books should be discussed with NIAO staff and supported by an approved journal and any other underlying documentation. Further adjustments may be required as a result of our audit findings.
15. We will require access to schedules and documentation which support the figures and disclosures within the financial statements, and we would expect the draft account to have been subject to appropriate management review prior to submission for audit. A list summarising the key items of audit information required and the dates that we need them for will be agreed with the finance team prior to each audit visit.
16. We will verify that the submitted financial statements and their supporting schedules have been subject to a detailed management review.

Fraud

17. The primary responsibility for the detection of fraud rests with management. Their role in the detection of fraud is an extension of their role in preventing fraudulent activity. The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for establishing a sound system of internal control designed to support the achievement of Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council policies, aims and objectives and to manage the risks facing the organisation; this includes the risk of fraud.
18. Our audit is designed to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements (as a whole) are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. We are not responsible for preventing fraud or corruption, although our audit may serve to act as a deterrent.
19. We are required to make inquiries of those charged with governance in respect of their oversight responsibility for:
 - Management's assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated owing to fraud, including the nature, extent and frequency of such assessments;

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- Management’s process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud, including any specific risks of fraud that management has identified or that has been brought to its attention;
- Management’s communication to the Audit Committee (and others charged with governance) on its processes for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud;
- Management’s communication, if any, to its employees on its views about business practices and ethical behaviour; and
- Whether management has any knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud.

Communication of audit matters

20. ISA 260: *Communication with those charged with governance* provides guidance for communication during the audit cycle.
21. The principles of this ISA are embodied in the NIAO audit approach. These include the provision of this strategy document, wash-up meetings, after audit visits to communicate findings, and the provision of a Report to those Charged with Governance at the completion of the audit setting out observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the course of the audit. In addition we shall complete an Annual Audit Letter for publication which will summarise our audit findings.
22. In addition, the ISA states that ‘*the auditor shall communicate with those charged with governance significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit*’. Significant difficulties would include delays in management providing required information, the unavailability of expected information and restrictions imposed on the auditor by management. We will consider if any issues we have in performing our audit represents significant difficulties. If we encounter significant difficulties we must report these to those charged with governance, documenting how they have been resolved.
23. ISA 265: *Communicating deficiencies in internal control to those charged with governance and management* places a responsibility on the auditor to communicate appropriately to those charged with governance and management deficiencies in internal control that the auditor has identified in an audit of financial statements. We will report significant deficiencies in writing to those charged with governance and management.

Whole of Government Accounts

24. Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council has been designated for inclusion in the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) by DFP under section 15(1) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. As such, Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council is required to provide a WGA return to DFP as directed.
25. The Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council is deemed by DFP to be a ‘WGA Minor Body’ and as such has limited reporting requirements and does not require an audit of the WGA returns. Minor Body status is subject to review each year.

Personal Data

26. The processing of personal data for audit purposes will be completed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. We have procedures in place to ensure that the security of personal data is safeguarded at all stages of the audit process. We will notify you in the Executive Summary of the Report to those charged with Governance of action taken to return, retain or destroy any personal data processed for audit purposes.

Assembly of certified audit files

27. International Standard on Quality Control (UK and Ireland) 1 (ISQC1): *Quality control for firms that perform audits* provides guidance on the assembly of completed audit files. We are dedicated to achieving quality throughout our audit process. ISQC1 suggests that 60 days is

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sufficient time to assemble the files and also states that firms should have “policies and procedures designed to maintain the confidentiality, safe custody, integrity, accessibility and retrievability of engagement documentation”.

28. As part of our office procedures we operate a structured approach to storing the completed audit files within 60 days of certification thereby demonstrating compliance with ISQC1 requirements (which are echoed in ISA 230: *Audit documentation*). Therefore we will request that management responses to our Report to those charged with Governance are agreed within 60 days of certification.

Independence

29. The NIAO complies with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence and has developed important safeguards and procedures in order to ensure our independence and objectivity. These are set out in **Annex 2** below: *NIAO quality standards and independence*. We will reconfirm our independence and objectivity for the year ended 31st March 2016 in our Report to those Charged with Governance.

Annex 2: NIAO quality standards and independence

Audit quality

1. Auditing Standards require that we communicate at least annually with each body we audit on how we maintain our audit quality and our independence.
2. Quality is strongly embedded in the NIAO culture and manifests itself through:
 - Continued Professional Development (CPD) – all professional staff are expected to maintain a level of CPD each year across the range of professional, management and personal effectiveness training and development; and
 - specialist skills – our audit team can call as necessary on the NIAO in-house Audit Policy Branch.
3. We have well established review procedures to ensure that appropriate audit work is undertaken efficiently and in accordance with International Standards on Auditing:
 - all planning decisions and fieldwork are reviewed by NIAO management and directorate;
 - all significant matters are dealt with promptly and will be raised with Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council management as necessary; and
 - progress on the audit is monitored on a continuous basis to ensure that the work is completed efficiently, effectively, to time and within budget. We have well established review procedures to ensure that appropriate audit work is undertaken efficiently and in accordance with International Standards on Auditing.
4. In addition, the NIAO has additional procedures for high risk audits, which include the review of key judgements by an NIAO Director who is fully independent of the audit team.
5. Each year the NIAO executes a programme of post-certification internal Quality Control Reviews. The objective of these reviews is to establish whether sufficient and appropriate evidence has been collected and evaluated and whether the NIAO's financial audits comply with professional standards and internal policies.
6. To seek an external view, the other UK public audit agencies conduct external Quality Control Reviews on a sample of our post-certified audit files. The results of the Quality Control Reviews are regularly brought to the attention of all staff.

Independence policies and safeguards

7. The NIAO is independent of government and differs from other professional audit bodies in that it has additional public service responsibilities.
8. All public sector bodies are required to observe high standards of probity in the management of their affairs, and the Committee on Standards in Public Life has identified seven key principles which should be followed: selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership. The combination of professional ethics and public sector principles therefore places the NIAO in a unique position.
9. These principles underpin the work of the NIAO, in particular:
 - Accountability - everything done by those who work in the NIAO must be able to stand the test of assembly scrutiny, public judgements on propriety, and professional codes of conduct;
 - Probity - there should be an absolute standard of honesty and integrity in handling NIAO work and resources; and
 - Objectivity and Impartiality - The Local Government Auditor a member of the NIAO staff. The head of NIAO is the Comptroller and Auditor General and his independence is secured in statute. This underlines the need for all NIAO staff to be objective and impartial in our work, including accurate, fair and balanced reporting.

Annex 2: NIAO quality standards and independence

10. We need to apply these values to retain our credibility with the Assembly, local government bodies and other stakeholders in our work and therefore a code of conduct is issued annually for all staff to complete a return confirming that they have complied with its provisions.