

Item: 5

Pension Fund Sub-committee: 26 May 2021.

Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund – Annual Audit Plan.

Report by Head of Finance.

1. Purpose of Report

To present Audit Scotland's Audit Plan for the external audit of the Council's Pension Fund for 2020/21.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

The external audit annual plan for 2020/21 in respect of the Council's Pension Fund, prepared by Audit Scotland, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Background

3.1.

Regulation 55 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2018 states that councils responsible for administering a pension fund (administering authorities) are required to publish a Pension Fund Annual Report containing the financial statements of the Pension Fund.

3.2.

The Accounts Commission appointed Audit Scotland as external auditor of the Council's Pension Fund for the five-year period from 2016 to 2021. This is the final year of this appointment.

3.3.

Audit Scotland's responsibilities, as independent auditor, are established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and the Code of Audit Practice and are guided by the auditing profession's ethical guidance.

3.4.

Following the conclusion of each year's planning process, the external auditor prepares an annual plan detailing the work to be undertaken as part of the annual audit of the Council's Pension Fund. The plan sets out the ways in which Audit Scotland will meet its respective responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

4. Audit Plan 2020/21

4.1.

The Annual Audit Plan 2020/21, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, contains an overview of the planned scope and timing of the Pension Fund audit. The plan identifies the work required to provide an opinion on the financial statements and related matters and to meet the wider scope requirements of the public sector audit, including the approach to Best Value. The wider scope of public audit contributes to conclusions on the appropriateness, effectiveness and impact of corporate governance, performance management arrangements and financial sustainability.

4.2.

Based on discussions with staff, attendance at committee meetings and a review of supporting information, the main risk areas identified for the Council's Pension Fund are as follows:

4.2.1.

Financial statement issues and risks:

- Risk of management override of controls – the risk of management override of controls in order to change the position disclosed in the financial statements.
- Estimation, judgements and classification – there is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and classification of certain investments such as pooled funds and other unquoted investments, where valuations involve the application of judgement in determining appropriate amounts.

4.2.2.

Wider dimension issues:

- Risk of fraud over income and expenditure – the risk of fraud over expenditure in the public sector, the extent and complexity of income, and the misstatement of high value payments.

4.3.

Audit Scotland will provide an independent auditor's report to members of the Council, as the administering authority for the Pension Fund, and the Accounts Commission for Scotland, setting out its opinions on the annual accounts, and will provide the Pension Fund Sub-committee and the Accounts Commission with an annual report on the audit containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen in the course of the audit.

5. Corporate Governance

This report relates to governance and financial processes and procedures and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

6. Financial Implications

6.1.

Audit Scotland charges a set fee for undertaking the audit of the Council's Pension Fund. In determining the audit fee, external auditors have taken account of the risk exposure of the Fund, the planned management assurances in place and the level of reliance they plan to take from the work of internal audit. The audit approach assumes receipt of the unaudited annual accounts, with a complete working papers package by 30 July 2021.

6.2.

Audit Scotland's fee proposal for the Pension Fund Audit 2020/21 is £21,490, a rise of 2% in comparison to the fee of £21,010 for 2019/20.

7. Legal Aspects

An external audit and review of the Council's Pension Fund helps the Council to meet its statutory obligation to secure best value.

8. Contact Officers

Gareth Waterson, Head of Finance, Email gareth.waterson@orkney.gov.uk.

Colin Kemp, Corporate Finance Senior Manager, Email colin.kemp@orkney.gov.uk.

9. Appendix

Appendix 1: Audit Scotland, Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund – Annual Audit Plan 2020/21.

Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund

Annual Audit Plan 2020/21



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund Sub Committee and Pensions Board

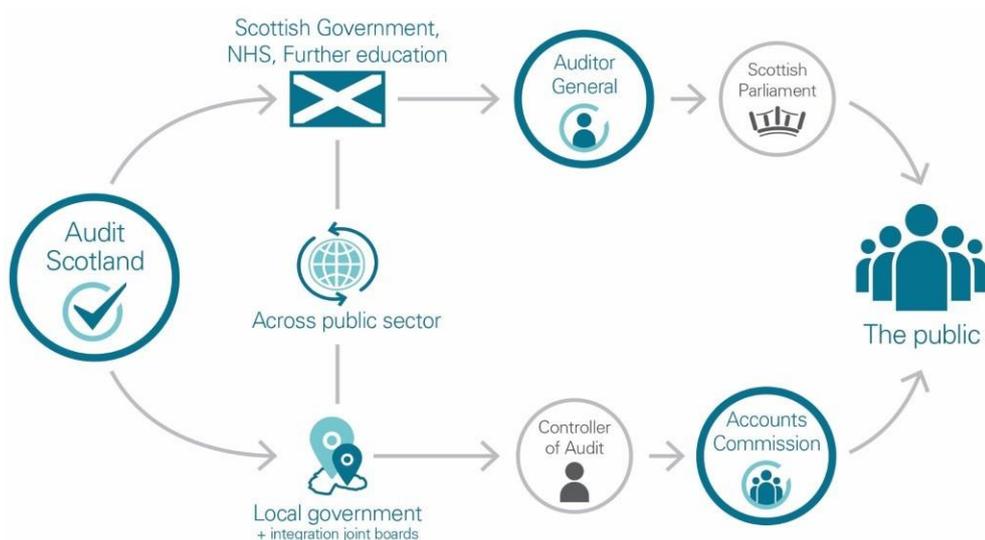
April 2021



Who we are

The Auditor General, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland work together to deliver public audit in Scotland:

- The Auditor General is an independent crown appointment, made on the recommendation of the Scottish Parliament, to audit the Scottish Government, NHS and other bodies and report to Parliament on their financial health and performance.
- The Accounts Commission is an independent public body appointed by Scottish ministers to hold local government to account. The Controller of Audit is an independent post established by statute, with powers to report directly to the Commission on the audit of local government.
- Audit Scotland is governed by a board, consisting of the Auditor General, the chair of the Accounts Commission, a non-executive board chair, and two non-executive members appointed by the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, a commission of the Scottish Parliament.



About us

Our vision is to be a world-class audit organisation that improves the use of public money.

Through our work for the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, we provide independent assurance to the people of Scotland that public money is spent properly and provides value. We aim to achieve this by:

- carrying out relevant and timely audits of the way the public sector manages and spends money
- reporting our findings and conclusions in public
- identifying risks, making clear and relevant recommendations.

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Risks and planned work

1. This annual audit plan contains an overview of the planned scope and timing of our audit which is carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs), the [Code of Audit Practice](#), and [guidance on planning the audit](#). This plan sets out the work necessary to allow us to provide an independent auditor's report on the annual accounts and meet the wider scope requirements of public sector audit.
2. The wider scope of public audit contributes to assessments and conclusions on financial management, financial sustainability, governance and transparency, and value for money.
3. The public health crisis caused by the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has had a significant and profound effect on every aspect of Scottish society. Public services have been drastically affected, requiring immediate changes to the way they are provided. The impact on public finances has been unprecedented, which has necessitated both the Scottish and UK governments providing substantial additional funding for public services as well as support for individuals, businesses and the economy. It is likely that further financial measures will be needed and that the effects will be felt well into the future.
4. Public audit has an important contribution to the recovery and renewal of public services. The Auditor General for Scotland, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland are responding to the risks to public services and finances from Covid-19 across the full range of audit work including annual audits and the programme of performance audits. Audit Scotland views 2020/21 as a transitional year, leading in future to audit timetables which were possible before Covid-19. The well-being of audit teams and the delivery of high-quality audits remain paramount. Maintaining a pragmatic and flexible approach will enable change at short notice as new issues emerge, or if current risks change in significance. Where this impacts on annual audits, an addendum to this annual audit plan may be necessary.

Adding value

5. We aim to add value to Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund (the Fund) through our external audit work by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas for improvement and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In so doing, we intend to help the Fund promote improved standards of governance, better management, and decision making, and more effective use of resources.

Audit risks

6. Building on our knowledge from previous years, discussions with staff, attendance at Committee meetings and a review of supporting information, we have identified two significant financial statement audit risks. These risks are detailed in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

2020/21 Significant audit risks

Financial statement risks		
<p>1 Management override of controls</p> <p>International Auditing Standards require that audits are planned to consider the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements caused by fraud, which is presumed to be a significant risk in any audit. This includes the risk of fraud due to the management override of controls.</p>	<p>Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance.</p>	<p>Detailed testing of journal entries.</p> <p>Review of accounting estimates and judgements.</p> <p>Focused testing of accruals and prepayments.</p> <p>Evaluation of significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business.</p>
<p>2 Estimation, judgements and Classification</p> <p>There is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and valuation of investments. Investments include level 3 investments such as pooled funds and other unquoted investments.</p> <p>Investments of this nature are based on judgements taken by investment managers and are complex and difficult to value.</p>	<p>The Fund appoints various investment managers and a custodian for investments.</p> <p>The control environment at the custodian and fund managers is considered via third party audit reports.</p>	<p>Completion of 'review of the work of an expert' in accordance with ISA 500, for fund managers with significant unquoted investments.</p> <p>Confirmation of valuations to valuation reports and/ or other supporting documentation.</p> <p>Sample testing of investments to independent pricing sources.</p>

Source: Audit Scotland

7. As set out in ISA 240: "The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of the financial statements", there is a presumed risk of material misstatement arising from fraud in the recognition of income. Audit Practice Note 10 extends this risk for public sector bodies to also cover fraud over the recognition of expenditure.

8. We have rebutted these risks for the pension fund on the basis that employee contributions and benefits payable both follow a predictable pattern and consist of a low volume of high value transactions. There is limited opportunity for fraudulent manipulation.

9. Income and expenditure relating to investments are managed by external fund managers and there is limited opportunity for the results to be manipulated.

Reporting arrangements

10. Audit reporting is the visible output for the annual audit. All annual audit plans, and the outputs as detailed in [Exhibit 2](#) and any other outputs on matters of public interest will be published on our website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk.

11. Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft management reports will be issued to the relevant officers to confirm factual accuracy.

12. We will provide an independent auditor's report to Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund Sub Committee and the Accounts Commission setting out our opinions on the annual accounts.

13. We will provide an annual report on the audit containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit. All dates below may be subject to change due to uncertainty and additional challenges arising from remote working.

Exhibit 2

2020/21 Audit outputs

Audit Output	Target date	Committee Date
Annual Audit Plan	30 April 2021	26 May 2021
Annual Audit Report	30 November 2021	24 November 2021
Independent Auditor's Report	30 November 2021	24 November 2021

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

14. The proposed audit fee for the 2020/21 audit of the Fund is £21,490 (2019/20: £21,010). In determining the audit fee, we have taken account of the risk exposure of the Fund, the planned management assurances in place and the level of reliance we plan to take from the work of internal audit. Our audit approach assumes receipt of the unaudited annual accounts, with a complete working papers package on 30 July 2021.

15. Where our audit cannot proceed as planned through, for example, late receipt of unaudited annual accounts or being unable to take planned reliance from the work of internal audit, a supplementary fee may be levied. An additional fee may also be required in relation to any work or other significant exercises outwith our planned audit activity.

Responsibilities

Pension Fund Sub-Committee and Section 95 Officer

16. Audited bodies have primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance that enable them to successfully deliver their objectives.

17. The audit of the annual accounts does not relieve management or the pension fund sub-committee as those charged with governance, of their responsibilities.

Appointed auditor

18. Our responsibilities as independent auditors are established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and the Code of Audit Practice (including supplementary guidance) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

19. Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information within the annual accounts. We also review and report on the arrangements within the audited body to manage its performance and use of resources. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

Audit scope and timing

Annual accounts

20. The audit of the annual accounts, including the financial statements, will be the foundation and source for most of the work necessary to support our judgements and conclusions. We also consider the wider environment and challenges facing the public sector. Our audit approach includes:

- understanding the business of the Fund and the associated risks which could impact on the financial statements
- assessing the key systems of internal control, and establishing how weaknesses in these systems could impact on the financial statements
- identifying major transaction streams, balances and areas of estimation and understanding how the Fund will include these in the financial statements
- assessing the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements
- determining the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to provide us with sufficient audit evidence as to whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

21. We will give an opinion on whether the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable law and the 2020/21 Code of the financial transactions of the fund during the year ended 31 March 2021 and of the amount and disposition at that date of its assets and liabilities;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, as interpreted and adapted by the 2020/21 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Statutory other information in the annual accounts

22. We also review and report on statutory other information published within the annual accounts including the management commentary, annual governance statement and the governance compliance statement. We give an opinion on whether these statements have been compiled in accordance with the appropriate regulations and frameworks in our independent auditor's report.

23. We also review the content of the pension fund annual report for consistency with the financial statements and with our knowledge. We consider whether the information is otherwise materially misstated. We report any uncorrected material misstatements in statutory other information.

Materiality

24. We apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing the audit. It is used in evaluating the effect of identified misstatements on the audit, and of any uncorrected misstatements, on the financial statements and in forming our opinions in the independent auditor's report.



25. We calculate materiality at different levels as described below. The calculated planning materiality values for the Fund are set out in [Exhibit 3](#).

Exhibit 3 Materiality values

Materiality	
Planning materiality – This is the figure we calculate to assess the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. For 2020/21 it has been set at 1% of gross assets, based on the latest audited accounts, which are the 2019/20 annual accounts.	£3.8 million
Performance materiality – This acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality this would indicate that further audit procedures should be considered. Using our professional judgement, we have calculated performance materiality at 65% of planning materiality.	£2.5 million
Reporting threshold (i.e. clearly trivial) – We are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount. This has been calculated at 2.5% of planning materiality.	£100 thousand

Source: Audit Scotland

Lower specific materiality

26. In addition to planning materiality we set lower, specific materiality levels for certain classes of transaction, account balances or disclosures where lesser amounts could influence the decisions of the users of the accounts.

27. We recognise that pension benefits payable to members are of importance to the users of the accounts and we set specific materiality levels as shown in [Exhibit 4](#).

Exhibit 4 Lower specific materiality values

Materiality	
Specific materiality - It has been set at 10% of benefits payable, based on the latest audited accounts, which are the 2019/20 annual accounts.	£0.9 million
Specific performance materiality – Using our professional judgement we have calculated performance materiality at 65% of the specific materiality.	£0.6 million

Source: Audit Scotland

Timetable

28. To support the efficient use of resources it is critical that an annual report and accounts timetable is agreed with us to produce the unaudited accounts. We have included an agreed timetable at [Exhibit 5](#). Central planning guidance from Audit Scotland explains that the provisions of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, which permits bodies to delay publication of accounts where reasonably practicable, have been extended. Reasonably practicable was considered to be 30 November. This also permits flexibility for the date of submission of unaudited accounts (usually 30 June). In view of the compressed time period and a number of competing priorities

we, with the support officers, have scheduled this audit for later in 2021, but in time for the revised deadlines.

Exhibit 5 Annual accounts timetable

 Key stage	 Date
Consideration of unaudited annual report and accounts by those charged with governance	31 August 2021
Latest submission date of unaudited annual report and accounts with complete working papers package	30 July 2021
Latest date for final clearance meeting with Payroll and Pensions Manager and Head of Finance	15 October 2021
Agreement of audited unsigned financial statements; Issue of Annual Audit Report including ISA 260 report to those charged with governance	24 November 2021
Independent auditor's report signed	30 November 2021

Source: Audit Scotland

Internal audit

29. Internal audit is provided by Orkney Islands Council Internal Audit section overseen by a Chief Internal Auditor. As part of our planning process we carry out an annual assessment of the internal audit function to ensure that it operates in accordance with the main requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). ISA 610 requires an assessment on whether the work of the internal audit function can be used for the purposes of external audit. This includes:

- the extent to which the internal audit function's organisational status and relevant policies and procedures support the objectivity of the internal auditors
- the level of competence of the internal audit function
- whether the internal audit function applies a systematic and disciplined approach, including quality control.

30. We carried out an early assessment of the internal audit function and concluded that it has sound documentation standards and reporting procedures in place and complies with the main requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

Audit dimensions

31. Our audit is based on four audit dimensions that frame the wider scope of public sector audit requirements as shown in [Exhibit 6](#).

Exhibit 6

Audit dimensions



Source: Code of Audit Practice

Financial sustainability

32. As auditors we consider the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting as part of the annual audit. We will also comment on the Fund's financial sustainability. We define financial sustainability as having medium term (two to five years) and longer term (greater than five years) financial plans in place. We will carry out work and conclude on:

- the effectiveness of financial planning in identifying and addressing risks to financial sustainability in the short, medium and long term
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of funding arrangements and the investment strategy in place to address any identified funding gaps
- whether there are arrangements in place to demonstrate the affordability and effectiveness of funding and investment decisions.

Financial management

33. Financial management in the context of a pension fund is complex and includes not just investment and funding strategy, but also arrangements for contract management, performance review, budget setting, forecasting and the financial control environment. We will review, conclude and report on:

- the Fund's financial performance and funding levels for the year, including performance against its investment strategy
- whether arrangements are in place to ensure systems of internal control are operating effectively
- the effectiveness of the budgetary control system in communicating accurate and timely financial performance
- how the Fund has assured itself that its financial capacity and skills are appropriate
- whether there are appropriate and effective arrangements in place for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.

Governance and transparency

34. Governance and transparency is concerned with the effectiveness of scrutiny and governance arrangements, leadership and decision-making, and transparent reporting of financial and performance information. The knowledge and skills of Pension Fund Sub Committee and Pension Board members is key to this process. We will review, conclude and report on:

- the governance disclosures in the annual report and accounts
- whether the Fund can demonstrate that the governance arrangements in place are appropriate and operating effectively
- whether there is effective scrutiny, challenge and transparency on the decision making and on the financial and performance reporting
- the quality and timeliness of financial and performance reporting on the Fund's administration and investments
- consistency of the annual governance statement and the governance compliance statement with the disclosures made in the financial statements.

Value for money

35. Value for money refers to using resources effectively and continually improving services. We will review, conclude and report on whether the Fund can demonstrate value for money in the use of resources, has focus on improvement and that there is a clear link to outcomes delivered.

Independence and objectivity

36. Auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission or Auditor General for Scotland must comply with the Code of Audit Practice and relevant supporting guidance. When auditing the financial statements auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council and those of the professional accountancy bodies. These standards impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with these standards including an annual "fit and proper" declaration for all members of staff. These arrangements are overseen by the Director of Audit Services, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

37. The engagement lead (i.e. appointed auditor) for the Fund is Gillian Woolman, Audit Director. Auditing and ethical standards require the appointed auditor to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of audit staff. We are not aware of any such relationships pertaining to the audit of Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund.

Quality control

38. International Standard on Quality Control (UK) 1 (ISQC1) requires that a system of quality control is established, as part of financial audit procedures, to provide reasonable assurance that professional standards and regulatory and legal requirements are being complied with and that the independent auditor's report or opinion is appropriate in the circumstances.

39. The foundation of our quality framework is our Audit Guide, which incorporates the application of professional auditing, quality and ethical standards and the Code of Audit Practice (and relevant supporting guidance) issued by Audit Scotland and approved by the Auditor General for Scotland. To ensure that we achieve the required quality standards Audit Scotland conducts peer reviews and internal quality reviews. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) have also been commissioned to carry out external quality reviews of our work.

40. As part of our commitment to quality and continuous improvement Audit Scotland will periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. We welcome feedback at any time and this may be directed to the engagement lead.

Orkney Islands Council Pension Fund

Annual Audit Plan 2020/21

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Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN
T: 0131 625 1500 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk