

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Annual Financial Audit Outline

Gwynedd Pension Fund

Audit year: 2013-14

Issued: April 2014

Document reference: 255A2014



Status of document

The Auditor General is independent of government, and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office is held to account by the National Assembly.

Together with appointed auditors, the Auditor General audits local government bodies in Wales, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities and community councils. He also conducts local government value for money studies and assesses compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Beyond local government, the Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales.

The Auditor General and staff of the Wales Audit Office aim to provide public-focused and proportionate reporting on the stewardship of public resources and in the process provide insight and promote improvement.

This document was produced by Derwyn Owen, Amanda Hughes and Alan Hughes.

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Annual Financial Audit Outline

Introduction

1. This Annual Financial Audit Outline has been prepared by Derwyn Owen on behalf of Anthony Barrett, the Appointed Auditor.
2. As your external auditor, my objective is to carry out an audit which discharges my statutory duties as Appointed Auditor and fulfils my obligations under the Code of Audit Practice to examine and certify whether the Gwynedd Pension Fund (the Pension Fund) accounting statements are 'true and fair'.
3. The purpose of this outline is to explain to you:
 - my audit team's approach to the audit of your Pension Fund accounting statements for the year ending 31 March 2014 including the significant risks of material misstatements in your accounting statements and how we plan to address them;
 - the planned timetable, fees and audit team; and
 - the scope of the audit, our respective responsibilities and how we ensure independence and objectivity in our work.
4. There have been no limitations imposed on me in planning the scope of this audit.

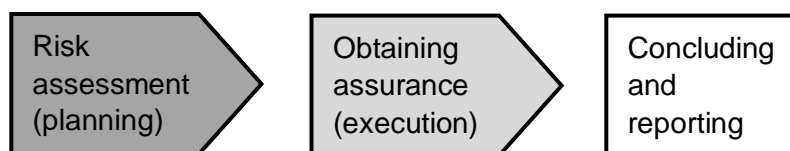
Audit of Pension Fund accounts

5. It is my responsibility to issue a report on the accounting statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness', providing assurance that they:
 - are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error;
 - comply with statutory and other applicable requirements; and
 - comply with all relevant requirements for accounting presentation and disclosure.

Audit approach

6. My team's audit work uses a range of techniques to assess risk and obtain audit evidence and assurance, and is based on a thorough understanding of your business. This understanding allows my team to develop an audit approach which focuses on addressing specific risks whilst providing assurance for the Pension Fund accounts as a whole. Our audit approach consists of three phases as set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1: Our audit approach

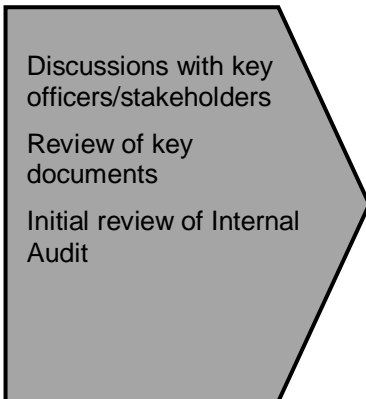


7. The work we undertake in each of these three areas is set out in more detail in [Exhibit 2](#).
8. I do not seek to obtain absolute assurance that the Pension Fund accounting statements are true and fair, but adopt a concept of materiality. In planning and executing the audit, we aim to identify material misstatements in the accounts and related notes, that is, those that might result in a reader of the accounts being misled. The levels at which I judge such misstatements to be material will be reported to the Audit Committee as the administering authority of the Pension Fund as a whole, prior to completion of the audit.
9. For reporting purposes we will treat any misstatements below a 'trivial' level (the lower of five per cent of materiality or £100,000) as not requiring consideration by those charged with governance and therefore will not report them.

Exhibit 2: Our audit approach

Risk assessment (planning)

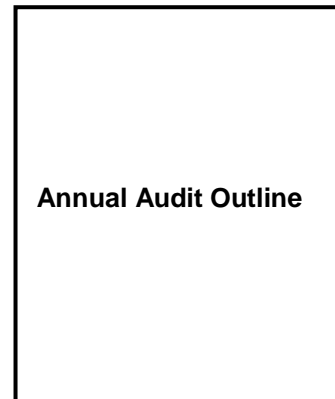
Key tasks



Objectives

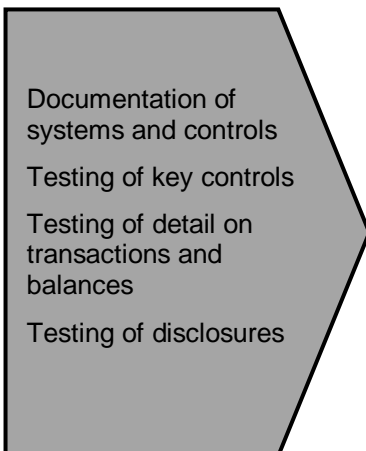


Output

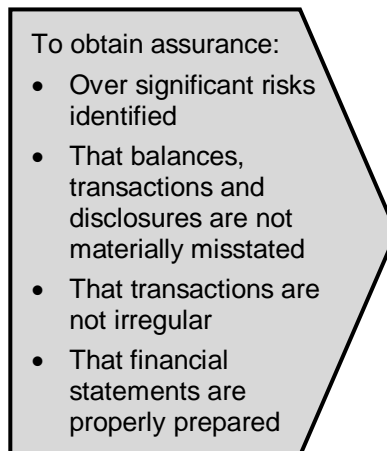


Obtaining assurance (execution)

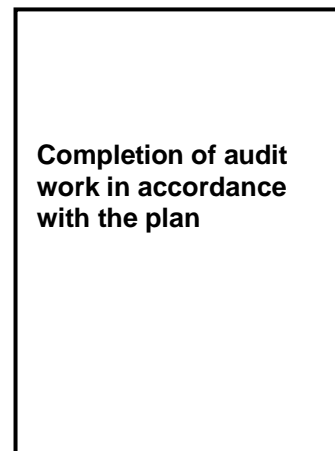
Key tasks



Objectives

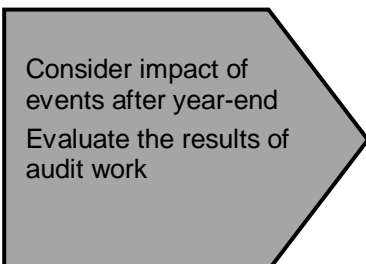


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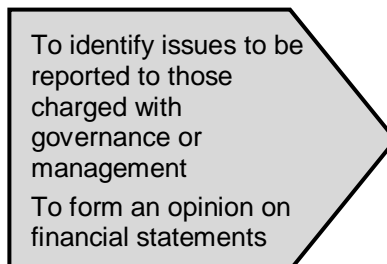


Concluding and reporting

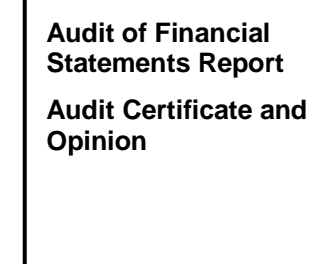
Key tasks



Objectives



Output



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10. In planning my work and obtaining an understanding of the Pension Fund, I consider the control environment including the activities of Internal Audit to determine the potential impact of its work on my planned procedures and to evaluate the extent to which I can rely on that work.
11. As part of the planning process, my staff considered the information which would be required to support the accounts submitted for audit. The fees, once agreed, will assume that this information will be provided by the timescales agreed and to the quality standards that we expect. My other main assumptions in setting the estimated fees will be that:
- the financial statements and supporting working papers have been subject to review and validation by management, to provide the Responsible Financial Officer with assurance that they are 'true and fair';
 - all appropriate officials will be available during the audit;
 - you have all the necessary controls and checks in place to enable the Responsible Financial Officer to provide all the assurances that I require in the Letter of Representation addressed to me; and
 - Internal Audit has completed its planned programme of work and that management has taken all necessary remedial action on issues that could have affected the financial statements.

Audit risks

12. **Exhibit 3** provides information regarding the main operational and financial risks faced by the Pension Fund that could affect my audit. These are the main risks that I have identified during the initial audit planning process, based upon information currently available, and the actions proposed to address them. I may need to change the audit plan if any new risks emerge. I will not make any changes to the audit plan without first discussing them with officers and, where relevant, those charged with governance.

Exhibit 3: Summary of main audit risks and proposed responses

Risks	Action proposed
Control environment risks	
<p>The risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is viewed as a significant risk.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements; • focus its testing on areas of the financial statements which could contain reporting bias; and • evaluate the rationale for any significant transactions outside the normal course of business.
<p>Following an issue identified in 2012-13 there is a risk that membership records held in the pensions administration system are not up to date as some Employer bodies do not always provide appropriate information on a timely basis.</p>	<p>We will review the process undertaken by the pensions administration to work with Employer Bodies to ensure that data has been brought up to date.</p>
<p>There is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud in revenue recognition and as such it is viewed as a significant risk.</p>	<p>We will review the design and test the operation of controls in the systems relating to income and treasury management.</p>
Financial systems risks	
<p>Risk that the Council's high level financial controls are not designed or operating effectively to prevent and detect material misstatements in the financial statements.</p>	<p>We will review the design and test the operation of high level controls in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main accounting system; • budgetary control system; and • the accounts preparation process.
<p>External investment managers are appointed to manage the investment portfolio. Their own systems and records will generate account entries made to the Pension Fund account and net assets statement.</p>	<p>We will obtain direct confirmation from the fund managers of year-end investment balances, and consider whether investment managers' internal control reports indicate specific risks to these balances.</p>

Risks	Action proposed
Preparation of the accounts risks	
<p>The preparation of the Statement of Accounts will involve the estimation of a number of account figures.</p>	<p>We will review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the annual assessment made by officers of the basis on which estimates are made and revised in line with the latest information; and documentation held to support estimates derived and judgements made, and refer to papers provided in support of them. <p>We will also ensure that appropriate accounting and disclosure requirements are included within the financial statements.</p>
Financial statements risks	
<p>Risk of material misstatement in the financial statements arising from error or omission of transactions, balances and disclosure.</p>	<p>We will undertake a programme of audit testing to address risks identified as part of our planning work and review of the draft financial statements.</p>

Accounting and reporting issues

13. In addition to the significant audit risks set out above, I also need to consider any new financial accounting and reporting requirements which impact on my responsibilities.
14. There are no significant new financial accounting and reporting requirements that I wish to draw to your attention.

Pension Fund annual report

15. In addition to including the Pension Fund accounts in their main accounting statements, administering authorities are required to publish a Pension Fund annual report which must include the Pension Fund accounts.
16. I am required to read the Pension Fund annual report and consider whether the information it contains is consistent with the audited Pension Fund accounts included in the Council's main accounting statements.
17. I also issue an audit statement confirming the consistency of the accounts included in the annual report with the audited Pension Fund accounts.

Fee, audit team and timetable

Fee

18. We are currently unable to provide you with an estimate of our fee for our 2013-14 audit work.
19. Owing to the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013, we have needed to revise our approach to fee setting. This act introduces a slightly revised fee-setting requirement on the new Wales Audit Office for all our audit work once its provisions come into effect from 1 April 2014. In anticipation of this new requirement, we have needed to take legal advice to clarify a number of its provisions. In the light of that advice, we have reviewed our cost allocation and apportionment processes to ensure that going forward our fee setting will fully comply with these new statutory requirements. This unfortunately has been a time-consuming process. The exercise has now been completed and the Auditor General has consulted on his fee scales, which take account of revisions made in anticipation of the new legislation. That consultation provides further information about the new legislative requirements.
20. We are currently considering the consultation responses and we anticipate being able to provide you with an estimate of your 2013-14 fee in April 2014.
21. Planning will be ongoing, and changes to my programme of audit work and therefore my fee may be required if any key new risks emerge. I shall make no changes without first discussing them with the Director of Finance. Further information on the new Wales Audit Office fee scales and fee setting will be provided once finalised.
22. Further information on the Auditor General's fee scales and fee setting can be found on our website at: www.wao.gov.uk/aboutus/4240.asp.

Audit team

Exhibit 4: My team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Derwyn Owen	Engagement Lead – Financial Audit	02920 320651	derwyn.owen@wao.gov.uk
Amanda Hughes	Financial Audit Manager	07969 919986	amanda.hughes@wao.gov.uk
Alan Hughes	Financial Audit Team Leader	01286 679158	alan.hughes@wao.gov.uk

23. **Exhibit 4** highlights the key members of the audit engagement at the Council. I can confirm that with the exception of one member of staff, there are no known threats to my independence as Appointed Auditor or on the independence of staff or contractors working for me.

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24. With regards to the exception noted above, one member of the audit team is related to a temporary junior member of the Council's internal audit staff. As a result we have taken steps to ensure that our member of staff is not involved in any work we may do that covers the review of internal audit or its programme of work.

Timetable

25. I will provide reports, or other outputs as agreed, to the Audit Committee covering the areas of work identified in this document. My key milestones are set out in [Exhibit 5](#).

Exhibit 5: Timetable

Planned output	Work undertaken	Report finalised
Annual Financial Audit Outline for 2014	December 2013 – March 2014	April 2014
Financial accounts work:		
• Audit of Financial Statements Report	July - September 2014	September 2014
• Opinion on Financial Statements	September 2014	September 2014
• Pension fund annual report 'consistent with' opinion	October 2014	October 2014
Annual Audit Letter 2014	October 2014	November 2014

Appendix 1

Roles and responsibilities

The Council is the administering authority of the Pension Fund. This Annual Financial Audit Outline has been prepared to meet the requirements of auditing standards and proper audit practices. It provides the Council with an outline of the financial audit work required for the 2013-14 Pension Fund accounts.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013 (the 2013 Act) sets out that the Auditor General is to be the auditor of local government bodies in Wales. The 2013 Act does, however, provide transitional arrangements where the appointment of a person as an auditor under section 13 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 continues to have effect until the end of the period for which the appointment was made (subject to any earlier termination). The Auditor General has appointed me as the auditor of the Pension Fund accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014.

As Appointed Auditor, I am required by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 to examine and certify the accounts of the Pension Fund. In accordance with professional standards that apply by virtue of the Code of Audit Practice set under the act, this involves giving an opinion on whether the accounts give a true and fair view of the Pension Fund's financial transactions and of the amount and disposition of the fund's assets and liabilities. The act also requires me to satisfy myself of these things:

- that the accounts are prepared in accordance with regulations under section 39 of the act (the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005);
- that the accounts comply with the requirements of all other statutory provisions applicable to them; and
- that proper practices have been observed in the compilation of the accounts.

I am also required to certify that the audit has been completed in accordance with the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

The audit does not relieve the Council of its responsibility regarding the Pension Fund to:

- establish systems of internal control to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

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