

Progress Report

December 2009

Brent London Borough

Audit 2008/09

Audit Committee 17 December

Contents

Summary	3
Appendix 1 – Key Deliverables	6
Appendix 2 – Key deliverables	7
The Audit Commission	9

Status of our reports

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

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

Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this progress report is to brief the Audit Committee on work currently being planned or undertaken by the Audit Commission.

Audit Progress 2008/09

- 2 We have completed our work on Use of Resources. The final scores are:

– Managing Finances	3
– Governing the Business	2
– Managing resources	2

We have agreed our Use of resources report with officers. This is included for your review; and

- 3 We have completed our Accounts memorandum and agreed this with officers. At present the officers are busy finalising actions to address our recommendations. This is included for your review.
- 4 We have completed our certification of eleven grant claims prepared by the Council. We have completed our Grants report and are in the process of agreeing this with officers. This will be presented at the next Audit Committee.
- 5 We agreed the 2008/09 Annual Audit Letter with the Chief Executive and Director of Finance at a meeting held on the 15 December 2009. This will be presented at the next Audit Committee.
- 6 Our 2009/10 audit has commenced. We have agreed plans with the finance team, and have started reviewing organisational and system level risks. We continue to maintain regular communication with the finance team to identify and resolve potential issues early. Following this work, we will draft our supplementary opinion plan. This will be presented at the next Audit Committee.
- 7 Over the next few weeks we will be starting to plan the 2010/2011 audit. This will include exploring our initial thoughts and ideas with officers. We would welcome your views on any areas of risk where external audit work would be beneficial; your views can be fed back to ourselves either directly or via officers.

Recent Audit Commission publications

- 8 The Audit Commission produces a regular Councillors' Update. This e-mailed newsletter aims to keep councillors up to date with the Commission's current work, such as CAA, national reports and studies. News stories containing details of specific tools and case studies will direct councillors to information that they can use in their work. If you have not automatically received your copy of Councillors' Update, please subscribe via the following link:

[Councillor Update newsletter - Audit Commission](#)

Audit quality reports (November 2009)

- 9 The Audit Commission has published two important reports on the quality of the work of its appointed auditors for our stakeholders, which include our sponsoring departments, audited bodies, the wider accounting and auditing profession and other interested parties.
- 10 The first is the [Audit Commission's quality review process](#) that summarises the results of our quality review of the work of the audit practice and the firms of private sector auditors that we appoint as auditors to local government and NHS bodies.
- 11 The second is the [Audit Practice annual quality report](#) that summarises the results of the quality review of the work of the Commission's own staff as auditors to local government and NHS bodies, including the views of the Audit Inspection Unit that carried out an independent review of our work.
- 12 The publication of the Audit Commission's audit practice annual quality report is one of a range of measures aimed at demonstrating our commitment to delivering audit quality. It assures audited bodies and stakeholders about the arrangements in place and the underlying strength of the Commission's audit practice and compares our audit practice with the firms and the other audit agencies.

Nothing but the truth? (November 2009)

- 13 The high-profile failure of public authorities to both safeguard Baby Peter in Haringey, and prevent the high number of deaths in Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, has directed attention to the accuracy and reliability of the data underpinning local service delivery.
- 14 It is not a matter of quantity; we have more data about services than we can realistically use. Yet the public lacks trust in the institutions that govern and serve it - and this mistrust extends to the information they provide.
- 15 The Audit Commission exists to reassure the public that local public bodies are spending their money well and achieving positive outcomes in local communities. The Commission has a role in assessing the quality of data in local public services and we have made a public promise to help improve it.
- 16 This paper sets out important issues as the basis for discussion on how to ensure data about local public services is fit for purpose. It asks if citizens, along with frontline staff,

Summary

managers, politicians, central government and local public service regulators, can have confidence in the data they rely on. And if not, what needs to be done about it?

Means to an end (October 2009)

- 17 This report reviews the joint financing and integrated care arrangements between NHS bodies and councils with adult social care responsibilities. It builds on our previous publication, [Clarifying joint financing arrangements](#), that explained the practical implications and legislative framework for joint financing.
- 18 It considers how these arrangements are used, focusing on learning disability, mental health and older people - areas where service users most often need health and social care.
- 19 The report's recommendations and examples of notable practice aim to help national and local bodies better understand the options available, how to use them and to achieve better outcomes for service users.

Lofty ambitions (October 2009)

- 20 Councils have many opportunities to act and to exercise community leadership to achieve reductions in domestic CO2 emissions. This report examines and reports on the progress made by councils to cut these emissions in their areas. It gives practical examples to show councils how they can tackle emissions, and at the same time help to reduce fuel poverty. The report also considers how councils can achieve improvements in value for money from their actions to reduce CO2

Protecting the public purse (September 2009)

- 21 This report considers the key fraud risks and pressures facing councils and related bodies and identifies good practice in fighting fraud. It has never been more important that councils fight fraud. Every pound lost to cheats is a pound that cannot be used for people in real need. The report identifies specific risks that are often not adequately addressed, to do with housing tenancy, council tax and recruitment fraud.
- 22 The Commission found housing tenancy fraud could be tying up at least 50,000 council and housing association properties worth more than £2 billion, while queues for homes have increased by more than 50 per cent over the last six years. The number of people in need of social housing is predicted to rise to 2 million by 2011.
- 23 Council taxpayers could be losing almost £2 million a week to fraudsters claiming a 25 per cent single person discount on their council tax. The discount can be claimed by householders where there are no other residents aged 18 or over living at an address.
- 24 The report provides an overview of the threats of fraud facing councils. It calls on them to urgently reassess their counter fraud plans and to ensure that staff understand, and have faith in, whistle-blowing arrangements.

Appendix 1 – Key Deliverables

Table 1 Progress on Key Deliverables for 2008/09

Product	Timing	Current position
Planning		
Audit Plan	January 2008- March 2008	Plan presented to Audit Committee in September 2007
Opinion		
Work on financial systems	January 2008 – June 2009	Completed
Financial statements; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opinion; • Annual Governance Report; and • opinion memorandum 	July - September 2009	Completed and opinion issued on 28 September 2009 Annual Governance report issued September 2009 Opinion memorandum issued December 2009
Use of Resources		
Health Inequalities phase 1 phase 2	May 2009 October 2009	Final report issued Set up meeting in July 2009
Data Quality	July 2008 - November 2008	Completed and report issued December 2008.
Value for money conclusion	June 2009 to September 2009	Completed and opinion issued on 28 September 2009
Use of resource judgements	August - November 2008	Use of Resources scores issued. Report issued December 2009.
Inspection		
Direction of Travel	October 2008- January 2009	Work completed and Direction of Travel wording and scores issued 15 January 2009.
Reporting		
Annual Audit and Inspection Letter	February - March 2010	Discussed with CE and DOF

Appendix 2 – Key deliverables

Table 2 Progress on Key Deliverables for 2009/10

Product	Timing	Current position
Planning		
Audit Plan	January 2009- March 2009	Plan presented to Audit Committee in June 2009
Opinion		
Work on financial systems	December 2009 – June 2010	
Financial statements; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opinion; • Annual Governance Report; and • opinion memorandum 	July - September 2010	
Use of Resources		
Health Inequalities phase 1 phase 2	May 2010 October 2010	Phase 1 completed and report issued. Phase 2 commencing
Performance management follow up	June 2009 to December 2009	This work is nearing completion, and we anticipate completing early in the new year.
HR follow up	December 2009 to February 2010	We have met officers for a setup meeting, and audit work is underway. We anticipate completion early in the new year.
Project management review	January 2009 to March 2010	
Value for money conclusion	June 2010 to September 2010	
Use of resource judgements	August - November 2010	
Inspection		
Direction of Travel	October 2009-	

Appendix 2 – Key deliverables

Product	Timing	Current position
	January 2010	
Reporting		
Annual Audit and Inspection Letter	December 2010	

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

Copies of this report

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