

# Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership Financial year ending 31 March 2021

External Audit Plan - DRAFT

Board Meeting

23 April 2021



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# Contents

Section	Page
Plan overview	03
Introduction	04
Audit approach	05
Materiality	06
Significant audit risks	07
Other matters	09
Audit timeline	11
Quality and adding value through the audit	12
Audit Fees	13
Independence	14
<b>Appendices</b>	
Responsibilities	16
Communication	17
Fraud responsibilities	18
Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures (ISA 540 revised)	19

The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit planning process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the organisation or all weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and Audit Scotland (under the Audit Scotland Code of Practice 2016). We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

# Plan overview

The audit plan for the financial year ended 31 March 2021 sets out our risk based audit approach. This plan is reported to those charged with governance. Planning is a continuous process and we will continue to review our risk assessment and planned approach.

## 03

### Wider Scope Audit – smaller body arrangements

In accordance with Audit Scotland's Code of Practice, we feel it is appropriate to continue to treat you as a smaller body under the Code. In 2020/21 we will consider the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership ('the Partnership') arrangements for ensuring financial sustainability as well as your governance arrangements in place to support disclosures contained within the annual governance statement included within your financial statements.

## 01

### Materiality

We have calculated planning materiality using gross prior year expenditure as our benchmark (same as prior year):

- £52,080 planning materiality
- Performance materiality of £39,060 (75% of planning materiality)
- Trivial is capped at £2,604
- Lower materiality (£1,000) on Remuneration Report

## 04

### Other audit matters

We summarise other audit matters for the Partnerships awareness. This includes:

- The revised ISA 540 standard relating to Accounting estimates and the additional considerations required at planning. For the Partnership we anticipate this to relate to defined benefit pension scheme liabilities.
- In accordance with the Code and planning guidance we also complete and submit a number of deliverables in year including sharing intelligence with Audit Scotland.
- Consideration of going concern in accordance with Practice Note 10.

## 02

### Financial statement audit risks

At planning, in accordance with the ISAs (UK) and FRC Practice Note 10 we have identified the following significant financial statement audit risks:

- Management override of controls (ISA UK 240)
- Risk of fraud in expenditure (cut-off) (FRC PN10)
- Risk of misstatement of defined benefit pension scheme liabilities

## 05

### Our Audit Fee

Audit fees were shared by Audit Scotland with Partnership in December 2020. Our fee agreed with Management is:

- £10,240 which is set at the baseline fee.
- This fee includes £850 related to Audit Scotland pooled costs and central costs of £490.
- Audit fees are paid to Audit Scotland who pay us.
- We reserve the right to review our fee during the audit should significant delays be encountered and/or new technical matters arise.

# Introduction

## Purpose

This document provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the external audit of the Partnership for those charged with governance.

We are appointed by the Accounts Commission as the external auditors of the Partnership for the 6 year period (2016/17 until 2021/22).

## Respective responsibilities

Audit Scotland has issued a document entitled Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') dated 2016 covering this audit appointment period. This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is expected from the audited body. Our respective responsibilities, and that of Partnership are summarised in Appendix 1 of this plan. We draw your attention to this and the Code.

## Scope of our audit

The scope of our audit is set in accordance with the Code and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK). We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on:

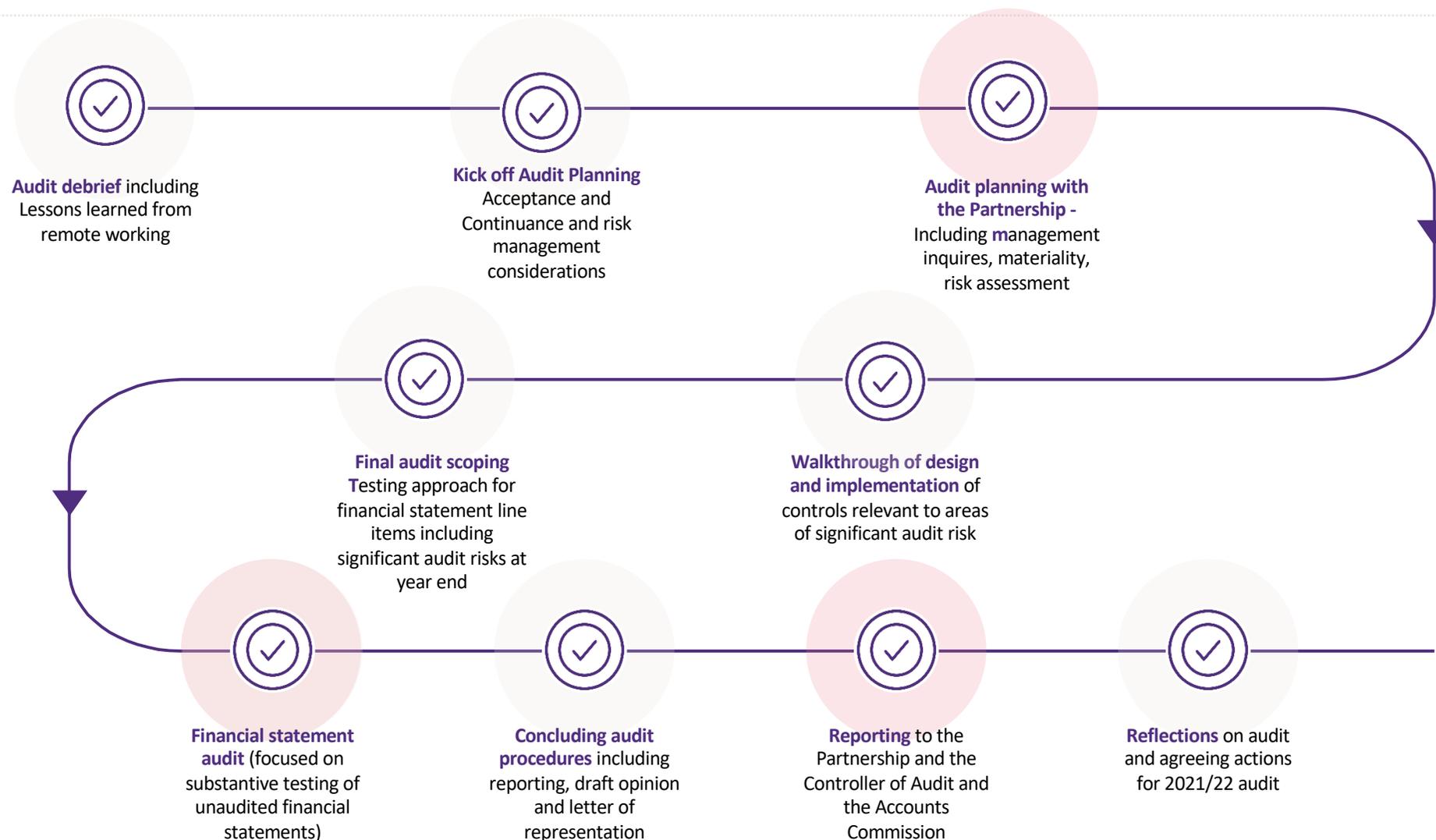
- The Partnership's financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance (the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership Board).

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve Officers or the Partnership of your responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the Partnership to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We will consider how the Partnership is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our audit approach is based on a thorough understanding of the Partnership and is risk based.

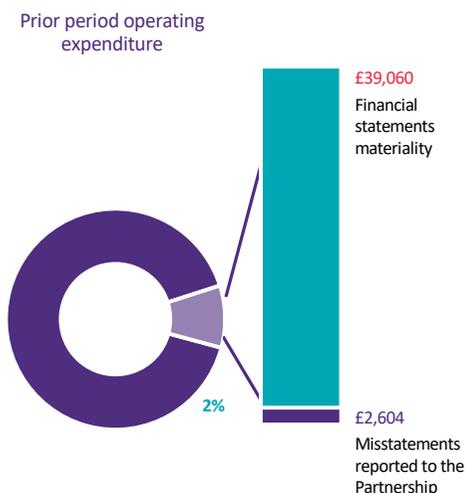


# Audit approach



# Materiality

Financial statement materiality is determined based on a proportion of the total operating expenditure. We have determined **planning materiality** to be £52,080, which equates to approximately 2% of your prior year total operating expenditure in-year.



**Performance materiality** represents the amount set for the financial statements as a whole to reduce the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceed materiality. We use this to determine our testing approach to the financial statements. We have set this at 75% of planning materiality (£39,060). This is based on our understanding of the Partnership including no material or unadjusted errors in the prior year.

Materiality reflects our professional judgement of the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the users of the financial statements.

On this basis we apply a separate **lower materiality level** to the Remuneration Report. This is set at the lowest disclosure bandings in the Remuneration Report (£1,000).

Under ISA 260 (UK) 'Communication with those charged with governance', we are required by auditing standards to report uncorrected omissions or misstatements other than those which are '**clearly trivial**' to those charged with governance. We have determined this threshold to be £2,604 being 5% of financial statement materiality.

**We will update our materiality based on the unaudited 2020/21 financial statements. During the course of our audit engagement, we will continue to assess the appropriateness of our materiality.**

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# Significant audit risks

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Significant risks are defined by ISAs (UK) as risks that, in the judgement of the auditor, require special audit consideration. In identifying risks, audit teams consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood. Significant risks are those risks that have a higher risk of material misstatement.

## Management Override of Controls (as required within Auditing Standards – ISA 240)

Our risk focuses on the areas of the financial statements where there is potential for management to use their judgement to influence the financial statements alongside the potential to override of internal controls, related to individual transactions.

Our work focuses on critical estimates and judgements as set out within the financial statements, including accounting policies. In addition, we specifically consider cut-off (expenditure) and the use of manual journals during the year, and in creating the financial statements where controls may be overridden by management. These are inherently the areas in which management has the potential to use their judgement to influence the financial statements. We will obtain an understanding of the business rationale of significant transactions that we become aware of that, based on our audit knowledge and understanding, are outside the normal course of business for the entity, or that otherwise appear to be unusual.

## Risk of Fraud in Expenditure (as recommended in FRC Practice Note 10 for Public Sector entities) (Completeness)

Operating expenditure is understated or not treated in the correct period (risk of fraud in expenditure). As payroll expenditure is well forecast and agreeable to underlying payroll systems, there is less opportunity for the risk of misstatement in this expenditure stream. We therefore focus on material non-pay expenditure streams including research and strategy development costs and European Project costs. We consider the risk to be particularly prevalent around the year end and therefore focus our testing on cut-off of these expenditure streams and the completeness of expenditure.

Our testing includes a specific focus on year end cut-off arrangements, where it may be advantageous for management to show an enhanced/different financial position in the context of reporting in-year to Scottish Government and the need to achieve the financial targets set.

## IAS 19 Defined Benefit Pension Liabilities (valuation)

The Partnership participates in the Highland Council Pension Fund, a local government pension scheme (LGPS). The scheme is a defined benefit pension scheme and in accordance with IAS 19: Pensions, Partnership is required to recognise its share of the scheme assets and liabilities on the statement of financial position. As at 31 March 2020 the Authority had pension fund liabilities of £765,000.

Hymans Robertson UK LLP provide an annual IAS 19 actuarial valuation of the Authority's net liabilities in the pension scheme. There are a number of assumptions contained within the valuation, including: discount rate; future return on scheme assets; mortality rates; and, future salary projections. Given the material value of the scheme liabilities and the level of estimation in the valuation, there is an inherent risk that the defined benefit pension scheme liability could be materially misstated within the financial statements.

We will consider the work of the actuary (Hymans Robertson UK LLP), including the assumptions applied, using the work performed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) (commissioned on behalf of Audit Scotland to review actuarial assumptions proposed by LGPS actuaries), as well as local audit assessment. A appointed auditors over the Highland Council Pension Fund we will obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to the Partnership, including assets held and membership data, and confirm joint assurances in respect of employer and employee contributions in the year. We will review and test the accounting entries and disclosures made within Partnership's financial statements in relation to IAS 19.

As set out in ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper recognition of revenue. In 2019/20 the Partnership received £223,000 in funding from constituent authorities. In addition, the Council received £1.926 million in grant funding from Scottish Government and other projects. While material, this funding is formally agreed during the budget setting process with constituent authorities and total income is agreed. Total revenue and receivables at the year end are agreed to third party confirmation (signed accounts). Consequently, we consider there to be a lower opportunity to materially misstate this revenue stream. We therefore rebut the presumed risk of improper recognition of revenue.

**We will communicate significant findings on these areas as well as any other significant matters arising from the audit to you in our Annual Report to those Charged with Governance and the Controller of Audit.**

# Other matters

## Auditor Responsibilities

We have a number of audit responsibilities as set out in the Code and planning guidance:

- We audit parts of your Remuneration Report in your Annual Report and check whether these sections of your Annual Report have been properly prepared (opinion)
- We read the sections of your Annual Report which are not subject to audit and check that they are consistent with the financial statements on which we give an opinion (opinion)
- We carry out work to satisfy ourselves that disclosures made in your Annual Governance Statement are consistent with the financial statements and that the report is prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).
- We consider our other duties under the Code and planning guidance (2020/21), as and when required, including:
  - Supporting Audit Scotland in Section 22 reporting.
  - Providing regular updates to Audit Scotland to share awareness of current issues
  - Notifying Audit Scotland of any cases of money laundering or fraud
  - Review of Central Government Technical guidance prior to issue by Audit Scotland

## Internal control environment

Throughout our audit planning and fieldwork we will continue to develop our understanding of the overall control environment (design) as related to the financial statements. In particular we will:

- Consider procedures and controls around related parties, journal entries and other key entity level controls.
- Perform walkthrough procedures on key controls around identified risk areas including: Requisition funding; payroll expenditure; material non-pay expenditure streams (administration costs, property costs, supplies and services); journal entries; and, material areas of management estimate and judgement including defined benefit pension scheme liabilities.
- Our focus is design and implementation of controls only. We do place reliance on controls when it comes to our year end financial statement audit work.

## Other material balances and transactions

Under International Standards on Auditing, "irrespective of the assessed risks of material misstatement, the auditor shall design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transactions, account balance and disclosure". All other material balances and transaction streams will therefore be audited. However, the procedures will not be as extensive as the procedures adopted for the risks identified in this report.

## Going concern assessment

As auditors, we are required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding, and conclude on:

- whether a material uncertainty related to going concern exists; and
- the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements.

The Public Audit Forum has been designated by the Financial Reporting Council as a "SORP-making body" for the purposes of maintaining and updating Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom (PN 10). It is intended that auditors of public sector bodies read PN 10 in conjunction with (ISAs) (UK).

PN 10 has recently been updated to take account of revisions to ISAs (UK), including ISA (UK) 570 on going concern. The revisions to PN 10 in respect of going concern are important.

In particular, PN 10 allows auditors to apply a 'continued provision of service approach' to auditing going concern, where appropriate. In considering going concern we will refer to Audit Scotland's Going Concern publication (December 2020).

Within our wider scope work we will conclude on the Partnership's arrangements to ensure financial sustainability.

## Wider Scope Audit – smaller body arrangements

For smaller bodies the Audit Scotland Code of Practice permits auditors to not apply the full wider scope audit. In our judgement, taking into account the nature of the Partnership's operating activity and income and expenditure streams, we feel it is appropriate to continue to treat you as a smaller body under the Code. However, in accordance with Audit Scotland planning guidance, we will update our understanding of your arrangements for ensuring financial sustainability as well as your governance arrangements in place to support disclosures contained within the annual governance statement included within your financial statements.

## Accounting estimates

Under ISA (UK) 540 auditors are required to understand and assess an entity's internal controls over accounting estimates, including:

- The nature and extent of oversight and governance over management's financial reporting process relevant to accounting estimates;
- How management identifies the need for and applies specialised skills or knowledge;
- How the entity's risk management process identifies and addresses risks relating to accounting estimates;
- The entity's information system;
- The entity's control activities in relation to accounting estimates; and
- How management reviews the outcomes of previous accounting estimates.

To ensure compliance with this revised auditing standard, we will be requesting further information from management and those charged with governance during our audit. Based on our knowledge of the Partnership we have identified limited material accounting estimates for which this is likely to apply to defined benefit pension liabilities.

Further detail is set out in Appendix 4

# Audit timeline



## Client responsibilities

Where clients do not deliver to the timetable agreed, we need to ensure that this does not impact on audit quality or absorb a disproportionate amount of time, thereby disadvantaging other clients. Where additional resources are needed to complete the audit due to a client not meeting their obligations we are not able to guarantee the delivery of the audit to the agreed timescales. In addition, delayed audits will incur additional audit fees.

## Our requirements

To minimise the risk of a delayed audit, you need to ensure that you:

- produce draft financial statements of good quality by the deadline you have agreed with us, including all notes, the Annual Report and the Annual Governance Statement
- ensure that good quality working papers are available at the start of the audit, in accordance with the working paper requirements schedule that we have shared with you
- ensure that the agreed data reports are available to us at the start of the audit and are reconciled to the values in the accounts, in order to facilitate our selection of samples for testing
- ensure that all appropriate staff are available (or as otherwise agreed) over the planned period of the audit
- respond promptly and adequately to audit queries.

# Quality and adding value through the audit

Our overall approach for the audit is clear and upfront communication, founded on our public sector credentials and a methodology to ensure delivery of a quality audit.

The diagram opposite summarises our key approach to adding value to you throughout our audit.

Our methodology is risk based. We comply with Auditing standards and as a Firm we are regulated by the FRC. We taking findings on audit quality seriously and continue to invest as a Firm through our audit investment plan. The audit investment plan is supported by a specific national Public Sector audit plan.

We comply with Audit Scotland's quality arrangements including submitting an annual quality report over our Audit Scotland portfolio. As part of Audit Scotland's quality arrangements, ICAS review our work on a rotational basis. Audit Scotland's quality report can be found at [www.audit-scotland.co.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.co.uk)

Our wider quality arrangements are set out in our annual transparency reports which are available on our website ([www.granthornton.co.uk](http://www.granthornton.co.uk)).

## Project management

- Use of Inflo to track progress and deliverables throughout the audit
- Clear roles and ownership of responsibilities within our team
- Clarity over expectations and timetable
- Track record delivering public sector audits on behalf of Audit Scotland

## Clear reporting

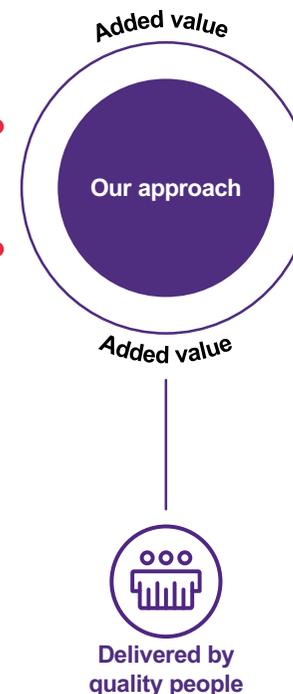
- Clear audit outputs at planning and within our final Annual Report
- Practical, risk based, recommendations for you to take forward
- Our judgements and conclusions set out transparently and in clear language
- Senior presence at the Partnership meetings to present our findings and support wider dialogue

## Pragmatism and early attention of issues

- Accessible and proactive engagement team
- Working with you to reach the right solution – flexing the workplan, recognising Covid-19
- Audit director takes ultimate decision on technical matters, consulting with our technical experts

## Public sector understanding

- Using our public sector insight to inform our audit and identify improvements you could make
- Regular meetings throughout the year sharing our observations and wider sector knowledge
- Experienced audit team including an audit team who specialise in public sector audits.



# Audit Fees

Across all sectors and firms, the FRC has set out its expectation of improved financial reporting from organisations and the need for auditors to demonstrate increased scepticism and challenge and to undertake additional and more robust testing. This includes the revised ISA (UK) 540 (revised): Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures.

As a firm, we are absolutely committed to meeting the expectations of the FRC over audit quality and public sector financial reporting. This includes, for Audit Scotland contracts, meeting the expectations of the Audit Scotland Quality Team and the ICAS quality framework.

Audit Scotland reviews the expected fee each year and adjusts it if necessary, based on auditors' experience, new requirements, or significant changes to audited bodies. The audit fee is calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Audit Scotland. In accordance with the Audit Scotland guidance, we can increase the fee by up to 20% from the base fee set by Audit Scotland, depending on risk factors identified by us as your external auditors. We cannot reduce the fee from the baseline set out by Audit Scotland. For 2020/21 we have agreed with Management to set the audit fee at the baseline fee.

## Relevant professional standards

Audit Scotland set the baseline audit fee. We can increase the fee, from the baseline, for the inclusion of additional risks, new technical matters or specific client matters identified. We are required to consider all relevant professional standards, including paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the FRC's Ethical Standard (revised 2019) which state that the Engagement Lead must set a fee sufficient to enable the resourcing of the audit with partners and staff with appropriate time and skill to deliver an audit to the required professional and Ethical standards.

## Audit fees for 2020/21

Service	Fees £
External Auditor Remuneration	8,900
Pooled Costs	850
Contribution to Audit Scotland costs	490
Contribution to Performance Audit and Best Value	-
<b>2020/21 Fee</b>	<b>10,240</b>

## Additional Fees (Non-Audit Services)

Service	Fees £
At planning stage we confirm there are no non-audit fees	Nil

## Fee assumptions

In setting the fee for 2020/21 we have assumed that the Partnership will:

- prepare a good quality set of accounts, supported by comprehensive and well-presented working papers which are ready at the start of the audit
- provide appropriate analysis, support and evidence to support all critical judgements and significant judgements made in preparing the financial statements
- provide early notice of proposed complex or unusual transactions which could have a material impact on the financial statements.

# Independence

## Auditor independence

Ethical Standards and ISA (UK) 260 require us to give you timely disclosure of all significant facts and matters that may bear upon the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm or covered persons relating to our independence.

We encourage you to contact us to discuss these or any other independence issues with us.

We will also discuss with you if we make additional significant judgements surrounding independence matters.

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention.

We have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard (Revised 2019) and we as a firm, and each covered person, confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Ethical Standard.

Our team complete annual fit and proper declarations including independence confirmations on a client by client basis as well as completing timesheets. The work of our Ethics team is overseen by the Ethics partner and all staff undergo ethics training in year.



# Appendices

# Responsibilities

The Code sets out auditor responsibilities and responsibilities of the audited body. Key responsibilities are summarised below. Please refer to the Code for further detail.

## Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership Board:

Responsibilities include:

- Preparing financial statements that give a true and fair view
- Maintaining accounting records
- Establishing and maintaining systems of internal control
- Effective internal controls including controls to achieve objectives and secure value for money
- Establish arrangements for proper conduct of affairs including legality of transactions
- Arrangements for prevention and detection of fraud, error, irregularity, bribery and corruption
- Appropriate corporate governance arrangements and arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of governance

## External Audit

Responsibilities include:

- Comply with professional engagement and ethical standards
- Provide an ISA compliant audit and opinion on the financial statements
- Demonstrate compliance with the wider scope public audit as detailed in the Code and applicable guidance
- Liaise with and notify Audit Scotland when circumstances indicate a statutory report may be required. This includes sharing awareness of current and/or sector issues
- Notify Audit Scotland of any known or suspected frauds greater than £5,000
- Contribute to relevant performance studies (as set out in the planning guidance for the year)



# Communication

ISA (UK) 260 as well as other ISAs set out prescribed matters which we are required to report to those charged with governance (the Partnership Board). Our reporting responsibilities are set out below. We communicate all matters affecting the audit on a timely basis, to management and/or those charged with governance (the Partnership Board).

<b>Our communication plan</b>	<b>Audit Plan</b>	<b>Annual Report (considered our ISA 260 Report)</b>
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	•	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit, including planning assessment of audit risks and wider scope risks	•	
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	•	•
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence. Relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged. Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	•	•
Significant matters in relation to going concern	•	•
Views about the qualitative aspects of the Partnership Board's accounting and financial reporting practices, including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures		•
Significant findings from the audit		•
Significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		•
Significant difficulties encountered during the audit		•
Significant deficiencies in internal control identified during the audit		•
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		•
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		•
Non-compliance with laws and regulations		•
Unadjusted misstatements and material disclosure omissions		•
Expected modifications to the auditor's report or emphasis of matter		•

# Fraud responsibilities

The term fraud refers to intentional acts of one or more individuals amongst management, those charged with governance, employees or third parties involving the use of deception that result in a material misstatement of the financial statements. In assessing risks, the audit team is alert to the possibility of fraud at the Partnership.

As part of our audit work we are responsible for:

- identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud in particular in relations to management override of controls.
- leading a discussion with those charged of governance (the Partnership Board) on their view of fraud. Typically we do this when presenting our audit plan and in the form of management and those charged with governance questionnaires.
- designing and implementing appropriate audit testing to gain assurance over our assessed risks of fraud
- responding appropriately to any fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

As auditors we obtain reasonable assurance the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

We will obtain annual representation from management regarding managements assessment of fraud risk, including internal controls, and any known or suspected fraud or misstatement. We also make inquires of internal audit around internal control, fraud risk and any known or suspected frauds in year.

## Anti-Money Laundering Arrangements

As required under the Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds Regulations 2017 there is an obligation on the Auditor General (as set out in the planning guidance) to inform the National Crime Agency if he knows or suspects that any person has engaged in money laundering or terrorist financing. Should we be informed of any instances of money laundering at Partnership we will report to the Auditor General as required by Audit Scotland.

The primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with management and those charged with governance including establishing and maintaining internal controls over the reliability of financial reporting effectiveness and efficiency of operations and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

It is the Partnership's responsibility to establish arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularity. This includes:

- developing, promoting and monitoring compliance with standing orders and financial instructions
- developing and implementing strategies to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularity
- receiving and investigating alleged breaches of proper standards of financial conduct or fraud and irregularity.

Throughout the audit we work with the Partnership to review specific areas of fraud risk, including the operation of key financial controls. We also examine the policies in place, strategies, standing orders and financial instructions to ensure that they provide a strong framework of internal control.

All suspected frauds and/or irregularities over £5,000 are reported to Audit Scotland by us as your auditors on a quarterly basis.

# Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures (ISA 540 revised)

## Introduction

Under ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018) auditors are required to understand and assess an entity's internal controls over accounting estimates, including:

- The nature and extent of oversight and governance over management's financial reporting process relevant to accounting estimates;
- How management identifies the need for and applies specialised skills or knowledge related to accounting estimates;
- How the entity's risk management process identifies and addresses risks relating to accounting estimates;
- The entity's information system as it relates to accounting estimates;
- The entity's control activities in relation to accounting estimates; and
- How management reviews the outcomes of previous accounting estimates.

As part of this process auditors also need to obtain an understanding of the role of those charged with governance, which is particularly important where the estimates have high estimation uncertainty, or require significant judgement.

Specifically do **Partnership Board members**:

- Understand the characteristics of the methods and models used to make the accounting estimates and the risks related to them;
- Oversee management's process for making accounting estimates, including the use of models, and the monitoring activities undertaken by management; and
- Evaluate how management made the accounting estimates?

## Additional information that will be required for our March 2021 audits

To ensure our compliance with this revised auditing standard, we will be requesting further information from management and those charged with governance during our audit for the year ended 31 March 2021. Based on our knowledge of the Partnership we have identified limited material accounting estimates for which this is likely to apply:

- Defined benefit pension scheme liabilities

## The Partnership Board's Information systems

In respect of the Partnership Board's information systems we are required to consider how management identifies the methods, assumptions and source data used for each material accounting estimate and the need for any changes to these. This includes how management selects, or designs, the methods, assumptions and data to be used and applies the methods used in the valuations.

When the models used include increased complexity or subjectivity, as is the case for many valuation models, auditors need to understand and assess the controls in place over the models and the data included therein. Where adequate controls are not in place we may need to report this as a significant control deficiency and this could affect the amount of detailed substantive testing required during the audit.

If management has changed the method for making an accounting estimate we will need to fully understand management's rationale for this change. Any unexpected changes are likely to raise the audit risk profile of this accounting estimate and may result in the need for additional audit procedures.

## Estimation uncertainty

Under ISA (UK) 540 we are required to consider the following:

- How management understands the degree of estimation uncertainty related to each accounting estimate; and
- How management address this estimation uncertainty when selecting their point estimate.

For example, how management identified and considered alternative, methods, assumptions or source data that would be equally valid under the financial reporting framework, and why these alternatives were rejected in favour of the point estimate used.

The revised standard includes increased emphasis on the importance of the financial statement disclosures. Under ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018), auditors are required to assess whether both the accounting estimates themselves and the related disclosures are reasonable.

Where there is a material uncertainty, that is where there is a significant risk of a material change to the estimated carrying value of an asset or liability within the next year, there needs to be additional disclosures. Note that not all material estimates will have a material uncertainty and it is also possible that an estimate that is not material could have a risk of material uncertainty.

Where there is material estimation uncertainty, we would expect the financial statement disclosures to detail:

- What the assumptions and uncertainties are;
- How sensitive the assets and liabilities are to those assumptions, and why;
- The expected resolution of the uncertainty and the range of reasonably possible outcomes for the next financial year; and
- An explanation of any changes made to past assumptions if the uncertainty is unresolved.

## Planning enquiries

As part of our planning risk assessment procedures have made formal inquires of management. We would appreciate a prompt response to these enquires in due course.

## Further information

Further details on the requirements of ISA (UK) 540 (Revised December 2018) can be found in the auditing standard on the Financial Reporting Council's website:

[https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/0fa69c03-49ec-49ae-a8c9-cc7a2b65382a/ISA-\(UK\)-540\\_Revised-December-2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/0fa69c03-49ec-49ae-a8c9-cc7a2b65382a/ISA-(UK)-540_Revised-December-2018_final.pdf)

