



# The Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board

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**External Audit Plan for the financial year ending 31 March 2019**

**DRAFT: Board meeting 25 January 2019**

**Joanne Brown**  
Engagement Leader

**John Boyd**  
Senior Manager

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# Our audit at a glance



Materiality is set at 2% of the VJB's 2018/19 gross expenditure budget (£59,800). We have calculated overall materiality in line with gross expenditure as this is recognised as a common and appropriate benchmark upon which to base materiality in the public sector. The materiality threshold is unchanged from the prior year (2017/18: 2%).



Performance materiality is set at 75% and trivial is 5% of materiality. This reflects minimal audit adjustments in prior year and our understanding of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board (VJB) in year 3 of our audit cycle.



Significant audit risks are: management override of controls; and the risk of fraud in expenditure recognition as set out in International Auditing Standards (ISA UK) practice note 10.

## An audit underpinned by quality and adding value to you



Our audit is undertaken in accordance with the Audit Scotland Code of Audit Practice. This includes consideration of wider scope audit dimensions. In accordance with Audit Scotland guidance we consider the VJB as a smaller body and therefore the full scope audit dimensions are not applicable. We will consider the VJB's financial sustainability arrangements, including financial plans and governance statement as reflected in the annual accounts.

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# Overarching principles of our audit

Our audit is risk based and undertaken in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK) and the Audit Scotland Code of Audit Practice 2016 ('the Code').

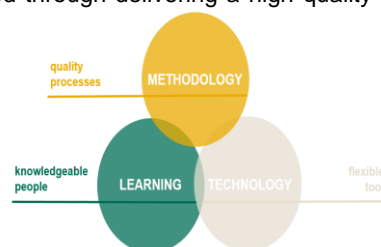
Our overall objective is a effective, quality-focused external audit which adds value through wider insights and challenge. Our audit foundations are:

- ✓ professional scepticism
- ✓ a focus on audit risks and key areas of management judgement
- ✓ Delivering a quality audit through our experienced public sector audit team, use of data analytics to focus our audit and understanding of the organisation
- ✓ clear and upfront communications, with regular communication during the year
- ✓ reporting with focused actions which will support you in improving your controls/operations

## Adding value

Our aim is to add value to the VJB through our external audit work. This will be delivered through delivering a high quality audit. Specifically for the VJB we will also undertake the following arrangements:

- **Robust and effective audit methodology:** Our ISA compliant audit methodology is tailored to **focus audit resource on significant risk areas** and key estimates and judgements.
- **Investing in our people:** Our resourcing model is designed to ensure you have a **skilled, experienced and knowledgeable audit team**.
- **Investing in technology:** We continue to invest in data analysis and audit software to deliver more **efficient ISA compliant audit processes**.



Where appropriate, we will share relevant Audit Scotland and Grant Thornton publications with Senior Management, identifying particular areas for consideration. We will pro-actively work with management during the year to discuss any new or emerging matters, such as the new revenue standards which come into effect from 31 March 2018.



## Key audit deliverables

### 2018/19 Deliverables as set out in the Audit Scotland planning guidance (October 2019)

- Confirmation of agreed fee by end of March 2019
- Annual quality report to the Auditor General and Accounts Commission (January 2019)
- National Fraud Initiative – completed Auditor questionnaire (30 June 2019)
- Current issue returns to Audit Scotland covering matters of Ministerial or Auditor General interest and best value elements (January 2019, March 2019, August 2019 and October 2019).
- Submission of fraud cases to Audit Scotland on a quarterly basis
- Submission of annual audit report and audited accounts (deadline 31 October 2019)

### Planned Audit Scotland publications which may be relevant to the VJB

- Local Government in Scotland: Performance and Challenges (expected Spring 2019)

### External Audit deliverables for 2018/19 – Audit and Risk Committee

- External Audit Plan (this document)
- Transparency Report and Audit Quality Briefing (March 2019)
- Annual Report to those Charged with Governance (September 2019)
- Audit opinion (September 2019)
- Management letter of representation (September 2019)

# Audit approach and materiality



We undertake your audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs) and the Audit Scotland Code of Audit Practice (May 2016). On an annual basis we are required to give an opinion as to whether the Financial Statements:

- give a true and fair view
- have been properly prepared in accordance with relevant legislation and standards
- audited parts of the remuneration and staff report have been prepared in accordance with the guidance
- the wider information contained in the financial statements e.g. Management Commentary, Annual Governance statement and Remuneration Report.

## Basis for materiality

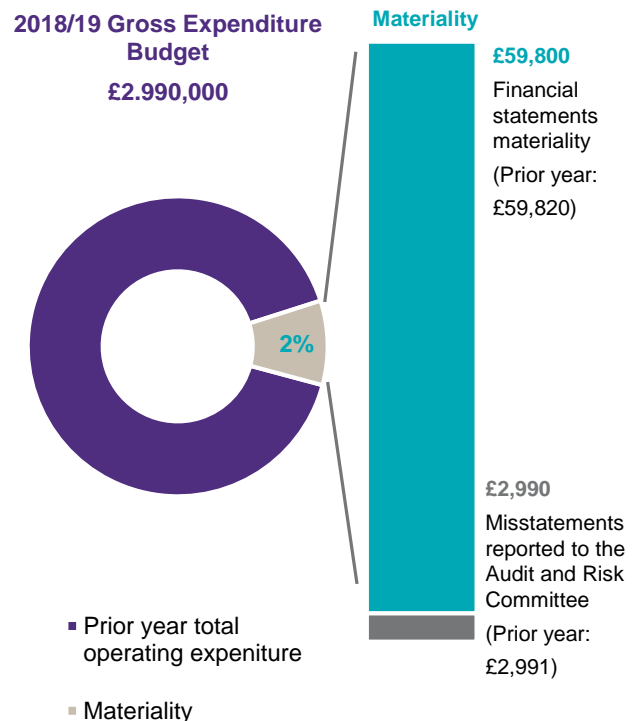
We calculated financial statement materiality based on the VJB's 2018/19 gross expenditure budget (£2,990,000). We have determined materiality to be **£59,800** (2017/18: £59,820), which equates to approximately **2%** of your gross expenditure budget in 2018/19. This is based on our judgement of our consideration of material to the user of the account based on understanding of the VJB. We reconsider planning materiality if, during the course of our audit engagement, we become aware of facts and circumstances that would have caused us to make a different determination of planning materiality.

## Performance materiality

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. Based on our audit experience in 2017/18, we have set performance materiality at 75% of total materiality and this remains unchanged from prior year (2017/18: 75%). Performance materiality determines those accounts which testing will be undertaken on and the level of sample testing performed where applicable.

## Reporting to those charged with governance

Whilst our audit procedures are designed to identify misstatements which are material to our opinion on the financial statements as a whole, we nevertheless report to the Board any unadjusted misstatements of lesser amounts to the extent that these are identified by our audit work. Under ISA 260 (UK) 'Communication with those charged with governance', we are obliged 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 **£2,990**. (2017/18: £2,991). If management have corrected material misstatements identified during the course of the audit, we will consider whether those corrections should be communicated to the Audit and Risk Committee to assist it in fulfilling its governance responsibilities.



# A risk based audit methodology

## Understanding The Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board and its environment

This is our third year as the external auditors of the VJB appointed under the Audit Scotland framework. In 2017/18, the VJB received funding of £2.652 million from constituent authorities and incurred a deficit on the provision of services of £461,000. A balanced budget for 2018/19 was approved in February 2018 and this included constituent authority contributions of £2.86 million and Scottish Government grant funding of £125,000. This funding is based on budgeted amounts set prior to the start of the financial year.

Expenditure and income are closely aligned. Like other Scottish public sector bodies, the VJB's budget allocation has remained flat meaning there has been a real term reduction despite additional service demands. With increasing financial pressures facing local authorities, it is increasingly important that the VJB has robust financial plans in place to ensure it can best utilise available funding to deliver services.

## Significant risks

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.

## Overview of our significant audit risks identified at planning and our proposed approach

Risk area	Description of risk	Planned response
Risk of fraud in revenue recognition	As set out in ISA 240, there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper recognition of revenue. The VJB is grant funded. The funding is well forecasted and agreed directly to funding letters. For these reasons, it is our opinion that there is an inherently low risk of fraud in revenue recognition.	<b>Risk Rebutted:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have rebutted the presumed risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition due to the income received by VJB coming from the Scottish Government via grant funding and requisition funding.</li> <li>We will therefore consider the revenue balance as part of our year end audit but not at a significant risk level.</li> </ul>
Fraud in expenditure recognition as set out in Practice Note 10.	Operating expenditure is understated or not treated in the correct period (risk of fraud in expenditure). As set out in Practice note 10 (revised) which applies to public sector entities. 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 non-pay expenditure. We consider the risk to be particularly prevalent around the year end and therefore focus our testing on cut-off of non-pay expenditure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform cut off at year end on pre and post year end transactions and recording.</li> <li>Walkthrough of the key expenditure controls in place.</li> <li>Regularity – Expenditure incurred in accordance with the type/nature of the VJB as an organisation.</li> </ul>
Management override of controls	As set out in ISA 240, across all entities there is a presumed risk of fraud being perpetrated by management through its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Therefore, there is a presumed risk that management override of controls is present in all entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A focus on understanding how/where management override of controls may occur.</li> <li>Review of the controls over journal entries using our data analyser tool to focus on higher risk journals.</li> <li>Understanding key areas of judgement and accounting estimates within the financial statements and the basis for these judgements and the application of accounting policies.</li> <li>Reviewing unusual and/or significant transactions that are out with the normal course of business for the entity to understand the rationale for these transactions.</li> </ul>

# Wider scope audit – Audit dimensions and Best Value

Our responsibilities under Audit Scotland's Code of Audit Practice extend beyond the audit of the financial statements.

The Code sets out four dimensions that frame wider scope audit work into identifiable areas. Alongside Best Value, the audit dimensions set a common framework for our audit work and we review and conclude on the four dimensions and that there are organisational arrangements in place to secure Best Value. Audit Scotland Audit Planning guidance outlines key areas for consideration. Relevant to the organisation we will consider the following:

- EU Withdrawal;
- Changing landscape for public financial management;
- Dependency on key suppliers; and
- Openness and transparency.



## Wider scope approach - Smaller Body

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 VJB operating activity and income and expenditure streams, we feel it is appropriate 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.

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# Appendices

**Key audit deliverables and our team**

**Audit process**

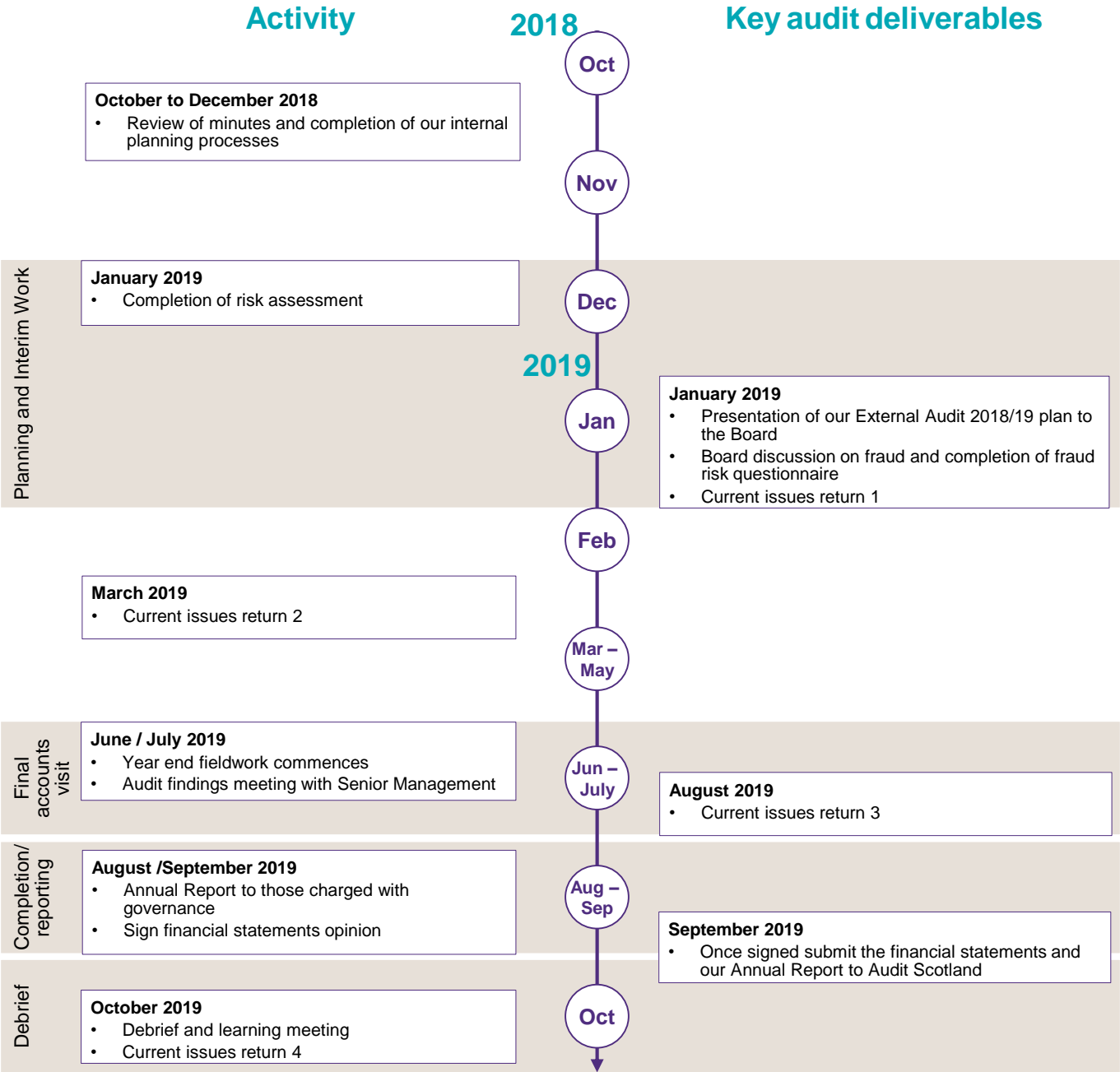
**Fees and independence**

**Fraud arrangements**

**Respective responsibilities**



# Key audit deliverables and our team



## Our team

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**In addition, we will use our accounting technical team as required.**

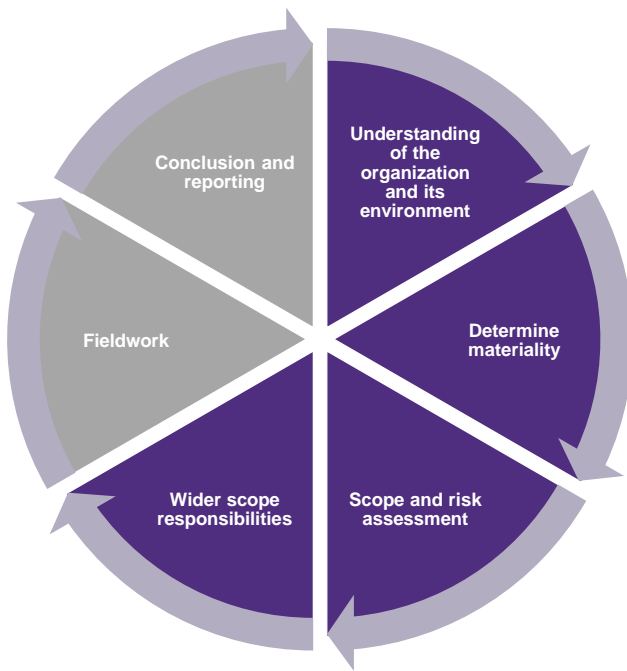
# Audit process

## Fieldwork, conclusion and reporting

Our audit fieldwork will be conducted in accordance with ISAs and the Code of Audit Practice. Our fieldwork is designed to provide sufficient assurance to provide an opinion on the true and fair view of the financial statements and allow us to conclude on the areas of wider scope. We will conclude our audit procedures and provide an independent audit opinion on the financial statements. Our key conclusions and findings from our audit work will be reported to you through our annual audit report.

## Understanding of the organisation and its environment

This is our third year as the external auditors of the VJB appointed under the Audit Scotland framework. In this time we have built on our knowledge of your business and the environment in which you operate. Our understanding of the organization and its environment is provided on **page 6**.



## Determine materiality

Fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law. Misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements. We determine your materiality during our audit planning process and continue to assess the appropriateness of this value throughout the audit. More detail around your materiality is provided on **page 5**.

## Wider scope

The Code sets responsibilities for auditors of public bodies which extend beyond the audit of the financial statements. Auditors are required to consider and report on wider audit dimensions. In our judgement, we feel it is appropriate to treat you as a smaller body under the Code. However, we will update our understanding of your arrangements for ensuring financial sustainability as well as your governance arrangements in place to support the delivery of the VJB's strategic outcomes as part of our audit. Our consideration of the Wider scope is provided on **page 7**.

## Scope and risk assessment

The scope of our audit work is in accordance with the Code and International Standards on Auditing.

Our audit work is risk based and during our audit planning we identify significant audit risks. These are detailed within our scope and risk assessment below.

# Fees and independence

## External Audit Fee

Service	Fees £
External Auditor Remuneration	<b>6,280</b>
Pooled Costs	<b>610</b>
Contribution to Audit Scotland costs	<b>390</b>
Contribution to Performance Audit and Best Value	<b>0</b>
<b>2018-19 Fee</b>	<b>7,280</b>

## Fees for other services

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

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. The above proposed fee, set at the base fee, has been agreed with management. The fee is based on the following assumptions:

- supporting schedules to all figures in the accounts are supplied by the agreed dates and in accordance with the agreed upon information request list
- the scope of the audit, and the VJB's activities will not change significantly from planned
- The VJB will make available management and accounting staff to help us locate information and to provide explanations. We reserve the right to charge an additional fee for any additional work.
- We will only receive (and audit) 3 sets of accounts (1st draft; amended draft and final)
- Specific balances such as pensions and valuations of assets are supported by an independent specialist

## Independence and ethics

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 Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Full details of all fees charged for audit and non-audit services will be included in our Annual Report to those charged with governance at the conclusion of the audit.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

We are required by auditing and ethical standards to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team.

We can confirm no independence concerns have been identified.

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# Fraud arrangements

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 VJB.

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 (for the VJB this is assumed to be the 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 but not absolute 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.

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 VJB'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 VJB 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.

# Respective responsibilities

As set out in the Code of Audit Practice (pages 10 to 16) there are a number of key responsibilities you as an organisation are responsible for, and others, as appointed auditors we are responsible for. These are summarised below:

Area	VJB's Responsibilities
Corporate governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing arrangements for proper conduct of its affairs</li> <li>Legality of activities and transactions</li> <li>Monitoring adequacy and effectiveness of arrangements (inc role of those charged with governance)</li> </ul>
Financial statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of their financial position</li> <li>Maintaining accounting records and working papers</li> <li>Putting in place systems of Internal Control</li> <li>Maintaining proper accounting records</li> <li>Preparing and publishing an annual governance statement, management commentary and remuneration report</li> <li>Effective systems of internal control as well as financial, operational and compliance controls – supporting achievement of objectives and secure value for money</li> </ul>
Financial position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proper arrangements to ensure financial position is soundly based and responsibility to ensure arrangements secure best value</li> </ul>
Fraud and error	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing appropriate arrangements for prevention and detection of fraud, error, irregularities, bribery and corruption and affairs are properly managed</li> </ul>

## Our responsibilities



- Undertake statutory duties and comply with professional engagement and ethical standards
- Provide an opinion on financial statements and where appropriate regularity of transactions
- Review and report on, as appropriate, other information eg annual governance statements, management commentary, remuneration reports
- Notify the Auditor General when circumstances indicate a statutory report may be required
- Demonstrate compliance with wider public audit scope

## How do we do this in practice



- By reviewing and providing judgements and conclusions on the VJB's arrangements including those across the wider scope of audit dimensions.
- Consideration of the effectiveness of performance management arrangements
- Suitability and effectiveness of corporate governance arrangements in year
- Financial position and arrangements for ensuring financial sustainability in the medium to longer term
- Review of other information in line with our knowledge and understanding of the VJB
- Ongoing dialogue and engagement with Audit Scotland during the year

Weaknesses and risks identified by us as your auditors are only those which have come to our attention during our normal audit work in accordance with the Code, and may not be all that exist. Communication by us of matters arising from the audit of the financial statements or of risks or weaknesses does not absolve management from its responsibility to address the issues raised and to maintain an adequate system of control.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to VJB Management and the Board.

# Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

<b>Our communication plan</b>	<b>Audit Plan</b>	<b>Audit Findings</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 VJB'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		•

International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISA) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while our Annual Report to those Charged with Governance will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to VJB Management and the Board.



Grant Thornton

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