



The Audit Plan for Shropshire County Pension Fund

Year ending 31 March 2026

March 2026



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Introduction and headlines



Purpose

This document provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Shropshire County Pension Fund ('the Fund') for those charged with governance.

Respective responsibilities

The National Audit Office ('the NAO') has issued the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'). This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end, and what is expected from the audited body. Our respective responsibilities are also set out in the agreed in the Terms of Appointment and Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), the body responsible for appointing us as auditor of the Fund. We draw your attention to these documents in the links below.

- [Terms of Appointment from 2023/24 - PSAA](#)
- [Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies from 2023/24 audits - PSAA](#)

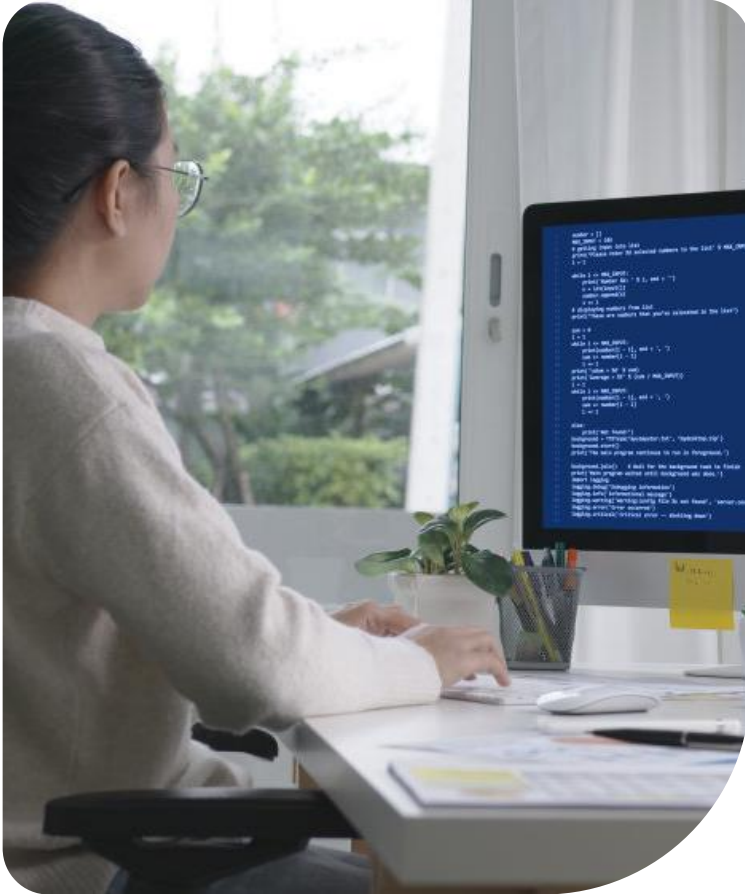
Scope of our audit

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 Fund's financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance (the Pensions Committee), and we consider whether there are sufficient arrangements in place at the Fund.

The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or the Pensions Committee of their responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the Fund 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 have considered how the Fund is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our audit approach is based on a thorough understanding of the Fund's business and is risk-based.

Introduction and headlines (Continued)



Significant risks

Those risks requiring special audit consideration and procedures to address the likelihood of a material financial statement error have been identified as:

- management override of control
- valuation of level 3 investments.

We will communicate significant findings on these areas as well as any other significant matters arising from the audit to you in our Audit Findings (ISA 260) Report.

Materiality

We have determined planning materiality to be £44.9 million (PY £38.8 million) for the Fund, which equates to 1.71% of your gross investment assets as at 31 March 2025.

We have determined a lower specific planning materiality for the Fund Account of £14.3 million (PY £14.3 million), which equates to 10% of prior year gross expenditure on the fund account.

Clearly trivial has been set at £2.2 million (PY £1.9 million).

Audit logistics

Our interim visit will take place in March 2026, and our final visit will take place in June and July. Our key deliverables are this Audit Plan, Auditor's Report, Auditor's Consistency Statement and our Audit Findings Report.

Our proposed fee for the audit is £90,404 (PY: £87,340) for the Fund, subject to the Fund delivering a good set of financial statements and working papers and no significant new financial reporting matters arising that require additional time and/or specialist input.

We have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard (revised 2024) 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.

Significant risks identified

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.

Significant risk	Audit team's assessment	Planned audit procedures
Management override of controls Significant Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management override of controls is present in all entities.	We have therefore identified management override of controls, in particular journals, management estimates and transactions outside the course of business as a significant risk of material misstatement.	We will: • evaluate the design effectiveness of management controls over journals • analyse the journals listing and determine the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals • test unusual journals recorded during the year and after the draft accounts stage for appropriateness and corroboration • gain an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied by management and consider their reasonableness with regard to corroborative evidence • evaluate the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions



“In determining significant risks, the auditor may first identify those assessed risks of material misstatement that have been assessed higher on the spectrum of inherent risk to form the basis for considering which risks may be close to the upper end. Being close to the upper end of the spectrum of inherent risk will differ from entity to entity and will not necessarily be the same for an entity period on period. It may depend on the nature and circumstances of the entity for which the risk is being assessed. The determination of which of the assessed risks of material misstatement are close to the upper end of the spectrum of inherent risk, and are therefore significant risks, is a matter of professional judgement, unless the risk is of a type specified to be treated as a significant risk in accordance with the requirements of another ISA (UK).” (ISA (UK) 315).

In making the review of unusual significant transactions “the auditor shall treat identified significant related party transactions outside the entity’s normal course of business as giving rise to significant risks.” (ISA (UK) 550).

Significant risks identified (continued)

Significant risk	Audit team's assessment	Planned audit procedures
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions Rebutted Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a rebuttable presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue	We have identified and completed a risk assessment of all revenue streams for the Fund. We have rebutted the presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue for all revenue streams, because: • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited • the culture and ethical frameworks of public sector bodies, including the Fund, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable. Therefore, we do not consider this to be a significant risk for the Fund.	We do not consider this to be a significant risk for the Fund and have therefore rebutted it. We will keep this rebuttal under review throughout the audit to ensure this judgement remains appropriate.



Management should expect engagement teams to challenge management in areas that are complex, significant or highly judgemental which may be the case for accounting estimates, going concern, related parties and similar areas. Management should also expect to provide engagement teams with sufficient evidence to support their judgements and the approach they have adopted for key accounting policies referenced to accounting standards or changes thereto.

Where estimates are used in the preparation of the financial statements management should expect teams to challenge management's assumptions and request evidence to support those assumptions.

Significant risks identified (continued)

Significant risk	Audit team's assessment	Planned audit procedures
Significant Valuation of level 3 investments The valuations of level 3 investments are a significant accounting estimate based on unobservable inputs and hence there is a risk of material misstatement due to error and/or fraud.	By their nature Level 3 investment valuations lack observable inputs. These valuations therefore represent a significant accounting estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the balance (£606.6 million as at 31 March 2025) and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions. We have therefore identified the valuation of Level 3 investments as a significant risk.	We will: - document and evaluate management's processes for valuing Level 3 investments - obtain and review the audited financial statements of the investment accounts, where these are at a different reporting date to the Fund's financial statements: - the valuations will be compared to the year-end reporting date after accounting for cashflows, and - obtain and review the corresponding investment manager report (capital statement) as at the investment accounts audit date with the audited accounts and follow up significant differences - independently obtain and review the corresponding investment manager reports (capital statements) as at the reporting date and compare to the financial statements - review purchase and sale transactions of investments near the reporting date where appropriate - review the guidelines under which investments have been valued at the date of the investment accounts and the Fund accounts - review management's classification of the assets - obtain and review investment manager service auditor report on design and operating effectiveness of relevant internal controls where appropriate - undertake sample testing of purchases and sales to prime documentation across the period to support our reconciliation of the opening and closing balances.

Other matters

Other work

The Fund is administered by Shropshire Council (the 'Council'), and the Fund's accounts form part of the Council's financial statements.

In addition to our responsibilities under the Code of Practice, we have a number of other audit responsibilities, as follows:

- We read any other information published alongside the Council's financial statements to check that it is consistent with the Fund's financial statements on which we give an opinion and is consistent with our knowledge of the Authority.
- We consider our other duties under legislation and the Code, as and when required, including:
 - giving electors the opportunity to raise questions about your 2025/26 financial statements, consider and decide upon any objections received in relation to the 2025/26 financial statements
 - issue of a report in the public interest or written recommendations to the Fund under section 24 of the Act, copied to the Secretary of State
 - application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 or for a judicial review under Section 31 of the Act; or
 - issuing an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Act.

- We carry out work to satisfy ourselves on the consistency of the Fund's financial statements included in the Fund's annual report with the audited Fund's accounts.

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.

Other matters (Continued)

2025 triennial valuation

Under Regulation 62 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 the Fund must obtain an actuarial valuation of its assets and liabilities every three years. The latest valuation is as at 31 March 2025 (due to be published in April 2026). The purpose of the valuation is to set employer contribution rates for the period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029. It also provides the source data for actuaries to prepare their estimate of the actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits at the Fund level, as required under *IAS 26 - Accounting and Reporting by Retirement Benefit Plans*, and provides the base for actuaries to roll forward their estimates and assumptions from the triennial valuation to annually estimate individual employers' pension liabilities between triennial revaluations as required by *IAS 19 - Employee Benefits*.

The data used by actuaries to produce IAS 19 liabilities and assets can be broadly split into two categories:

- 1) Individual member data used to calculate the triennial valuation liabilities and assets which the IAS 19 liabilities and assets are based on.
- 2) Data used to carry out the roll-forward calculation from the triennial valuation liabilities and assets to the IAS 19 liabilities and assets. This data is provided by administering authorities and the relevant employers.

As auditors, we therefore need to test the individual member data used by the actuaries in their triennial valuation calculations (Item 1) against independent records every three years and Item 2 testing is carried out annually. The work for Item 1 will involve picking a sample of members across actives, deferrals and pensioners and testing a number of separate data sets within each category. Item 2 testing is included within the annual scale fee but Item 1 is additional work that will be need to be subject to a fee variation of £5,000. Our proposed fee variation is included on Page 16.

Our approach to materiality

The concept of materiality is 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.

Matter & Description	Planned audit procedures
Determination We have determined planning materiality (financial statement materiality for the planning stage of the audit) based on professional judgement in the context of our knowledge of the Fund, including consideration of factors such as stakeholder expectations, sector developments, financial stability and reporting requirements for the financial statements	We determine planning materiality in order to: • establish what level of misstatement could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements • assist in establishing the scope of our audit engagement and audit tests • determine sample sizes, and • assist in evaluating the effect of known and likely misstatements in the financial statements.
Other factors An item does not necessarily have to be large to be considered to have a material effect on the financial statements	An item may be considered to be material by nature when it relates to instances where greater precision is required. Additionally, there may be items which we feel would benefit from a lower specific materiality for those account balances (e.g. benefits payable within the Fund Account). Details of lower specific materialities applied can be found on the next page.
Reassessment of materiality Our assessment of materiality is kept under review throughout the audit process	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.

Our approach to materiality (Continued)

Materiality	Amount (£)	Qualitative factors considered
Headline materiality for the Fund's financial statements	44.90m	Headline Materiality for planning equates to 1.71% of your gross investment assets as at 31 March 2025. We deem this to be a level above which errors or omissions would alter the economic decisions of users of the accounts.
Specific materiality for Fund Account: a lower specific materiality for the fund account will be applied to the audit of all fund account transactions, except for investment transactions, for which headline materiality will be applied.	14.25m	Materiality for the Fund Account for planning equates to 10% of gross expenditure (in the fund account) as at 31 March 2025. We deem this to be a level above which errors or omissions would alter the economic decisions of users of the accounts.
Trivial matters - reporting threshold	2.20m	We will report to you all misstatements identified in excess of the reporting threshold, in addition to any matters considered to be qualitatively material. Trivial threshold is based on a percentage (5%) of the overall materiality. No significant issues noted in prior year and no significant change in business processes or control environment.



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; Judgments about materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances, and are affected by the size or nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both; and Judgments about matters that are material to users of the financial statements are based on a consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group. The possible effect of misstatements on specific individual users, whose needs may vary widely, is not considered. (ISA (UK) 320)

IT audit strategy

In accordance with ISA (UK) 315, we are required to obtain an understanding of the IT environment related to all key business processes, identify all risks from the use of IT related to those business process controls judged relevant to our audit and assess the relevant IT general controls (ITGCs) in place to mitigate them. Our audit will include completing an assessment of the design and implementation of ITGCs related to security management; technology acquisition, development and maintenance; and technology infrastructure.

We plan to rely on the operation of those business process controls and will therefore also carry out testing on the operation of the ITGCs in use to mitigate the risks from IT relevant to those controls. This is to gain assurance that the relevant controls have been operating effectively throughout the period.

The following IT applications are in scope for IT controls assessment based on the planned financial statement audit approach, we will perform the indicated level of assessment:

IT application	Audit area	Planned level IT audit assessment
Business World – Unit 4	Financial reporting	• ITGC assessment (design, implementation and operating effectiveness)
Altair	Member Data	• ITGC assessment (design, implementation and operating effectiveness)

Interim Audit Work

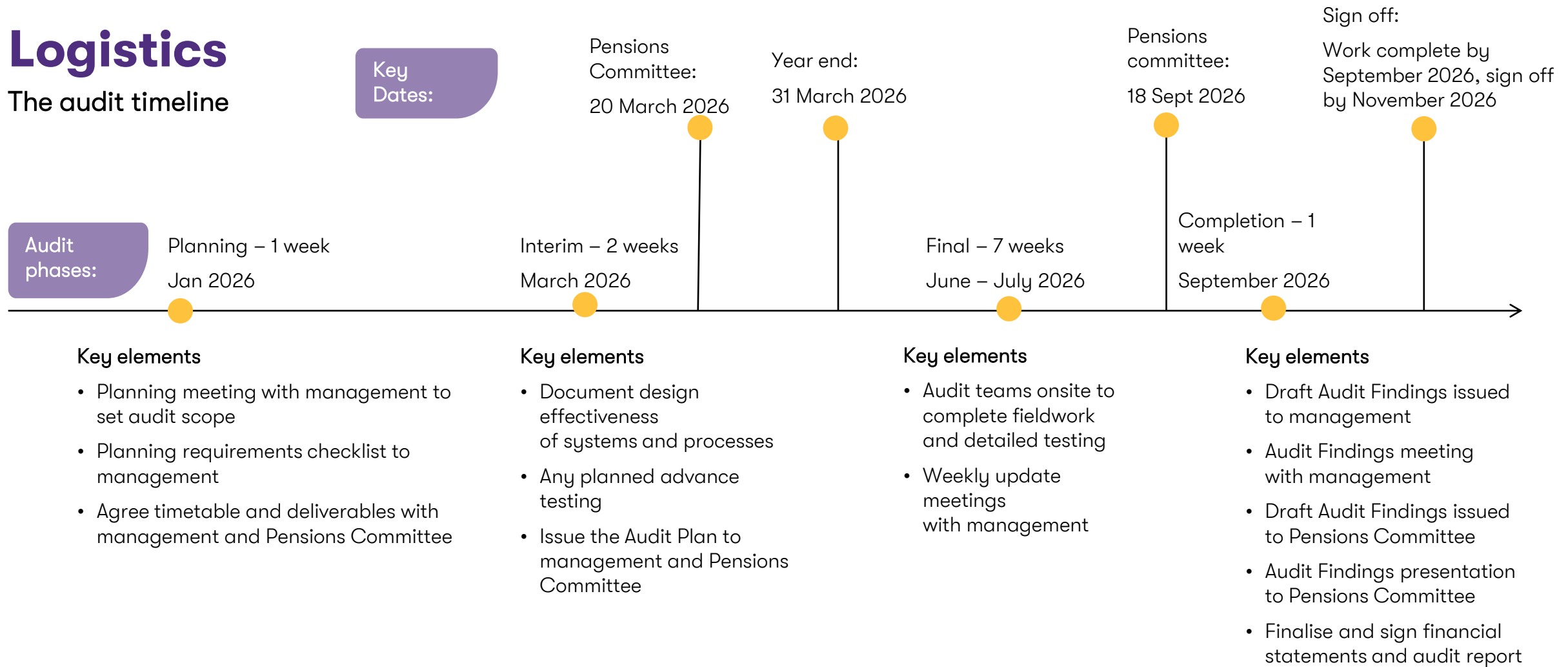
Details of work to be conducted at interim:

The backstop date is moving earlier in the year, as a result and to ensure that all work can be completed by this date, we will be using interim visit as a key part of the audit approach. Interim visits should be treated with the same importance as final accounts and will include regular catch-ups between management and the audit team to facilitate this visit.

Description	Work commentary
Advance testing areas	We have selected a sample for detailed testing for M1-9 based on interim data provided for the following areas: • Employees and Employers contributions • Benefits paid • Investment purchases and sales • Lump sums • Triennial member data • Member data movements

Logistics

The audit timeline



Our team and communications

Grant Thornton core team

Avtar Sohal
Key Audit Partner

- Key contact for senior management and Pensions Committee
- Overall quality assurance

Elliot Baker
Audit Manager

- Audit planning
- Resource management
- Performance management reporting

Zizipho Khonza
In-charge

- On-site audit team management
- Day-to-day point of contact
- Audit fieldwork

	Service delivery	Audit reporting	Audit progress	Technical support
Formal communications	• Client Surveys	• The Audit Plan • The Audit Findings • Auditor’s Annual Report	• Audit planning meetings • Audit clearance meetings • Communication of issues log	• Technical updates
Informal communications	• Open channel for discussion		• Communication of audit issues as they arise	• Notification of up-coming issues

As part of our overall service delivery, we may utilise colleagues who are based overseas, primarily in India and the Philippines. Those colleagues work on a fully integrated basis with our team members based in the UK and receive the same training and professional development programmes as our UK based team. They work as part of the engagement team, reporting directly to the In-charge and Manager and will interact with you in the same way as our UK based team albeit on a remote basis. Our overseas team members use a remote working platform which is based in the UK. The remote working platform (or Virtual Desktop Interface) does not allow the user to move files from the remote platform to their local desktop meaning all audit related data is retained within the UK.

Our fee estimate

Our fee estimate:

We have set out below our specific assumptions made in arriving at our estimated audit fees, we have assumed that the Fund 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 while preparing the financial statements
- provide early notice of proposed complex or unusual transactions which could have a material impact on the financial statements
- maintain adequate business processes and IT controls, supported by an appropriate IT infrastructure and control environment.

Relevant professional standards

In preparing our fee estimate, we have had regard to all relevant professional standards, including paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the FRC's [Ethical Standard \(revised 2024\)](#) which stipulate that the Engagement Lead (Key Audit Partner) 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.

PSAA

Local Government Audit fees are set by PSAA as part of their national procurement exercise. In 2017, PSAA awarded a contract of audit for Shropshire County Pension Fund to begin with effect from 2018/19. This contract was re-tendered in 2023 and Grant Thornton have been re-appointed as your auditors. The scale fee set out in the PSAA contract for the 2025/26 audit is £90,404.

Description

	Audit Fee for 2024/25 (£)	Proposed fee for 2025/26 (£)
Shropshire County Pension Fund Audit	86,240	90,404
IAS 19 letters to auditors of bodies outside the NAO code	1,100	1,100
2025 triennial valuation data testing	-	5,000
Other	-	-
Total (Exc. VAT)	87,340	96,504

This contract sets out four contractual stage payments for this fee, with payment based on delivery of specified audit milestones:

- Production of the final auditor's annual report for the previous Audit Year or opinion issued
- Production of the draft audit planning report to Audited Body
- 50% of planned hours of an audit have been completed
- 75% of planned hours of an audit have been completed

Any variation to the scale fee will be determined by PSAA in accordance with their procedures as set out here [Fee Variations Overview – PSAA](#)

Fees and non-audit services

The following tables below sets out the non-audit services charged from the beginning of the financial year to year end ie 31 March 2026, as well as the threats to our independence and safeguards have been applied to mitigate these threats.

The below non-audit services are consistent with the Fund’s policy on the allotment of non-audit work to your auditor

None of the below services were provided on a contingent fee basis

For the purposes of our audit, we have made enquiries of all Grant Thornton teams within the Grant Thornton International Limited network member firms providing services to Shropshire County Pension Fund. The table summarises all non-audit services which were identified. We have adequate safeguards in place to mitigate the perceived self-interest threat from these fees as detailed in the table below.

Grant Thornton UK LLP also acts as the statutory auditor of Shropshire Council. The fees for the audit and non-audit services charged for this entity are reported in its Audit Plan. We consider that such services and fees do not impair our independence.

Assurance Service Fees

Service	£	Threats Identified	Safeguards applied
Audit Related Assurance			
IAS 19 Assurance letters for Admitted Bodies outside of the NAO Code of Audit Practice (£1,100 per letter and received one request in 2024/25 which we anticipate being repeated)	£1,100 per letter	Self-Interest (because this is potentially a recurring fee)	The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the total fee for this work is £1,100 in comparison to the total proposed fee for the audit of £90,404 and relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP’s turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors all mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level. We have not prepared the financial information on which our assurances will be used by the requesting auditor to form an opinion on as part of their opinion on the financial statements of the admitted body. Any decisions whether to change controls over, or edits required to, financial information arising from our findings will be a matter for informed management. The scope of the work does not include making decisions on behalf of management or recommending or suggesting a particular course of action for management to follow. We may make recommendations to the Fund in respect of control weaknesses, in the same way as we would in an audit of financial statements. Informed management understand the operation of systems and can challenge our recommendations as appropriate.
Total	£1,100		

Independence considerations

Ethical Standards and ISA (UK) 260 require us to give you timely disclosure of all significant matters that may bear upon the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm or covered persons (including its partners, senior managers, managers and network firms). In this context, there are no matters that we are required to report:

Matter	Conclusions
Relationships with Grant Thornton	We are not aware of any relationships between Grant Thornton and the Fund and/or Administering Authority that may reasonably be thought to bear on our integrity, independence and objectivity.
Relationships and Investments held by individuals	We have not identified any potential issues in respect of personal relationships with the Fund and/or Administering Authority or investments in the Fund and/or Administering Authority held by individuals.
Employment of Grant Thornton staff	We are not aware of any former Grant Thornton partners or staff being employed, or holding discussions in respect of employment, by the Fund/Administering Authority as a director or in a senior management role covering financial, accounting or control related areas.
Business relationships	We have not identified any business relationships between Grant Thornton and the Fund and/or Administering Authority.
Contingent fees in relation to non-audit services	No contingent fee arrangements are in place for non-audit services provided.
Gifts and hospitality	We have not identified any gifts or hospitality provided to, or received from, a member of the Fund's and/or Administering Authority's board, senior management or staff (that would exceed the threshold set in the Ethical Standard).

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence at planning as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention and consider that an objective reasonable and informed third party would take the same view. The firm and each covered person and network firms have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements. Further, we have complied with the requirements of the National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note 01 issued in February 2025 which sets out supplementary guidance on ethical requirements for auditors of local public bodies.

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

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

This document, the Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while the Audit Findings will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues, findings 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 an audit progress memorandum.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	●	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit, form, timing and expected general content of communications including significant risks and Key Audit Matters	●	
Planned use of internal audit	●	
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	●	●

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance (continued)

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Views about the qualitative aspects of the Fund’s accounting and financial reporting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures		●
Significant findings from the audit		●
Significant matters and issue 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		●

Respective responsibilities

As auditor we are responsible for performing the audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

New and future standards and reporting requirements

New or revised accounting standards that have been adopted by the CIPFA Code for 2025/26

Amendments to IAS 21 – Lack of Exchangeability

IAS 21 *The Effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rates* has been amended by the IASB to clarify how an entity should assess whether a currency is exchangeable and how it should determine an appropriate spot exchange rate when exchangeability is lacking. The amendments introduce more detailed guidance on identifying a lack of exchangeability and on estimating a spot exchange rate in such circumstances. These amendments have been adopted by the Code from 1 April 2025.

IFRS 17 – Insurance Contracts

IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts was issued by the IASB in May 2017 and has been adopted by the CIPFA Code for local authority accounting from 1 April 2025. The standard introduces a new comprehensive framework for the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of insurance contracts, replacing IFRS 4. Key features of IFRS 17 include the introduction of revised measurement models for insurance liabilities, the contractual service margin to defer unearned profit, new presentation requirements and significantly enhanced disclosures aimed at improving transparency and comparability.

New or revised accounting standards that are expected to be adopted by the CIPFA Code in future years.

Amendments to IFRS 9 and IFRS 7 – Classification and measurement of financial instruments

These amendments clarify the requirements for the timing of recognition and derecognition of some financial assets and liabilities (including settling financial liabilities using an electronic payment system), adds guidance on the solely payment of principal and interest (SPPI) criteria, and includes updated disclosures for certain instruments. The amendments are expected to be adopted by the CIPFA Code for [2026/27](#).



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