

Annual Governance Report

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Annual Governance Report

**Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire
Authority**

Audit 2006/07

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Status of our reports

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

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

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Purpose of this document

- 1 In accordance with the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code), this report provides a summary of the work we have carried out during our 2006/07 audit of accounts, the conclusions we have reached and the recommendations we have made to discharge our statutory audit responsibilities to those charged with governance (in this case the Finance and Resources Committee) at the time they are considering the financial statements.
- 2 In preparing our report, the Code requires us to comply with the requirements of International Standards on Auditing (United Kingdom & Ireland) – ISA (UK&I) - 260 'Communication of Audit Matters to Those Charged with Governance', by reporting to you matters relating to the audit of the financial statements. Other auditing standards require us to communicate with you in other specific circumstances including:
 - where we suspect or detect fraud;
 - where there is an inconsistency between the financial statements and other information in documents containing the financial statements; and
 - non-compliance with legislative or regulatory requirements and related authorities.
- 3 We are also required to communicate to you the Audit Commission's requirements in respect of independence and objectivity, and these are set out at Appendix 2.
- 4 This report has been prepared for presentation to the Finance and Resources Committee on 20th September 2007. Members are invited to:
 - consider the matters raised in the report before the financial statements are approved;
 - approve the representation letter on behalf of the Authority and those charged with governance before we issue our opinion; and
 - consider amending the financial statements for unadjusted misstatements, significant qualitative aspects of financial reporting and any recommendations for improvement in the action plan.
- 5 Our work during the year was performed in line with the plan that we presented to you in June 2006. We have issued separate reports during the year having completed specific aspects of our programme, which are listed in Appendix 3.

Key messages

- 6 Our work on the financial statements is substantially complete and there are no significant outstanding issues to be resolved. There is a small amount of audit work outstanding. Should any further matters arise in concluding this work that need to be reported, we will raise them with the Head of Finance and Resources. We propose issuing an unqualified audit opinion by 30 September 2007 (a draft report is attached at Appendix 4).
- 7 In our view, the Statement on Internal Control (SIC) has been prepared in accordance with proper practice specified by CIPFA and is consistent with the findings from our audit.
- 8 Our work on the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources is now complete. We propose issuing an unqualified conclusion on the use of resources by 30 September 2007 (a draft report is attached at Appendix 4).
- 9 There have been major changes to the format of accounts for 2006/07, namely the new Income and Expenditure account and Pension accounts. These new arrangements and in particular the latter has proved a difficult exercise but officers have successfully managed the timely production of the Authority's accounts.

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Audit status

- 10 At the date of issue of this report our detailed audit is substantially complete.
- 11 The Authority has taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit and we would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the Authority's assistance and co-operation.

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Accounts and Statement on Internal Control

- 12 Our work on the financial statements is substantially complete with no significant outstanding issues still to be resolved. Some routine work on fixed assets, short-term investments and Whole Government Accounts has yet to be concluded.
- 13 Auditors are required to obtain written confirmation of certain representations from management and those charged with governance before an audit report is issued, such as acknowledgement of responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and responsibility for the design and implementation of internal control to prevent and detect error.
- 14 The auditor should also obtain written representations from management on matters material to the financial statements when other sufficient appropriate audit evidence cannot reasonably be expected to exist.
- 15 The final draft of the letter of representation has been attached as Appendix 5.

Unadjusted misstatements

- 16 We are required to report to you all unadjusted misstatements that we have identified during the course of our audit, other than those that are clearly trivial. There are no unadjusted misstatements for us to bring to the attention of members.

Adjustments to the financial statements

- 17 We are also required to bring to your attention misstatements that have already been corrected by management where we consider them relevant to your wider governance responsibilities. Only two such adjustments were made and these are recorded in full at Appendix 6.
- 18 One adjustment re Pensions (the FRS17 note) was the result of an error by the pensions administering authority. The other related to lease prepayments and reflected a minor weakness in accounts preparation procedures. Officers are examining how this can be addressed for next year.
- 19 We also requested two additional notes explaining material items in the balance sheet, namely debtors and creditors. The SORP requires authorities to provide explanation for other items which are not included within the list of mandatory specified notes, where these would provide additional information that might be material to the reader.

Accounting practices

- 20 We are also required to report to you our view on the qualitative aspects of the Authority's accounting practices and financial reporting and have set out below our observations on key issues affecting the Authority.

Working Papers

- 21 The standard of working papers was generally good and there were no major issues with obtaining necessary audit evidence. Officers have successfully managed the significant changes to the accounts for 2006/07.
- 22 We have identified areas where some improvement is required:
- providing more detailed analyses of purchase and sales ledger balances; and
 - making the Best Value accounting analysis supporting the Income and Expenditure Account less unwieldy and providing a clearer trail.
- 23 Our recommendations are in the Action Plan in Appendix 1

Systems of internal control

- 24 As part of our audit, we consider the systems of accounting and financial control and report to you any material weaknesses identified. No material weaknesses have been identified.
- 25 We have not provided a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses which may exist in internal control or of all improvements which may be made, but have addressed only those matters which have come to our attention as a result of the audit procedures we have performed.
- 26 We have also reviewed whether the SIC has been prepared in accordance with proper practice specified by CIPFA and is consistent with the findings from our audit.
- 27 The SIC approved by members did not refer to the well documented weaknesses in the Human Resources department and following discussions with the Treasurer and Head of Finance and Resources, reference to progress with implementing the recommendations of the consultant's report now has been included.

Use of resources

Work performed

- 28** The Code requires us to reach a conclusion on whether we are satisfied that the Authority has proper arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources – the value for money conclusion. In meeting this responsibility, we review evidence that is relevant to the Authority's corporate performance management and financial management arrangements across a range of criteria specified by the Audit Commission. Our work to support our conclusion comprises the following elements:
- use of resources assessment; and
 - the best value performance plan.
- 29** Details of our conclusion for each of the criteria specified by the Audit Commission are set out in Appendix 7.

Best value performance plan

- 30** Our work in respect of the Authority's 2006/07 Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) was reported in the 2006 annual audit and inspection letter. No recommendations were made to the Audit Commission or the Secretary of State.

Audit fee update

31 We reported our fee proposals as part of the Audit Plan for 2006/07. The table below reports the outturn fee against that plan:

	Plan 2006/07	Actual 2006/07
Financial statements and Statement on Internal Control	£32,205	£32,205
Use of Resources	£20,669	£20,669
Total Audit Fees	£46,480	£46,480

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Appendix 1 – Action plan

Page	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Medium 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Anticipated Implementation Date
8	Working papers: Provide more detailed analyses of purchase and sales ledger balances	2	Head of Finance and Resources	Yes	A detailed analysis of debtors and creditor balances will be provided in the 2007/08 working papers	Final accounts closedown 2007/08
8	Review the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice analysis supporting the Income and Expenditure Account in order to provide a clearer trail	2	Head of Finance and Resources	Yes	A project to improve various aspects of financial reporting is in the 2007/08 business plan. This includes a review of Best Value Accounting requirements and implementation of improvements for 2007/08	Final accounts closedown 2007/08

Appendix 1 – The Audit Commission’s requirements in respect of independence and objectivity

- 1 We are required to communicate the following matters to those charged with governance:
 - the principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by the auditor, including consideration of all relationships between the Authority, directors and the auditor;
 - any safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective;
 - any independent partner review;
 - the overall assessment of threats and safeguards; and
 - information about the general policies and processes for maintaining objectivity and independence.
- 2 We are not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team and which are required to be disclosed under auditing and ethical standards.

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Appendix 2 – Audit reports issued

Planned output	Planned date of issue	Actual date of issue	Addressee
Audit plan	May 2006	May 2006	Fire Authority
Annual governance report	September 2007	September 2007	Finance and Resources Committee
Opinion on financial statements	September 2007		Fire Authority
Use of resources conclusion	September 2007		Fire Authority
Opinion Audit Memorandum	September 2007		Treasurer / Head of Finance and Resources
BVPP report	December 2007		Fire Authority
Use of Resources and Direction of Travel Scorecards	January 2008		Fire Authority
Annual audit letter	March 2008		Fire Authority

Appendix 3 – Proposed auditor’s report

Independent auditor’s report to the Members of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

Opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements and the Firefighters’ pension fund accounting statements of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority for the year ended 31 March 2007 under the Audit Commission Act 1998. The financial statements comprise the Explanatory Foreword, Income and Expenditure Account, Balance Sheet, Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses, Cash Flow Statement and the related notes. The Firefighters’ pension fund accounting statements comprise the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes. The financial statements and Firefighters’ pension fund accounting statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them.

This report is made solely to Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority in accordance with Part II of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 36 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies prepared by the Audit Commission

Respective responsibilities of the Treasurer and auditor

The Treasurer’s responsibilities for preparing the financial statements, including the Firefighters’ pension fund accounting statements, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2006 are set out in the Statement of Responsibilities.

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

I report to you my opinion as to whether the financial statements and the Firefighters’ pension fund accounting statements present fairly, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2006:

- the financial position of the Authority and its income and expenditure for the year; and
- the financial transactions of its Firefighters’ pension fund during the year and the amount and disposition of the fund’s assets and liabilities, other than liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the end of the scheme year.

I review whether the statement on internal control reflects compliance with CIPFA’s guidance ‘The statement on internal control in local government: meeting the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003’ issued in April 2004. I report if it does not comply with proper practices specified by CIPFA or if the statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information I am aware of from my audit of the financial statements. I am not required to consider, nor have I considered, whether the statement on internal control covers all risks and controls. I am also not required to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the Authority’s corporate governance procedures or its risk and control procedures.

Basis of audit opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Audit Commission Act 1998, the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made by the Authority in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority’s circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

I planned and performed my audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which I considered necessary in order to provide me with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming my opinion I also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In my opinion:

- The financial statements present fairly, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2006, the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2007 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- The Firefighters’ pension fund accounting statements present fairly, in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2006, the financial transactions of the Firefighters’ pension fund during the year ended 31 March 2007, and the amount and disposition of the fund’s assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2007, other than liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the end of the scheme year.

Auditor David Brumhead

Signature: Date:

Address

Littlemoor House
Littlemoor
Eckington
Sheffield
S21 4EF

Conclusion on arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

Authority's Responsibilities

The authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to regularly review the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Under the Local Government Act 1999, the authority is required to prepare and publish a best value performance plan summarising the authority's assessment of its performance and position in relation to its statutory duty to make arrangements to ensure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Auditor's Responsibilities

I am required by the Audit Commission Act 1998 to be satisfied that proper arrangements have been made by the authority for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission requires me to report to you my conclusion in relation to proper arrangements, having regard to relevant criteria specified by the Audit Commission for principal local authorities. I report if significant matters have come to my attention which prevent me from concluding that the authority has made such proper arrangements. I am not required to consider, nor have I considered, whether all aspects of the authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

I am required by section 7 of the Local Government Act 1999 to carry out an audit of the authority's best value performance plan and issue a report:

- certifying that I have done so;
- stating whether I believe that the plan has been prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements set out in section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 and statutory guidance; and
- where relevant, making any recommendations under section 7 of the Local Government Act 1999.

Conclusion

I have undertaken my audit in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice and having regard to the criteria for principal local authorities specified by the Audit Commission and published in December 2006, I am satisfied that, in all significant respects, Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2007

Best Value Performance Plan

I issued my statutory report on the audit of the authority's best value performance plan for the financial year 2006/07 on December 2006. I did not identify any matters to be reported to the authority and did not make any recommendations on procedures in relation to the plan.

Certificate

I certify that I have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission.

Auditor David Brumhead

Signature: Date:

Address

Littlemoor House
Littlemoor
Eckington
Sheffield
S21 4EF

Appendix 4 – Management representation letter

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Combined Fire Authority - Audit for the year ended 31 March 2007

I confirm to the best of my knowledge and belief, having made appropriate enquiries of other officers, the following representations given to you in connection with your audit of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2007.

I confirm that I believe that the effects of the uncorrected financial statements misstatements referred to in your report to those charged with governance are not material to the financial statements, either individually or in aggregate.

The Authority has no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.

There are no assets which have been materially impaired in addition to those already accounted for by the Authority.

Supporting records

All the accounting records have been made available to you for the purpose of your audit and all the transactions undertaken by the Authority have been properly reflected and recorded in the accounting records. All other records and related information, including minutes of all Authority and Committee meetings, have been made available to you.

Related party transactions

I confirm the completeness of the information provided regarding the identification of related parties.

The identity of, and balances and transactions with, related parties have been properly recorded and where appropriate, adequately disclosed in the financial statements

Contingent liabilities

There are no other contingent liabilities, other than those that have been properly recorded and disclosed in the financial statements. In particular:

- there is no significant pending or threatened litigation, other than those already disclosed in the financial statements; and,
- there are no material commitments or contractual issues, other than those already disclosed in the financial statements;
- no financial guarantees have been given to third parties.

Law, regulations and codes of practice

There are no instances of non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice, likely to have a significant effect on the finances or operations of the Authority.

Irregularities

I acknowledge my responsibility for the design and implementation of internal control systems to prevent and detect fraud and error.

There have been no:

- irregularities involving management or any employees, including those who have significant roles in the system of internal accounting control, that could have a material effect on the financial statements;
- communications from regulatory agencies concerning non-compliance with, or deficiencies on, financial reporting practices which could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Post balance sheet events

Since the date of approval of the financial statements by the Authority, no significant post balance sheet events that have occurred which would require additional adjustment or disclosure in the financial statements.

Signed on behalf of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Combined Fire Authority

Signed:

Name:

Position:

Date

Appendix 6 – Summary of adjusted misstatements

The following misstatements were identified during the course of our audit and the financial statements have been adjusted by management. We bring them to your attention to assist you in fulfilling your governance responsibilities.

Adjusted misstatements	Nature of Adjustment	Income and Expenditure Account		Balance Sheet	
		Dr £000s	Cr £000s	Dr £000s	Cr £000s
1. Local Government Pension Scheme FRS 17 return on assets	Underestimate of the return by the actuary due to inaccurate information from the County Council				
Dr Net liability				188	
Cr Pensions reserve					188
2 Lease prepayments	In fact not prepaid because included in creditors				
Dr	Creditors			81	
Cr	Prepayments				81

Appendix 7 – Value for money conclusion

The Audit Commission has published, in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, 12 criteria on which auditors are required to reach a conclusion on the adequacy of an audited body's arrangements for economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Code criteria are linked to the use of resources assessment (UoR) key lines of enquiry (KLoEs). A score of Level 2 or higher under the KLoEs will result in an assessment that the Authority has adequate arrangements in place for the purposes of the Code criteria. The Code criteria and the linked KLoEs are show in the table below.

Code Criteria	Description	Associated UoR KLoE	UoR Score	VFM Conclusion
1	The body has put in place arrangements for setting, reviewing and implementing its strategic and operational objectives.	N/A	N/A	Adequate
2	The body has put in place channels of communication with service users and other stakeholders including partners, and there are monitoring arrangements to ensure that key messages about services are taken into account.	N/A	N/A	Adequate
3	The body has put in place arrangements for monitoring and scrutiny of performance, to identify potential variances against strategic objectives, standards and targets, for taking action where necessary, and reporting to members.	N/A	N/A	Adequate
4	The body has put in place arrangements to monitor the quality of its published performance information, and to report the results to members.	LG DQ KLoEs	N/A	Adequate
5	The body has put in place arrangements to maintain a sound system of internal control.	4.2	3	Adequate
6	The body has put in place arrangements to manage its significant	4.1	2	Adequate

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	business risks.			
7	The body has put in place arrangements to manage and improve value for money.	5.2	2	Adequate
8	The body has put in place a medium-term financial strategy, budgets and a capital programme that are soundly based and designed to deliver its strategic priorities.	2.1	2	Adequate
9	The body has put in place arrangements to ensure that its spending matches its available resources.	3.1	3	Adequate
10	The body has put in place arrangements for managing performance against budgets.	2.2	3	Adequate
11	The body has put in place arrangements for the management of its asset base.	2.3	2	Adequate
12	The body has put in place arrangements that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business.	4.3	2	Adequate

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