

Committee	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
Report Title	Grant Thornton Report: 'The Audit Plan for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – Year Ending 31 March 2025'
Date of Meeting	26 June 2025
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Wards Affected	All wards
Appendices (if any)	1. The Audit Plan for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (Grant Thornton)

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is to comment on the attached report which has been submitted by Grant Thornton.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:-

- To consider and comment upon Grant Thornton's report – 'The Audit Plan for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – Year Ending 31st March 2025'.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 Grant Thornton has issued the Council with its audit plan relating to the 2024/25 financial year, and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is asked to review the plan, comment upon it and seek any further information from Grant Thornton as appropriate.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 governs the work of auditors appointed to local authorities and other local public bodies. The Council's appointed auditor is Grant Thornton. The purpose of the report is to inform the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee of Grant Thornton's audit plan relating to the 2024/25 financial year. As such, there is no alternative option.

Context and Key Issues

- 5.1 The external auditor's audit plan provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of the Council's financial statements and value for money arrangements. The plan is intended to be reviewed by those within the Council charged with governance.
- 5.2 The scope of the auditor's work is set in accordance with the Code and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK). Grant Thornton is responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the Council's, and group's, financial statements that have been prepared by officers with the oversight of those charged with governance (the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee). Grant Thornton will also consider whether there are sufficient arrangements in place at the Council for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. Value for money relates to ensuring that arrangements are in place to use resources efficiently in order to maximise the outcomes that can be achieved, as defined by the Code of Audit Practice.
- 5.3 The audit of the financial statements does not relieve officers or the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee of their responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.
- 5.4 The audit plan includes sections describing risks that have been identified by Grant Thornton, audit of the group accounts, the auditor's approach to materiality, the IT audit strategy, interim work carried out to date, work relating to value for money arrangements, audit fees, and communication of audit matters with those charged with governance. These chapters are set out on the contents page of the plan on page 2.
- 5.5 The final audit work will begin in July 2025. The key deliverables at the conclusion of the auditor's work will be the Audit Findings Report, Auditor's Report and Auditor's Annual Report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Grant Thornton's audit plan includes an estimate of the audit fees that will be payable by the Council in relation to the 2024/25 financial year. Those fees are set out on pages 43 and 44 of the plan.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 Part of Grant Thornton's work will be to review the Council's governance arrangements. This forms part of the audit of value for money arrangements, which is described on pages 35 to 38 of the report.

8. Risks

- 8.1 Risks that Grant Thornton has identified are set out on pages 15 to 22 of the plan.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 9.1 It was not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.

10. Other Relevant Implications

- 10.1 There were no direct other relevant implications directly arising from this report.

11. Background Documents

None

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

- Growing up in Sandwell
- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell
- One Council One Team Approach.

The work of the Council's external auditors is an important element of the accountability and transparency of the Council's financial arrangements, and those arrangements help to support all of the Council's objectives.