

Audit Strategy Memorandum

London Borough of Hackney
Pension Fund

Year ending 31 March 2023



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This document is to be regarded as confidential to London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund. It has been prepared for the sole use of the Audit Committee as the appropriate sub-committee charged with governance. No responsibility is accepted to any other person in respect of the whole or part of its contents. Our written consent must first be obtained before this document, or any part of it, is disclosed to a third party.



Audit Committee
London Borough of Hackney
Hackney Town Hall
Mare Street
London

Mazars LLP
30 Old Bailey
London
EC4M 7AU

September 2023

Dear Audit Committee Members

Audit Strategy Memorandum – Year ending 31 March 2023

We are pleased to present an Indicative Audit Strategy Memorandum for London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund for the year ending 31 March 2023. The purpose of this document is to summarise our audit approach, highlight significant audit risks and areas of key judgements and provide you with the details of our audit team. As it is a fundamental requirement that an auditor is, and is seen to be, independent of its clients, section 6 of this document also summarises our considerations and conclusions on our independence as auditors. We consider two-way communication with you to be key to a successful audit and important in:

- reaching a mutual understanding of the scope of the audit and the responsibilities of each of us;
- sharing information to assist each of us to fulfil our respective responsibilities;
- providing you with constructive observations arising from the audit process; and
- ensuring that we, as external auditors, gain an understanding of your attitude and views in respect of the internal and external operational, financial, compliance and other risks facing London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund which may affect the audit, including the likelihood of those risks materialising and how they are monitored and managed.

With that in mind, we see this document, which has been prepared following our initial planning discussions with management, as being the basis for a discussion around our audit approach, any questions, concerns or input you may have on our approach or role as auditor. This document also contains an appendix that outlines our key communications with you during the course of the audit,

Client service is extremely important to us and we strive to provide technical excellence with the highest level of service quality, together with continuous improvement to exceed your expectations so, if you have any concerns or comments about this document or audit approach, please contact me on 07977 261873.

Yours faithfully

Suresh Patel, Partner - Mazars LLP

01

Section 01:

**Engagement and
responsibilities summary**

1. Engagement and responsibilities summary

Overview of engagement

We are appointed to perform the external audit of London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund (the Pension Fund) for the year to 31 March 2023. The scope of our engagement is set out in the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies, issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) available from the PSAA website: <https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/>. Our responsibilities are principally derived from the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO), as outlined below.

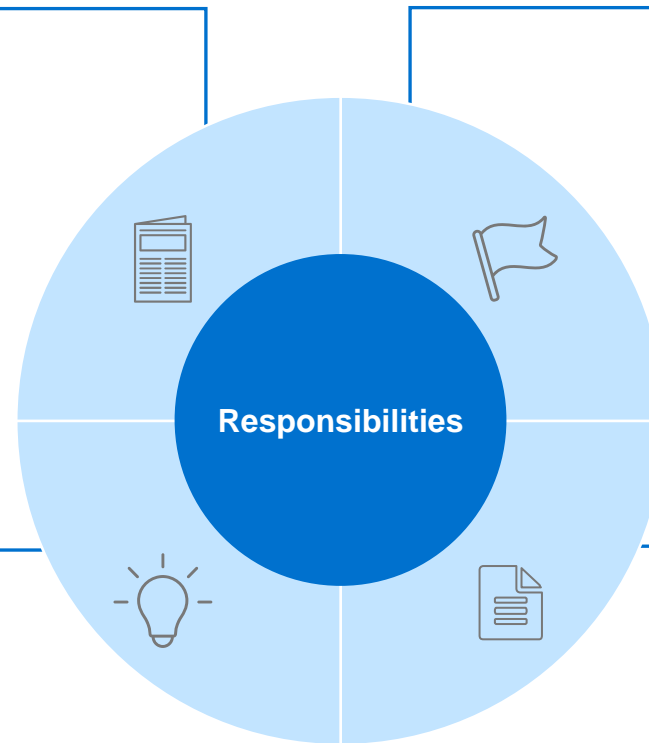
Audit opinion

We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements. Our audit does not relieve management or the corporate committee, as those charged with governance, of their responsibilities.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the assessment of whether it is appropriate for the Pension Fund to prepare its accounts on a going concern basis. As auditors, we are required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding, and conclude on: a) whether a material uncertainty related to going concern exists; and b) consider the appropriateness of the Chief Finance Officer's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements.

Consistency Statement

We are required to form and express an opinion on the consistency of the financial statements within the Pension Fund's annual report and the Pension Fund's financial statements included in the Statement of Accounts of London Borough of Hackney.



Fraud

The responsibility for safeguarding assets and for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and non-compliance with law or regulations rests with both those charged with governance and management. This includes establishing and maintaining internal controls over reliability of financial reporting.

As part of our audit procedures in relation to fraud we are required to enquire of those charged with governance and key management as to their knowledge of instances of fraud, the risk of fraud and their views on internal controls that mitigate the fraud risks. In accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), we plan and perform our audit so as to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements taken as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. However our audit should not be relied upon to identify all such misstatements.

Wider reporting and electors' rights

The 2014 Act requires us to give an elector, or any representative of the elector, the opportunity to question us about the accounting records of the London Borough of Hackney and consider any objection made to the accounts. This would include an objection made to the accounts of the Pension Fund included in the administering authority's financial statements. We also have a broad range of reporting responsibilities and powers that are unique to the audit of local authorities in the United Kingdom



02

Section 02:

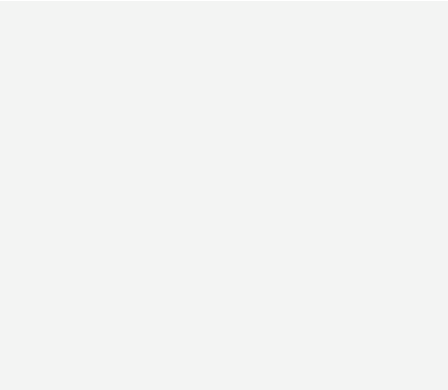
Your audit engagement team

2. Your audit engagement team

We have made one change to your audit team. Tom Greensill will manage your audit, having worked as the lead auditor for the last year.



Suresh Patel
Partner and Engagement Lead
Email: suresh.patel@mazars.co.uk
Telephone: 07977 261873



Tom Greensill
Manager
Email: tom.greensill@mazars.co.uk
Telephone:

Engagement and responsibilities summary	Your audit engagement team	Audit scope, approach and timeline	Significant risks and key judgement areas	Value for money	Fees for audit and other services	Our commitment to independence	Materiality and misstatements	Appendices
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03

Section 03:

Audit scope, approach and timeline

3. Audit scope, approach and timeline

Audit scope

Our audit approach is designed to provide an audit that complies with all professional requirements.

Our audit of the financial statements will be conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), relevant ethical and professional standards, our own audit approach and in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work is focused on those aspects of your business which we consider to have a higher risk of material misstatement, such as those impacted by management judgement and estimation, application of new accounting standards, changes of accounting policy, changes to operations or areas which have been found to contain material errors in the past.

Audit approach

Our audit approach is a risk based approach primarily driven by the risks we consider to result in a higher risk of material misstatement of the financial statements. Once we have completed our risk assessment, we develop our audit strategy and design audit procedures in response to this assessment.

If we conclude that appropriately designed controls are in place then we may plan to test and rely upon these controls. If we decide controls are not appropriately designed, or we decide it would be more efficient to do so, we may take a wholly substantive approach to our audit testing. Substantive procedures are audit procedures designed to detect material misstatements at the assertion level and comprise: tests of details (of classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures); and substantive analytical procedures. Irrespective of the assessed risks of material misstatement, which take into account our evaluation of the operating effectiveness of controls, we are required to design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transactions, account balance, and disclosure.

Our audit will be planned and performed so as to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement and give a true and fair view. The concept of materiality and how we define a misstatement is explained in more detail in section 7.

The diagram on the next page outlines the procedures we perform at the different stages of the audit.



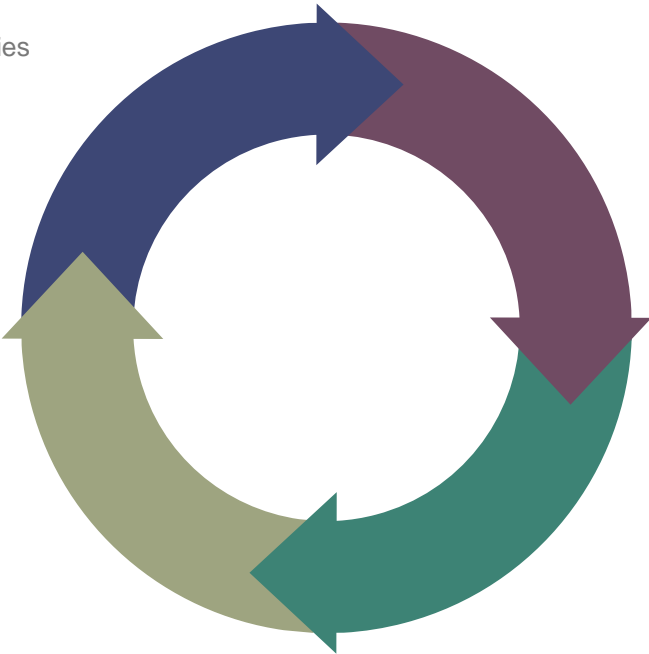
3. Audit scope, approach and timeline

Planning – July 2023

- Planning visit and developing our understanding of the Pension Fund
- Initial opinion assessment
- Considering proposed accounting treatments and accounting policies
- Developing the audit strategy and planning the audit work to be performed
- Agreeing timetable and deadlines
- Preliminary analytical review

Completion – October 2023

- Final review and disclosure checklist of financial statements
- Final partner review
- Agreeing content of letter of representation
- Reporting to the Audit Committee
- Reviewing subsequent events
- Signing the auditor’s reports



Interim – July 2023

- Documenting systems and controls
- Performing walkthroughs
- Interim controls testing including tests of IT general controls
- Early substantive testing of transactions
- Reassessment of audit plan and revision if necessary

Fieldwork – August – September 2023

- Receiving and reviewing draft financial statements
- Reassessment of audit plan and revision if necessary
- Executing the strategy starting with significant risks and high risk areas
- Communicating progress and issues
- Clearance meeting



3. Audit scope, approach and timeline

Reliance on internal audit

We do not intend to rely on the work of internal audit. However, we will review their work and it to inform our assessment of the control environment and we will modify the nature, extent and timing of our audit procedures

We will meet with internal audit to discuss the progress and findings of their work prior to the commencement of our controls evaluation procedures.

Management's and our experts

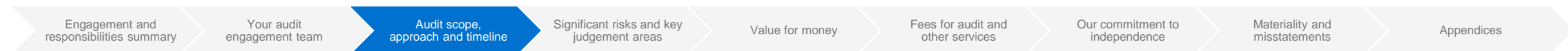
Management makes use of experts in specific areas when preparing the Council's financial statements. We also use experts to assist us to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence on specific items of account.

Item of account	Management's expert	Our expert
Disclosure notes on funding arrangements and actuarial present value of contractual retirement benefits.	Hymans Robertson	We make use of PWC actuarial services who are commissioned by the NAO to review the national analysis of pension trends and assumptions of the various LGPS actuaries and consider the findings for potential impact on the values included within the financial statements.
Financial instrument disclosures	Arlingclose	We will review the output and associated analysis against available information to confirm that the basis of the assessments appears reasonable and the disclosures are appropriate.

Service Organisations

International Auditing Standards (UK) (ISAs) define service organisations as third party organisations that provide services to the Council that are part of its information systems relevant to financial reporting. We are required to obtain an understanding of the services provided by service organisations as well as evaluating the design and implementation of controls over those services. We have not identified any relevant service organisations.

Items of account	Service organisation	Audit approach
Investment valuations and income along with all related disclosures	Fund managers and Custodians	Substantive testing of transactions occurring in the year, income received and valuations applied to investments at the year end. We will seek an appropriate Type 1 or Type 2 report in respect of the operation of systems by the service organisation to give us assurance over their operation of key controls. We will consider the findings of this review and the impact on the overall control environment.
The management and maintenance of administrative information to allow for calculation of pension payments, transfers, etc., as well as the actuarial assessment of funding levels based on up to date membership data.	Equiniti	We will seek appropriate confirmation that the organisation's controls and procedures have operated as designed throughout the year and that no weaknesses have been identified that would have a material impact on the information they provide to the London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund.



04

Section 04:

Significant risks and other key judgement areas

4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Following the risk assessment approach discussed in section 3 of this document, we have identified relevant risks to the audit of financial statements. The risks that we identify are categorised as significant, enhanced or standard. The definitions of the level of risk rating are given below:

Significant risk

A significant risk is an identified and assessed risk of material misstatement that, in the auditor's judgment, requires special audit consideration. For any significant risk, the auditor shall obtain an understanding of the entity's controls, including control activities relevant to that risk.

Enhanced risk

An enhanced risk is an area of higher assessed risk of material misstatement ('RMM') at audit assertion level other than a significant risk. Enhanced risks require additional consideration but does not rise to the level of a significant risk, these include but may not be limited to:

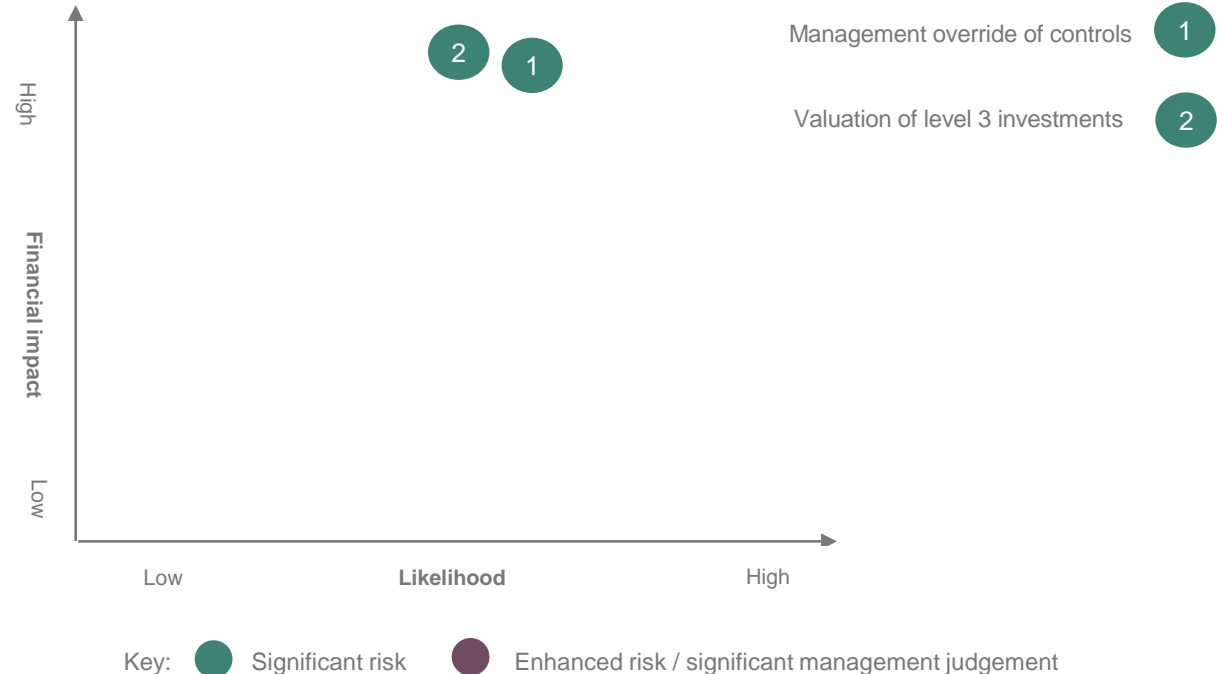
- key areas of management judgement, including accounting estimates which are material but are not considered to give rise to a significant risk of material misstatement; and
- other audit assertion risks arising from significant events or transactions that occurred during the period.

Standard risk

This is related to relatively routine, non-complex transactions that tend to be subject to systematic processing and require little management judgement. Although it is considered that there is a risk of material misstatement (RMM), there are no elevated or special factors related to the nature, the likely magnitude of the potential misstatements or the likelihood of the risk occurring.

Summary risk assessment

The summary risk assessment, illustrated in the table below, highlights those risks which we deem to be significant and other enhanced risks in respect of the London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund. We have summarised our audit response to these risks on the next page.



4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Specific identified audit risks and planned testing strategy

We have presented below in more detail the reasons for the risk assessment highlighted above, and also our testing approach with respect to significant risks. An audit is a dynamic process, should we change our view of risk or approach to address the identified risks during the course of our audit, we will report this to the Audit Committee.

Significant risks

	Description	Fraud	Error	Judgement	Planned response
1	<p>Management override of controls</p> <p>This is a mandatory significant risk on all audits due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur.</p> <p>Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits.</p>	●	○	○	<p>We will address the risk through performing audit procedures, covering a range of areas including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accounting estimates included in the financial statements for evidence of management bias; • any significant transactions outside the normal course of business; and • Testing a sample of journals that meet our risk criteria and other adjustments recorded in the general ledger in preparing the financial statements.



4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Significant risks

	Description	Fraud	Error	Judgement	Planned response
2	<p>Valuation of level 3 investments</p> <p>As at 31 March 2022 the Pension Fund held investments with a fair value of £248m which were identified as level 3 (those where at least one input that has an impact on the valuation is not based on observable market data). These assets account for 14.2% of the Fund’s net investment assets.</p> <p>Inherently these assets are harder to value, as they may not have publicly available quoted prices from a traded market, and as such they require professional judgement or assumptions to be made when valuing them at year end.</p> <p>As the pricing of these investment assets is subject to judgements, they may be susceptible to pricing variances due to the assumptions underlying the valuation. We therefore consider that there is an increased risk of material misstatement.</p>	○	●	●	<p>We plan to address this risk by completing the following additional procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree holdings from fund manager reports to the global custodian’s report; • agree the valuation to supporting documentation including investment manager valuation statements and cash flows for any adjustments made to the investment manager valuation; • agree the investment manager valuation to audited accounts or other independent supporting documentation, where available; and • where audited accounts are available, check that they are supported by a clear opinion.



05

Section 05:

Fees for audit and other services

5. Fees for audit and other services

Fees for work as the Pension Fund’s appointed auditor

The scale fee set by PSAA for 2022/23 includes an inflationary increase which they will provide a contribution to the fund of £871. At this stage we indicating the additional work we will have to undertake as part of our audit of the 2022/23 financial statements.

Area of work	2022/23 Proposed Fee	2021/22 Proposed Fee
Code Audit Work	£17,852	£17,011
Fee variations: - Level 3 investments & ISA 540	£2,000 - £4,000	£2,000 - £4,000

Fees for non-PSAA work

We confirm that we have not been separately engaged by the Fund to carry out additional work for the London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund. Further information about our responsibilities in relation to independence is provided in section 6.



06

Section 06:

Our commitment to independence

6. Our commitment to independence

We are committed to independence and are required by the Financial Reporting Council to confirm to you at least annually in writing that we comply with the FRC’s Ethical Standard. In addition, we communicate any matters or relationship which we believe may have a bearing on our independence or the objectivity of the audit team.

Based on the information provided by you and our own internal procedures to safeguard our independence as auditors, we confirm that in our professional judgement there are no relationships between us and any of our related or subsidiary entities, and you and your related entities creating any unacceptable threats to our independence within the regulatory or professional requirements governing us as your auditors.

We have policies and procedures in place which are designed to ensure that we carry out our work with integrity, objectivity and independence. These policies include:

- All partners and staff are required to complete an annual independence declaration;
- All new partners and staff are required to complete an independence confirmation and also complete computer based ethical training;
- Rotation policies covering audit engagement partners and other key members of the audit team; and
- Use by managers and partners of our client and engagement acceptance system which requires all non-audit services to be approved in advance by the audit engagement partner.

We confirm, as at the date of this document, that the engagement team and others in the firm as appropriate, Mazars LLP are independent and comply with relevant ethical requirements. However, if at any time you have concerns or questions about our integrity, objectivity or independence please discuss these with Suresh in the first instance.

Prior to the provision of any non-audit services Suresh will undertake appropriate procedures to consider and fully assess the impact that providing the service may have on our auditor independence.

No threats to our independence have been identified.

Any emerging independence threats and associated identified safeguards will be communicated in our Audit Completion Report.



07

Section 07:

Materiality and other misstatements

7. Materiality and misstatements

Summary of initial materiality thresholds

Threshold	Initial threshold £'000s
Overall materiality	£18.7m
Performance materiality	£14.9m
Specific materiality:	
Fund account overall materiality	£8.3m
Fund accounts performance materiality	£6.6m
Trivial threshold for errors to be reported to the Audit Committee	£561k

Materiality

Materiality is an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of financial statements as a whole.

Misstatements in financial statements are considered to be material if they, individually or in aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

Judgements on materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances and are affected by the size and nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both. Judgements about materiality are based on consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group and not on specific individual users.

The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement and is affected by our

perception of the financial information needs of the users of the financial statements. In making our assessment we assume that users:

- Have a reasonable knowledge of business, economic activities and accounts;
- Have a willingness to study the information in the financial statements with reasonable diligence;
- Understand that financial statements are prepared, presented and audited to levels of materiality;
- Recognise the uncertainties inherent in the measurement of amounts based on the use of estimates, judgement and the consideration of future events; and
- Will make reasonable economic decisions on the basis of the information in the financial statements.

We consider materiality whilst planning and performing our audit based on quantitative and qualitative factors.

Whilst planning, we make judgements about the size of misstatements which we consider to be material and which provides a basis for determining the nature, timing and extent of risk assessment procedures, identifying and assessing the risk of material misstatement and determining the nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures.

The materiality determined at the planning stage does not necessarily establish an amount below which uncorrected misstatements, either individually or in aggregate, will be considered as immaterial.

We revise materiality for the financial statements as our audit progresses should we become aware of information that would have caused us to determine a different amount had we been aware of that information at the planning stage.

Engagement and responsibilities summary

Your audit engagement team

Audit scope, approach and timeline

Significant risks and key judgement areas

Fees for audit and other services

Our commitment to independence

Materiality and misstatements

Appendix

7. Materiality and misstatements

Materiality (continued)

Our provisional materiality is set based on a benchmark of Net Assets as at 31 March 2023. We will identify a figure for materiality but identify separate levels for procedures design to detect individual errors, and also a level above which all identified errors will be reported to the Audit Committee.

We consider that net assets remains the key focus of users of the financial statements and, as such, we base our materiality levels around this benchmark.

We expect to set a materiality threshold at 1% of Net Assets. Based on the current year financial statements we have set the overall materiality for the year ending 31 March 2023 as £18.7m (£19.6m in the prior year).

After setting initial materiality, we continue to monitor materiality throughout the audit to ensure that it is set at an appropriate level.

Performance Materiality

Performance materiality is the amount or amounts set by the auditor at less than materiality for the financial statements as a whole to reduce, to an appropriately low level, the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceeds materiality for the financial statements as a whole. Our initial assessment of performance materiality is based on medium inherent risk, meaning that we have applied 80% of overall materiality as performance materiality.

Misstatements

We accumulate misstatements identified during the audit that are other than clearly trivial. We set a level of triviality for individual errors identified (a reporting threshold) for reporting to the Audit Committee that is consistent with the level of triviality that we consider would not need to be accumulated because we expect that the accumulation of such amounts would not have a material effect on the financial statements. Based on our preliminary assessment of overall materiality, our proposed triviality threshold is £561k based on 3% of overall materiality. If you have any queries about this please do not hesitate to raise these with Suresh.

Reporting to the Audit Committee

The following three types of audit differences will be presented to the Audit Committee:

- summary of adjusted audit differences;
- summary of unadjusted audit differences; and
- summary of disclosure differences (adjusted and unadjusted).



Appendix: Key communication points

Appendix: Key communication points

We value communication with Those Charged With Governance as a two way feedback process at the heart of our client service commitment. ISA 260 (UK) 'Communication with Those Charged with Governance' and ISA 265 (UK) 'Communicating Deficiencies In Internal Control To Those Charged With Governance And Management' specifically require us to communicate a number of points with you.

Relevant points that need to be communicated with you at each stage of the audit are outlined below.

Form, timing and content of our communications

We will present the following reports:

- Our Audit Strategy Memorandum;
- Our Audit Completion Report; and
- Auditor's Annual Report

These documents will be discussed with management prior to being presented to yourselves and their comments will be incorporated as appropriate.

Key communication points at the planning stage as included in this Audit Strategy Memorandum

- Our responsibilities in relation to the audit of the financial statements;
- The planned scope and timing of the audit;

- Significant audit risks and areas of management judgement;
- Our commitment to independence;
- Responsibilities for preventing and detecting errors;
- Materiality and misstatements; and
- Fees for audit and other services.

Key communication points at the completion stage to be included in our Audit Completion Report

- Significant deficiencies in internal control;
- Significant findings from the audit;
- Significant matters discussed with management;
- Our conclusions on the significant audit risks and areas of management judgement;
- Summary of misstatements;
- Management representation letter;
- Our proposed draft audit report; and
- Independence.



Appendix: Key communication points

ISA (UK) 260 ‘Communication with Those Charged with Governance’, ISA (UK) 265 ‘Communicating Deficiencies In Internal Control To Those Charged With Governance And Management’ and other ISAs (UK) specifically require us to communicate the following:

Required communication	Where addressed
Our responsibilities in relation to the financial statement audit and those of management and those charged with governance.	Audit Strategy Memorandum
The planned scope and timing of the audit including any limitations, specifically including with respect to significant risks.	Audit Strategy Memorandum
With respect to misstatements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion; • The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods; • A request that any uncorrected misstatement is corrected; and • In writing, corrected misstatements that are significant. 	Audit Completion Report
With respect to fraud communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiries of the Audit Committee to determine whether they have a knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity; • Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that fraud may exist; and • A discussion of any other matters related to fraud. 	Audit Completion Report and discussion at Audit Committee, Audit Planning and Clearance meetings



Appendix: Key communication points

Required communication	Where addressed
<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity’s related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-disclosure by management; • Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions; • Disagreement over disclosures; • Non-compliance with laws and regulations; and • Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity. 	<p>Audit Completion Report</p>
<p>Significant findings from the audit including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures; • Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit; • Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management or were the subject of correspondence with management; • Written representations that we are seeking; • Expected modifications to the audit report; and • Other matters, if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process or otherwise identified in the course of the audit that we believe will be relevant to the Audit Committee in the context of fulfilling their responsibilities. 	<p>Audit Completion Report</p>
<p>Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit.</p>	<p>Audit Completion Report</p>



Appendix: Key communication points

Required communication	Where addressed
Where relevant, any issues identified with respect to authority to obtain external confirmations or inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures.	Audit Completion Report
Audit findings regarding non-compliance with laws and regulations where the non-compliance is material and believed to be intentional (subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off) and enquiry of the Audit Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Audit Committee may be aware of.	Audit Completion Report and Audit Committee meetings
<p>With respect to going concern, events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty; • Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements; and • The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements. 	Audit Completion Report
Reporting on the valuation methods applied to the various items in the annual financial statements including any impact of changes of such methods	Audit Completion Report
Indication of whether all requested explanations and documents were provided by the entity	Audit Completion Report



Suresh Patel, Partner

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Mazars is an internationally integrated partnership, specialising in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax and legal services*. Operating in over 90 countries and territories around the world, we draw on the expertise of 40,400 professionals – 24,400 in Mazars' integrated partnership and 16,000 via the Mazars North America Alliance – to assist clients of all sizes at every stage in their development.

*where permitted under applicable country laws.