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Report to those charged with governance (ISA 260) 2013/14

Nottinghamshire County Council

September 2014

Contents

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This report is addressed to the Authority and has been prepared for the sole use of the Authority. We take no responsibility to any member of staff acting in their individual capacities, or to third parties. The Audit Commission has issued a document entitled *Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies*. This summarises where the responsibilities of auditors begin and end and what is expected from the audited body. We draw your attention to this document which is available on the Audit Commission's website at www.auditcommission.gov.uk.

External auditors do not act as a substitute for the audited body's own responsibility for putting in place proper arrangements to ensure that public business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

If you have any concerns or are dissatisfied with any part of KPMG's work, in the first instance you should contact Neil Bellamy, the appointed engagement lead to the Authority, who will try to resolve your complaint. If you are dissatisfied with your response please contact Trevor Rees on 0161 246 4000, or by email to trevor.rees@kpmg.co.uk, who is the national contact partner for all of KPMG's work with the Audit Commission. After this, if you are still dissatisfied with how your complaint has been handled you can access the Audit Commission's complaints procedure. Put your complaint in writing to the Complaints Unit Manager, Audit Commission, 3rd Floor, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF or by email to complaints@audit-commission.gsi.gov.uk. Their telephone number is 03034448330.

Section one

Introduction

This document summarises:

- **the key issues identified during our audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2014 for the Authority; and**
- **our assessment of the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money.**

Scope of this report

This report summarises the key findings arising from:

- our audit work at Nottinghamshire County Council ('the Authority') in relation to the Authority's 2013/14 financial statements; and
- the work to support our 2013/14 conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources ('VFM conclusion').

We have separately issued our *Report to those charged with governance (ISA 260) 2013/14* in respect of the Pension Fund administered by Nottinghamshire County Council in September 2014.

Financial statements

Our *External Audit Plan 2013/14*, presented to you in March 2014, set out the four stages of our financial statements audit process.

This report focuses on the second and third stages of the process: control evaluation and substantive procedures. Our on site work for these took place during February 2014 (interim audit) and July 2014 (year end audit).

We are now in the final phase of the audit, the completion stage. Some aspects of this stage are also discharged through this report.

VFM conclusion

Our *External Audit Plan 2013/14* explained our risk-based approach to VFM work, which follows guidance provided by the Audit Commission. We have now completed our work to support our 2013/14 VFM conclusion. This included:

- assessing the potential VFM risks and identifying the residual audit risks for our VFM conclusion;
- considering the results of any relevant work by the Authority and other inspectorates and review agencies in relation to these risk areas.

Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows:

- Section two summarises the headline messages.
- Section three sets out our key findings from our audit work in relation to the 2013/14 financial statements.
- Section four outlines our key findings from our work on the VFM conclusion.

Our recommendations are included in Appendix 1. We have also reviewed your progress in implementing prior recommendations and this is detailed in Appendix 1.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank officers and Members for their continuing help and co-operation throughout our audit work.

Headlines

This table summarises the headline messages. Sections three and four of this report provide further details on each area.

Proposed audit opinion	We anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion on the Authority's financial statements by 30 September 2014. We will also report that the wording of your Annual Governance Statement accords with our understanding.
Audit adjustments	Our audit has not identified any material audit adjustments within the financial statements.
Key financial statements audit risks	We have worked with officers throughout the year to discuss specific risk areas. The Authority addressed the issues appropriately. We identified one audit difference above our reporting threshold which has been amended by management. This is detailed in Appendix 2.
Accounts production and audit process	We have noted an improvement in the quality of the accounts and the supporting working papers. Officers dealt efficiently with audit queries and the audit process has been completed within the planned timescales. We have identified that a prior year recommendation has not been fully implemented with regards to quality assurance procedures. This recommendation is detailed in Appendix 1.
Control environment	The Authority's organisational control environment is effective overall, and we have not identified any significant weaknesses in controls over key financial systems. We undertook a review of the work of internal audit. Our review did not identify any significant issues and were able to rely on their work where this was relevant to our work.
Completion	At the date of this report our audit of the financial statements is substantially complete subject to final checks, including Director review, as part our completion procedures. Before we can issue our opinion we require a signed management representation letter. We confirm that we have complied with requirements on objectivity and independence in relation to this year's audit of the Authority's financial statements.
VFM conclusion and risk areas	We have concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We therefore anticipate issuing an unqualified VFM conclusion by 30 September 2014.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Simpson (Director of Finance & Procurement), Nigel Stevenson (Group Manager) and all other staff who have assisted us during our audit.

Proposed opinion and audit differences

We have identified no issues in the course of the audit that are considered to be material.

We anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion in relation to the Authority's financial statements by 30 September 2014.

The wording of your Annual Governance Statement accords with our understanding.

Proposed audit opinion

Subject to all outstanding queries being resolved to our satisfaction, we anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion on the Authority's financial statements following approval of the Statement of Accounts by the Audit Committee on 3 September 2014.

Audit differences

In accordance with ISA 260 we are required to report uncorrected audit differences to you. We also report any material misstatements which have been corrected and which we believe should be communicated to you to help you meet your governance responsibilities.

We did not identify any material misstatements. We identified a small number of issues that have been adjusted by management.

The tables on the right illustrate the total impact of audit differences on the Authority's movements on the General Fund for the year and balance sheet as at 31 March 2014.

In addition, we identified a small number of presentational adjustments required to ensure that the accounts are compliant with the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting the United Kingdom 2013/14 ('the Code')*. We understand that the Authority will be addressing these where significant.

Annual Governance Statement

We have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and confirmed that:

- it complies with *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: A Framework* published by CIPFA/SOLACE; and
- it is not misleading or inconsistent with other information we are aware of from our audit of the financial statements.

We have reviewed the Authority's annual report and can confirm it is not inconsistent with the financial information contained in the audited financial statements.

Movements on the General Fund 2013/14

£m	Pre-audit	Post-audit
Deficit on the provision of services	107	107
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under Regulations	(91)	(91)
Transfers to earmarked reserves	(3)	(3)
Decrease in General Fund	**13**	**13**

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2014

£m	Pre-audit	Post-audit
Property, plant and equipment	1,184	1,184
Other long term assets	30	30
Current assets	93	88
Current liabilities	(155)	(150)
Long term liabilities	(1,277)	(1,277)
Net worth	**(125)**	**(125)**
General Fund	29	29
Other usable reserves	181	181
Unusable reserves	(335)	(335)
Total reserves	**(125)**	**(125)**

Key financial statements audit risks

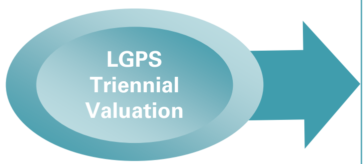
We have worked with officers throughout the year to discuss specific risk areas. The Authority addressed the issues appropriately.

In our External Audit Plan 2013/14, presented to you in March 2014, we identified the key risks affecting the Authority's 2013/14 financial statements. We have now completed our testing of these areas and set out our evaluation following our substantive work.

The table below sets out our detailed findings for each of the risks that are specific to the Authority.

Additionally, we considered the risk of management override of controls, which is a standard risk for all organisations.

Our controls testing and substantive procedures, including over journal entries, accounting estimates and significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business, or are otherwise unusual, did not identify any issues.

Key audit risk	Issue	Findings
	During the year, the Pension Fund has undergone a triennial valuation with an effective date of 31 March 2013 in line with the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008. The share of pensions assets and liabilities for each admitted body is determined in detail, and a large volume of data is provided to the actuary to support this triennial valuation. The pension numbers to be included in the financial statements for 2013/14 will be based on the output of the triennial valuation rolled forward to 31 March 2014. For 2014/15 and 2015/16 the actuary will then roll forward the valuation for accounting purposes based on more limited data. There is a risk that the data provided to the actuary for the valuation exercise is inaccurate and that these inaccuracies affect the actuarial figures in the accounts. The Pension Fund only includes limited disclosures around pensions liabilities but we anticipate that this will be identified as a risk area by some of the admitted bodies, whose pension liabilities represent a significant element of their balance sheet. This includes the Authority itself.	We have reviewed the data provided to the actuary to ensure: ▪ The process was undertaken in a suitable control environment; ▪ the accuracy of the information provided by agreeing a sample of data to source documentation; ▪ the reasonableness of the completeness of the data by conducting an analysis of movements during the period, and reviewing the overall amount of records provided. Our work did not identify any significant issues relating to the accounting or reporting requirements.

Accounts production and audit process

We have noted an improvement in the quality of the accounts and the supporting working papers.

Officers dealt efficiently with audit queries and the audit process could be completed within the planned timescales.

The Authority has not implemented of the recommendation in our *ISA 260 Report 2012/13* in full.

Accounts production and audit process

ISA 260 requires us to communicate to you our views about the significant qualitative aspects of the Authority's accounting practices and financial reporting. We also assessed the Authority's process for preparing the accounts and its support for an efficient audit.

We considered the following criteria:

Element	Commentary
Accounting practices and financial reporting	The Authority has strengthened its financial reporting process through early discussions with us over key risk areas. There is scope to improve this further by completing final quality assurance over procedures prior to submission of the accounts. We consider that accounting practices are appropriate.
Completeness of draft accounts	We received a complete set of draft accounts on 27 June 2014. The Authority made a number of amendments of a presentational nature after this date but prior to the start of the audit.
Quality of supporting working papers	Our *Accounts Audit Protocol*, which we issued on 23 March 2014 and discussed with the Senior Accountant, set out our working paper requirements for the audit. The quality of working papers provided was variable but met the standards specified in our *Accounts Audit Protocol*.
Response to audit queries	Officers resolved audit queries in a reasonable time. However, we experienced some delays, specifically where multiple staff from various departments were involved in preparing the response.

Prior year recommendations

As part of our audit we have specifically followed up the Authority's progress in addressing the recommendations in last years ISA 260 report.

The Authority has not implemented the recommendation in full in our *ISA 260 Report 2012/13*, specifically relating to the reclaimed VAT balances for school cash accounts.

Appendix 1 provides further details.

Controls over key financial systems

Based on the review of internal audit findings, the areas identified as Limited Assurance is not considered to have a material impact on the accounts.

Work completed

We review the outcome of internal audit's work on the financial systems to influence our assessment of the overall control environment, which is a key factor when determining the external audit strategy.

Where we have determined that this is the most efficient audit approach to take, we test selected controls that address key risks within these systems. The strength of the control framework informs the substantive testing we complete during our final accounts visit.

Our assessment of a system will not always be in line with your internal auditors' opinion on that system. This is because we are solely interested in whether our audit risks are mitigated through effective controls, i.e. whether the system is likely to produce materially reliable figures for inclusion in the financial statements.

Key findings

Based on the work of your internal auditors, we have considered the opinions submitted to management, and conclude that the areas identified as Limited Assurance are not considered to have a material impact on the statement of accounts.

Department and Audit Area	Internal audit rating
Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection	
Fairer Contributions and financial assessments	Substantial Assurance
Financial monitoring and auditing of direct payments– follow-up audit	Reasonable Assurance
Children, Families and Cultural Services	
School Funding Formula	Substantial Assurance
Country Parks and Green Estates	Substantial Assurance
Environment and Resources	
ICT Backup and Recovery	Reasonable Assurance
Council-wide Procurement	Reasonable Assurance
Imprest accounts – corporate controls	Limited Assurance
BMS Accounts Receivable (Debtors) Process Map Compliance	Reasonable Assurance
BMS Payroll Process Map Compliance	Reasonable Assurance
BMS Authorisation and Security	Reasonable Assurance
Policy, Planning and Corporate Services	
Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire Programme	Substantial Assurance
Business	
Business Continuity	Limited Assurance
Purchase Cards: Follow-up and new BMS Process	Reasonable Assurance
Medium Term Financial Strategy	Substantial Assurance

We confirm that we have complied with requirements on objectivity and independence in relation to this year's audit of the Authority's financial statements.

Before we can issue our opinion we require a signed management representation letter.

Once we have finalised our opinions and conclusions we will prepare our *Annual Audit Letter* and close our audit.

Declaration of independence and objectivity

As part of the finalisation process we are required to provide you with representations concerning our independence.

In relation to the audit of the financial statements of Nottinghamshire County Council for the year ending 31 March 2014, we confirm that there were no relationships between KPMG LLP and Nottinghamshire County Council, its directors and senior management and its affiliates that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the objectivity and independence of the audit engagement lead and audit staff. We also confirm that we have complied with Ethical Standards and the Audit Commission's requirements in relation to independence and objectivity.

We have provided a detailed declaration in Appendix 3 in accordance with ISA 260.

Management representations

You are required to provide us with representations on specific matters such as your financial standing and whether the transactions within the accounts are legal and unaffected by fraud. We have provided a template to the Group Manager for presentation to the Audit Committee. We require a signed copy of your management representations before we issue our audit opinion.

Other matters

ISA 260 requires us to communicate to you by exception 'audit matters of governance interest that arise from the audit of the financial statements' which include:

- significant difficulties encountered during the audit;
- significant matters arising from the audit that were discussed, or subject to correspondence with management;
- other matters, if arising from the audit that, in the auditor's professional judgment, are significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process; and
- matters specifically required by other auditing standards to be communicated to those charged with governance (e.g. significant deficiencies in internal control; issues relating to fraud, compliance with laws and regulations, subsequent events, non disclosure, related party, public interest reporting, questions/objections, opening balances etc).

There are no others matters which we wish to draw to your attention in addition to those highlighted in this report or our previous reports relating to the audit of the Authority's 2013/14 financial statements.

VFM conclusion

Our VFM conclusion considers how the Authority secures financial resilience and challenges how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We have concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Background

Auditors are required to give their statutory VFM conclusion based on two criteria specified by the Audit Commission. These consider whether the Authority has proper arrangements in place for:

- securing financial resilience: looking at the Authority's financial governance, financial planning and financial control processes; and
- challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness: looking at how the Authority is prioritising resources and improving efficiency and productivity.

We follow a risk based approach to target audit effort on the areas of greatest audit risk. We consider the arrangements put in place by the Authority to mitigate these risks and plan our work accordingly.

The key elements of the VFM audit approach are summarised in the diagram below.

Work completed

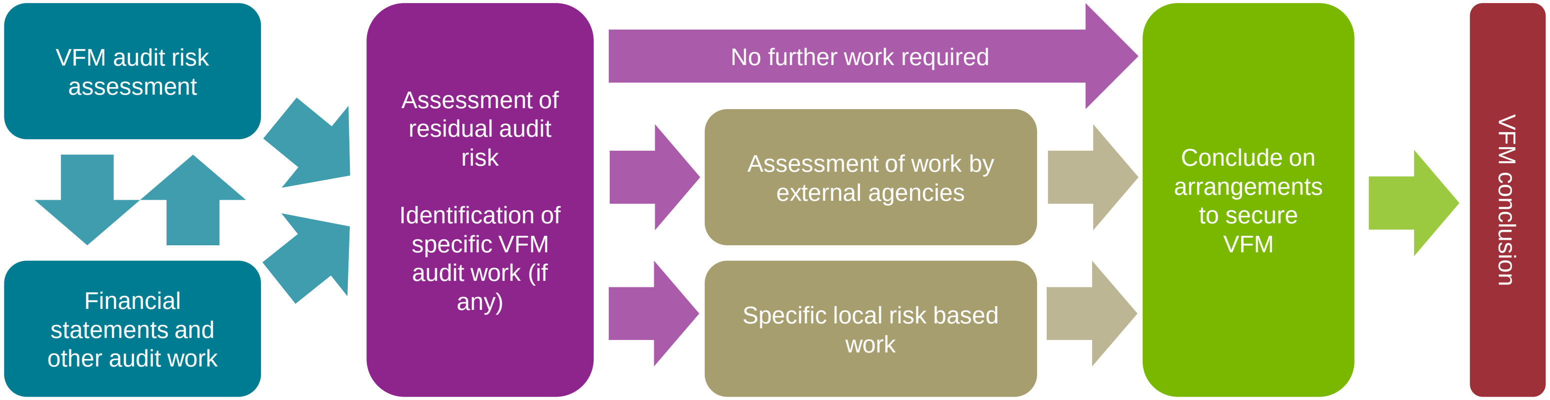
We performed a risk assessment earlier in the year and have reviewed this throughout the year.

We have not identified any significant risks to our VFM conclusion and therefore have not completed any additional work.

Conclusion

We have concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

VFM criterion	Met
Securing financial resilience	✓
Securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness	✓



Appendix 1: Key issues and recommendations

We have given each recommendation a risk rating and agreed what action management will need to take.

The Authority should closely monitor progress in addressing specific risks and implementing our recommendations.

We will formally follow up these recommendations next year.

Priority rating for recommendations		
❶ ***Priority one***: issues that are fundamental and material to your system of internal control. We believe that these issues might mean that you do not meet a system objective or reduce (mitigate) a risk.	❷ ***Priority two***: issues that have an important effect on internal controls but do not need immediate action. You may still meet a system objective in full or in part or reduce (mitigate) a risk adequately but the weakness remains in the system.	❸ ***Priority three***: issues that would, if corrected, improve the internal control in general but are not vital to the overall system. These are generally issues of best practice that we feel would benefit you if you introduced them.

No.	Risk	Issue and recommendation	Management response / responsible officer / due date
1	❸	**Quality assurance procedures – Prior year follow up** In 2013/14 we raised a recommendation relating to the reclaimed VAT cash balances for school accounts. We highlighted there were quality assurance procedures which could be strengthened, in particular: ▪ school bank reconciliations included amounts relating to reclaimed VAT in the cash balance even though the reclaimed VAT was not actually received late into the following month. We have confirmed with officers that this element of the recommendation has not been implemented for 2013/14. **Recommendation** Although the financial impact of this recommendation is unlikely to be material, it is recommended that the Authority implement these additional quality assurance procedures regarding school bank accounts for completeness.	**Response** Although the balances concerned are not material to the overall accounts, (less than £1 million), the Council recognizes that strengthening internal control procedures to address this issue will result in improved reporting. As such a task has been added to the accounts closedown timetable to input a journal entry to transfer the balance from cash to debtors. The nominated Finance Business Partner has been informed and understands what is required and why. **Responsible officer** Neil Robinson, Group Manager - Financial Management **Due date** April 2015

Appendix 2: Audit differences

This appendix sets out the significant audit differences.

It is our understanding that all of these will be adjusted.

We are required by ISA 260 to report all uncorrected misstatements, other than those that we believe are clearly trivial, to those charged with governance (which in your case is the Audit Committee). We are also required to report all material misstatements that have been corrected but that we believe should be communicated to you to assist you in fulfilling your governance responsibilities.

Corrected audit differences

The following table sets out the significant audit differences identified during the audit of Nottinghamshire County Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2014. This issue has been amended for.

	Impact					
No.	**Income and Expenditure Statement**	**Movement in Reserves Statement**	**Assets**	**Liabilities**	**Reserves**	**Basis of audit difference**
1	-	-	Cr Debtors £4.5m	Dr Creditors £4.5m	-	It was identified that a corrective journal between debtors and creditors had been incorrectly input.
	-	**-**	**Cr £4.5m**	**Dr £4.5m**	**-**	**Total impact of adjustments: £4.5m**

Uncorrected audit differences

There were no uncorrected audit differences identified by our audit of Nottinghamshire County Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2014.

Appendix 3: Declaration of independence and objectivity

The *Code of Audit Practice* requires us to exercise our professional judgement and act independently of both the Commission and the Authority.

Requirements

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission must comply with the *Code of Audit Practice* (the 'Code') which states that:

"Auditors and their staff should exercise their professional judgement and act independently of both the Commission and the audited body. Auditors, or any firm with which an auditor is associated, should not carry out work for an audited body that does not relate directly to the discharge of auditors' functions, if it would impair the auditors' independence or might give rise to a reasonable perception that their independence could be impaired."

In considering issues of independence and objectivity we consider relevant professional, regulatory and legal requirements and guidance, including the provisions of the Code, the detailed provisions of the Statement of Independence included within the Audit Commission's *Standing Guidance for Local Government Auditors* ('Audit Commission Guidance') and the requirements of APB Ethical Standard 1 *Integrity, Objectivity and Independence* ('Ethical Standards').

The Code states that, in carrying out their audit of the financial statements, auditors should comply with auditing standards currently in force, and as may be amended from time to time. Audit Commission Guidance requires appointed auditors to follow the provisions of ISA (UK &I) 260 Communication of *Audit Matters with Those Charged with Governance*' that are applicable to the audit of listed companies. This means that the appointed auditor must disclose in writing:

- Details of all relationships between the auditor and the client, its directors and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by the audit firm and its network to the client, its directors and senior management and its affiliates, that the auditor considers may reasonably be thought to bear on the auditor's objectivity and independence.
- The related safeguards that are in place.
- The total amount of fees that the auditor and the auditor's network firms have charged to the client and its affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed into appropriate categories, for example, statutory audit services, further audit services, tax advisory services and other non-audit services. For each category, the amounts of any future services which have been contracted or where a written proposal has been submitted are separately disclosed. We do this in our *Annual Audit Letter*.

Appointed auditors are also required to confirm in writing that they have complied with Ethical Standards and that, in the auditor's professional judgement, the auditor is independent and the auditor's objectivity is not compromised, or otherwise declare that the auditor has concerns that the auditor's objectivity and independence may be compromised and explaining the actions which necessarily follow from his. These matters should be discussed with the Audit Committee.

Ethical Standards require us to communicate to those charged with governance in writing at least annually all significant facts and matters, including those related to the provision of non-audit services and the safeguards put in place that, in our professional judgement, may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and the objectivity of the Engagement Lead and the audit team.

General procedures to safeguard independence and objectivity

KPMG's reputation is built, in great part, upon the conduct of our professionals and their ability to deliver objective and independent advice and opinions. That integrity and objectivity underpins the work that KPMG performs and is important to the regulatory environments in which we operate. All partners and staff have an obligation to maintain the relevant level of required independence and to identify and evaluate circumstances and relationships that may impair that independence.

Appendix 3: Declaration of independence and objectivity (continued)

We confirm that we have complied with requirements on objectivity and independence in relation to this year's audit of the Authority's financial statements.

Acting as an auditor places specific obligations on the firm, partners and staff in order to demonstrate the firm's required independence. KPMG's policies and procedures regarding independence matters are detailed in the *Ethics and Independence Manual* ('the Manual'). The Manual sets out the overriding principles and summarises the policies and regulations which all partners and staff must adhere to in the area of professional conduct and in dealings with clients and others.

KPMG is committed to ensuring that all partners and staff are aware of these principles. To facilitate this, a hard copy of the Manual is provided to everyone annually. The Manual is divided into two parts. Part 1 sets out KPMG's ethics and independence policies which partners and staff must observe both in relation to their personal dealings and in relation to the professional services they provide. Part 2 of the Manual summarises the key risk management policies which partners and staff are required to follow when providing such services.

All partners and staff must understand the personal responsibilities they have towards complying with the policies outlined in the Manual and follow them at all times. To acknowledge understanding of and adherence to the policies set out in the Manual, all partners and staff are required to submit an annual ethics and independence confirmation. Failure to follow these policies can result in disciplinary action.

For the non audit work provided we have established the following safeguards to maintain the integrity of the audit team:

- Separate teams to conduct the audit and non audit work
- Internal risk assessment process prior to conducting any non audit work
- External approval from the Audit Commission

Auditor declaration

In relation to the audit of the financial statements of Nottinghamshire County Council for the financial year ending 31 March 2014, we confirm that there were no relationships between KPMG LLP and Nottinghamshire County Council, its directors and senior management and its affiliates that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the objectivity and independence of the audit engagement lead and audit staff. We also confirm that we have complied with Ethical Standards and the Audit Commission's requirements in relation to independence and objectivity.

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