

Report to: Audit Committee

Date of Meeting: 21 September 2017

Report Title: PSAA Appointment of External Auditor

Report By: Peter Grace
Assistant Director - Financial Services and Revenues

Purpose of Report

Further to our report on Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) to the Audit Committee on 25 January 2017, we have been advised that the auditors for 2018/19 will be Grant Thornton.

Recommendation(s)

1. That PSAA be advised that this council has no objection to this appointment

Reasons for Recommendations

PSAA must under regulation 13 of the Regulations, appoint an auditor to each opted-in authority and consult the authority about the proposed appointment.

Introduction

This is a formal communication to the chief executive and chief finance officer of Hastings Borough Council to consult on the auditor appointment from 2018/19

1. The PSAA has written to consult you on the appointment of Grant Thornton (UK) LLP to audit the accounts of Hastings Borough Council for five years from 2018/19. The appointment will start on 1 April 2018.

Background

2. For audits of the accounts from 2018/19, PSAA is responsible for appointing an auditor to principal local government and police bodies that have chosen to opt into its national auditor appointment arrangements. More information on the [appointing person scheme](#) is available on our website.

About the proposed appointment

3. PSAA must, under regulation 13 of the Regulations, appoint an external auditor to each opted-in authority and consult the authority about the proposed appointment.
4. Hastings Borough Council has opted into PSAA's auditor appointment arrangements. We have sent regular email communications to audited bodies about this process, and wrote to you on 19 June 2017 to advise you that we had completed a procurement to let audit contracts from 2018/19. Grant Thornton (UK) LLP was successful in winning a contract in the procurement, and we propose appointing this firm as the auditor of Hastings Borough Council.
5. Grant Thornton UK comprises around 4,500 employees delivering services to 40,000 clients. The public sector has played a significant role within the firm for over 30 years. The UK Public Sector Assurance team employs 301 people, including 29 Key Audit Partners, based in designated 'centres of excellence', providing it with locally based public sector specialists across the country. The team is solely dedicated to public audit work in local government and the NHS, with contracts with PSAA, Audit Scotland and the Wales Audit Office. The Public Sector Assurance team is a regular commentator on issues facing the sector and oversees the firm's development of appropriate thought leadership and support, such as its series of publications and workshops on income generation in local authorities. In addition, the team can draw on the commercial skills and experience of a wider assurance team of over 1,516 individuals, to reflect the changing assurance needs of local authorities and NHS bodies.
6. In developing this appointment proposal, we have applied the following principles, balancing competing demands as much as we can, based on the information provided to us by audited bodies and audit firms:

Ensuring auditor independence, as we are required to do by the Regulations;

Meeting our commitments to the firms under the audit contracts;

Accommodating joint/shared working arrangements where these are relevant to the auditor's responsibilities;

Ensuring a balanced mix of authority types for each firm;

Taking account of each firm's principal locations; and

Providing continuity of audit firm if possible, but avoiding long appointments.

7. Further information on the [auditor appointment process](#) is available on our website.

Responding to this consultation

8. PSAA are consulting you on the proposed appointment of Grant Thornton (UK) LLP to audit the accounts of Hastings Borough Council for five years from 2018/19. The consultation will close at 5pm on Friday 22 September 2017.
9. If you are satisfied with the proposed appointment, please confirm this by email to auditorappointments@psaa.co.uk. No further action is needed from you.
10. The PSAA Board will consider all proposed auditor appointments at its meeting scheduled for 14 December 2017. We will write by email to all opted-in bodies after this Board meeting to confirm auditor appointments.

Process for objecting to the proposed auditor appointment

11. If you wish to make representations to PSAA about the proposed auditor appointment, please send them by email to auditorappointments@psaa.co.uk to arrive by 5pm on Friday 22 September 2017.
12. Representations can include matters that you believe might be an impediment to the proposed firm's independence, were it to be your appointed auditor. Your email should set out the reasons why you think the proposed appointment should not be made. The following may represent acceptable reasons:
- There is an independence issue in relation to the firm proposed as the auditor, which had not previously been notified to PSAA;
- There are formal and joint working arrangements relevant to the auditor's responsibilities, which had not previously been notified to PSAA; or
- There is another valid reason, for example you can demonstrate a history of inadequate service from the proposed firm.
13. PSAA will consider carefully all representations and will respond by Monday 16 October 2017 by email.
14. If your representations are accepted, we will consult you on an alternative auditor appointment between 16-27 October 2017. If your representations are not accepted, we will confirm this to you. You may choose to make further representations to the PSAA Board, providing any additional information to support your case.

15. PSAA will write to all bodies to confirm the Board's final decision on the appointment of the auditor before 21 December 2017.

Scale fees for 2018/19

16. We will consult on scale fees for 2018/19 in due course and will publish confirmed scale fees for 2018/19 for opted-in bodies on our website in March 2018. The results of the audit procurement indicate that a reduction in scale fees in the region of approximately 18 per cent should be possible for 2018/19, based on the individual scale fees applicable for 2016/17. Further [information on the audit procurement](#) is available on our website.

Wards Affected

None

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	Yes
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

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Officer to Contact

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