Audit plan

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Audit 2011/12





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Introduction

The Audit Commission's Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies sets out the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the audited body.

Responsibilities

The Audit Commission's Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies sets out the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the audited body. The Audit Commission has issued a copy of the Statement to you.

The Statement summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body begin and end and I undertake my audit work to meet these responsibilities.

I comply with the statutory requirements governing my audit work, in particular:

- the Audit Commission Act 1998; and
- the Code of Audit Practice for local NHS bodies.

My audit does not relieve the Audit and Pensions Committee, as those charged with governance, of their responsibilities.

Accounting statements

Auditing standards require me to communicate with you the plan for the audit, including those areas viewed as highest risk. I have therefore set out the significant risks and the approach I will take for the audit of the 2011/12 financial statements. I also detail a series of questions that auditing standards require me to ask of management and the Audit Committee each year and request a response to these prior to the commencement of the audit.

Value for money

I will also assess the Authority's financial resilience and arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the form of a value for money conclusion. I set out the areas where my work will be focused for the 2011/12 value for money conclusion.

Milestones and deadlines, the audit team, independence and quality.

I have set out the planned timetable and outputs from 2011/12 audit work. I also confirm the audit team is independent and set out arrangements to ensure the service provided to the Authority meets quality standards.

Fees

The fee for the audit is £360,000 which is a reduction of 10 per cent from the previous year. The fee has not changed since it was originally communicated to the Authority in February 2011.

Accounting statements

I will carry out the audit of the accounting statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB). I am required to issue an audit report giving my opinion on whether the accounts give a true and fair view.

Materiality

I will apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing my audit, in evaluating the effect of any identified misstatements, and in forming my opinion.

Identifying audit risks

I gain an understanding of the Authority to identify any risk of material misstatement (whether due to fraud or error) in the accounting statements. I do this by:

- identifying the business risks facing the Authority, including assessing your own risk management arrangements;
- considering the financial performance of the Authority;
- assessing internal control, including reviewing the control environment, the IT control environment and internal audit; and
- assessing the risk of material misstatement arising from the activities and controls within the Authority's information systems.

I have considered the additional risks that are relevant to the audit of the accounting statements and have set these out below.

Risk	Audit response
Accruals International Standards on Auditing (ISA 240 UK&I) presume an inherent risk in relation to revenue recognition for all audits. Given the pressures placed on council finances by the local government finance settlement, the risk of misstatement exceeds that of prior years particularly with regard to management accruals of expenditure.	 I will identify and test management accruals. Specifically, I will: assess whether the method for making accruals is appropriate and has been consistently applied; review the assumptions used; test the effectiveness of management controls over the accruals; and verify the accuracy of the accrual by reference to subsequent settlement.
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reform The government plans to reform local authority housing finance by adopting a self-financing model from 1 April 2012. This will be through a one-off settlement payment to or from central government on or before 28 March 2012. This will change the HRA debt of the Authority. Payments from government will in most cases be used to redeem an equal percentage of all PWLB debt held by the Authority. Due to the complexity, magnitude and timing of the HRA reform there is risk that the financial statements will be materially misstated.	 I will carry out procedures to ensure HRA reform is accounted for correctly Specifically, I will: agree settlement payment or receipt to the amount specified in the Settlement Payments Determination 2012; check that the settlement transaction has been accounted for in line with the requirements of CIPFA guidance; agree details of loan redemptions to supporting documentation; and check cash flow working papers to confirm that non-cash transactions associated with the loan redemptions are accounted for correctly.

Risk

Accounts payable and receivable audit reports

Internal Audit reports on the accounts payable and accounts receivable systems provide only limited assurance over system controls. The work found weaknesses relating to the authorisation of transactions and changes to suppliers and customer standing data. Due to the importance of these controls in the system, there is a risk that income and expenditure in the financial statements could be misstated.

Heritage assets

The 2011/12 IFRS Code adopts the requirements of FRS 30 Heritage Assets for the first time. These are assets held by the council with the intention of preserving them for future generations because of their cultural, environmental or historical associations. Typical examples in local government include mayoral regalia and paintings. The standard requires that where information on cost or value is available, heritage assets must be reported on the Council's balance sheet and accounted for in accordance with the Code and its disclosure requirements. There is a risk that due to the difficulty in identifying and valuing heritage assets, this change in accounting policy may not be implemented correctly. I will undertake additional testing of both accounts payable and accounts receivable transactions.

Audit response

I will complete additional work to assess whether the Council has put in place adequate arrangements to identify all potential heritage assets and has applied appropriate judgements with regard to their classification, valuation and disclosure.

Testing strategy

My audit will involve the following.

- Review and re-performance of the work of your internal auditors in respect of the testing of controls in the accounts receivable, accounts payable and payroll systems.
- An IT risk assessment.
- Placing reliance on the work of experts as follows:
 - the actuary for pensions liabilities and assets; and
 - the valuer for the valuation of property, plant and equipment.
- Substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts on all material balances.

I have sought to:

- maximise reliance, subject to review and re-performance, on the work of your internal auditors; and
- maximise the work that can be undertaken before you prepare your accounting statements.

The Authority is required to prepare the accounting statements by 30 June 2012. I aim to complete my work and issue my opinion and value for money conclusion by 30 September 2012. I will agree with officers a schedule of working papers required to support the entries in the accounting statements.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside my work on the accounting statements, I will also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of my review and the nature of my report are specified by the National Audit Office.

Management and Audit Committee representations required by ISA (UK&I) 240, 260 and 315

Under the ISA (UK&I) I am required to update my understanding annually of:

- management processes and arrangements; and
- how the Audit Committee as those charged with governance gains assurance over management.

In order to comply with the standards I need to obtain and consider information from management and the Audit Committee by asking the questions outlined in appendix 2 and 3 respectively. The questions should be answered in respect of the Authority, Hammersmith & Fulham Pension Fund and Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust audits. I request that responses to the questions are provided to me prior to the commencement of the audit.

Value for money

I am required to reach a conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

My conclusion on the Authority's arrangements is based on two criteria, specified by the Commission. These relate to the Authority's arrangements for:

- securing financial resilience focusing on whether the Authority is managing its financial risks to secure a stable financial position for the foreseeable future; and
- challenging how the Authority secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness focusing on whether the Authority is prioritising its resources within tighter budgets and improving productivity and efficiency.

Identification of risks

I have considered the risks that are relevant to my value for money conclusion. I have identified the following risks that I will address through my work.

Table 2: Value for money risks

Risk	Audit response
The Local Government Finance Settlement reduced Central Government funding available to the Authority. In 2011/12 the Authority is targeting savings of £27 million. The projected level of savings required will increase in future years, increasing to £64 million by 2013/14.	 I will carry out the following tasks. Monitor progress on identified savings in 2011/12. Review arrangements for challenging the value for money of services and progress in identifying savings for 2012/13. Review the latest medium term financial plan.

Risk Audit response In May 2011, the Authority agreed plans to combine certain services with I will review the effectiveness of the proposals in the context of: City of Westminster Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and short and medium term financial planning (including savings) Chelsea. The tri-borough programme's objective is to improve people's projections) and supporting budgetary processes; lives across the three boroughs whilst delivering significant savings to the the methodology for the attribution of costs and savings; and partners that can be used to protect front-line service provision. governance arrangements to support the joint management of services Demonstrating the improvement and efficiency outcomes and embedding and in particular those concerning risk management, internal audit and sound governance arrangements to underpin the initiative will be critical to scrutiny. the Authority's achievement of value for money.

Milestones and deadlines

The Authority is required to prepare the accounting statements by 30 June 2012. I aim to complete my work and issue my opinion and value for money conclusion by 30 September 20102.

Table 3: Proposed timetable and planned output	Table 3:	Proposed	timetable	and p	planned	outputs
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Activity	Date	Output
Interim financial statements audit visit	January 2012	Audit Plan
Final financial statements audit visit	June – September 2012	Annual governance report
Value for money conclusion: review of arrangements	January – March 2012	Annual governance report
Issue opinion and value for money conclusion	By 30 September 2012	Auditor's report
Summarise overall messages from the audit	October 2012	Annual Audit Letter

The audit team

The members of the audit team for the 2011/12 audit are as follows.

Table 4: Audit team

Table 4. Audit team			
Name	Contact details	Responsibilities	
Jon Hayes District Auditor	j-hayes@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 2877	Responsible for the overall delivery of the audit including quality of reports, signing the auditor's report and liaison with the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Corporate Services.	
Julian McGowan Audit Manager	j-mcgowan@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 2655	Manages and coordinates the different elements of the audit work. Key point of contact for the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and Corporate Finance.	
James Beveridge Principal Auditor	j-beveridge@audit-commission.gov.uk 0844 798 2054	Manages the audit team whilst on site and ensures the prompt communication of audit issues to Corporate Finance.	

Independence and quality

Independence

I comply with the ethical standards issued by the APB and with the Commission's additional requirements for independence and objectivity as summarised in appendix 1. I am not aware of any relationships that might constitute a threat to independence.

Quality of service

I aim to provide you with a fully satisfactory audit service. If, however, you are unable to deal with any difficulty through me and my team please contact Chris Westwood, Director – Standards & Technical, Audit Practice, Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ (<u>c-westwood@audit-commission.gov.uk</u>) who will look into any complaint promptly and to do what he can to resolve the position.

If you are still not satisfied you may of course take up the matter with the Audit Commission's Complaints Investigation Officer (The Audit Commission, Westward House, Lime Kiln Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8SR).

Fees

The scale fee for the audit is £360,000 as set out in my letter of 29 February 2011.

The audit fee

Variations from the scale fee only occur where my assessments of audit risk and complexity are significantly different from those reflected in the 2010/11 fee. I have not identified significant differences and have therefore set the audit fee equal to the scale fee which represents a 10 per cent reduction on the audit fee for 2010/11.

The scale fee covers:

- my audit of your accounting statements and reporting on the Whole of Government Accounts return; and
- my work on reviewing your arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources.

The scale fee reflects:

- the Audit Commission's decision not to increase fees in line with inflation;
- a reduction resulting from the new approach to local VFM audit work; and
- a reduction following the one-off work associated with the first-time adoption of International Financing Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Assumptions

In setting the fee, I have made the assumptions set out in appendix 2. Where these assumptions are not met, I may be required to undertake more work and therefore increase the audit fee. Where this is the case, I will discuss this first with the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and I will issue a supplement to the plan to record any revisions to the risk and the impact on the fee.

Specific actions you could take to reduce your audit fee

The Audit Commission requires me to inform you of specific actions you could take to reduce your audit fee. I have identified the following actions that you could take:

- improve the quality of the draft financial statements; and
- improve the quality of working papers.

Total fees payable

In addition to the fee for the audit, the Audit Commission charges fees for:

- certification of claims and returns; and
- the agreed provision of non-audit services under the Audit Commission's advice and assistance powers.

Based on current plans the fees payable are as follows.

Table 5: Fees			
	2011/12 proposed (£)	2010/11 actual (£)	Variance (£)
Audit	360,000	400,000	(40,000)
Certification of claims and returns	70,000*	71,000	(1,000)
Non-audit work		-	
Total	430,000	471,000	(41,000)

* certification of claims and returns is charged on an hourly rate, so the proposed fee is an estimate.

Appendix 1 – Independence and objectivity

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission must comply with the Commission's Code of Audit Practice and Standing Guidance for Auditors. When auditing the accounting statements, auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board (APB). These impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. The Audit Practice puts in place robust arrangements to ensure compliance with these requirements, overseen by the Audit Practice's Director – Standards and Technical, who serves as the Audit Practice's Ethics Partner.

Area	Requirement	How we comply
Business, employment and personal relationships	Appointed auditors and their staff should avoid any official, professional or personal relationships which may, or could reasonably be perceived to, cause them inappropriately or unjustifiably to limit the scope, extent or rigour of their work or impair the objectivity of their judgement. The appointed auditor and senior members of the audit team must	All audit staff are required to declare all potential threats to independence. Details of declarations are made available to appointed auditors. Where appropriate, staff are excluded from engagements or safeguards put in place to reduce the threat to independence to an acceptably low level.
	not take part in political activity for a political party, or special interest group, whose activities relate directly to the functions of local government or NHS bodies in general, or to a particular local government or NHS body.	

Table 6: Independence and objectivity

Area	Requirement	How we comply
Long association with audit clients	The appointed auditor responsible for the audit should, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, be changed at least once every seven years, with additional consideration of threats to independence after five years.	The Audit Practice maintains and monitors a central database of assignment of auditors and senior audit staff to ensure this requirement is met.
Gifts and hospitality	The appointed auditor and members of the audit team must abide by the Commission's policy on gifts, hospitality and entertainment.	All audit staff are required to declare any gifts or hospitality irrespective of whether or not they are accepted. Gifts and Hospitality may only be accepted with line manager approval.
Non-audit work	Appointed auditors should not perform additional work for an audited body (that is work above the minimum required to meet their statutory responsibilities) if it would compromise their independence or might result in a reasonable perception that their independence could be compromised.	All proposed additional work is subject to review and approval by the appointed auditor and the Director – Standards and Technical, to ensure that independence is not compromised.
	Auditors should not accept engagements that involve commenting on the performance of other auditors appointed by the Commission on Commission work without first consulting the Commission.	
	Work over a specified value must only be undertaken with the prior approval of the Audit Commission's Director of Audit Policy and Regulation.	

Code of Audit Practice, Audit Commission Standing Guidance and APB Ethical Standards

Appendix 2 – Basis for fee

In setting the fee, I have assumed the following.

- The risk in relation to the audit of the accounting statements is not significantly different to that identified for 2010/11. For example, internal controls are operating effectively.
- The risk in relation to my value for money responsibilities is not significantly different to that identified for 2010/11.
- Internal Audit meets professional standards.
- Internal Audit undertakes sufficient appropriate work on all systems that provide material figures in the accounting on which I can rely.
- The Authority provides:
 - good quality working papers and records to support the accounting statements and the text of the other information to be published with the statements by 30 June 2012;
 - other information requested within agreed timescales; and
 - prompt responses to draft reports.
- There are no questions asked or objections made by local government electors.

Where these assumptions are not met, I will have to undertake more work which is likely to result in an increased audit fee.

Appendix 3 – Auditor questions to management

In order to comply with the requirement of ISA (UK&I) 240, 260 and 315 to update my understanding of management processes and arrangements annually, in respect of the Authority, Hammersmith & Fulham Pension Fund and Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust, I request that management provide a responses to the following questions.

- What are the management processes in relation to:
 - undertaking an assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud or error (including the nature, extent and frequency of these assessments);
 - identifying and responding to risks of fraud in the authority, including any specific risks of fraud which management have identified or that have been brought to its attention, or classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosure for which a risk of fraud is likely to exist;
 - communicating to employees its views on business practice and ethical behavior (for example by updating, communicating and monitoring against the Authority code of conduct); and
 - communicating to the Audit Committee the processes for identifying and responding to fraud or error.
- How does management gain assurance that all relevant laws and regulations have been complied with?
- Have there been any instances of non-compliance during 2011/12?
- Are there any actual or potential litigation or claims that would affect the financial statements?
- What controls do you have in place to: identify; authorise; approve; account for; and disclose, related party transactions and relationships? For any significant new related parties (ie any not already disclosed in your year-end 31 March 2011 audited financial statements) please provide a list of them, explain the nature of these, and whether you have entered into any transactions with these related parties during the year to 31 March 2012.
- Are you aware of any instances of actual, suspected or alleged fraud during the period 1 April 2011 31 March 2012?

- Do you suspect fraud may be occurring within the Authority?
 - Have you identified any specific fraud risks within the Authority?
 - Do you have any concerns that there are areas within your authority that are at risk of fraud?
 - Are there particular locations within the authority where fraud is more likely to occur?
- Are you satisfied that internal controls, including segregation of duties, exist and work effectively?
 - If not where are the risk areas?
 - What other controls are in place to help prevent, deter or detect fraud?
- How do you encourage staff to report their concerns about fraud?
 - What concerns about fraud are staff expected to report?
- From a fraud and corruption perspective, what are considered to be high risk posts within your authority?
 - How are the risks relating to these posts identified, assessed and managed?
- Are you aware of any related party relationships or transactions that could give rise to instances of fraud?
 - How do you mitigate the risks associated with fraud related to related party relationships and transactions?
- Are you aware of any entries made in the accounting records of the authority that you believe or suspect are false or intentionally misleading?
 - Are there particular balances where fraud is more likely to occur?
 - Are you aware of any assets, liabilities or transactions that you believe were improperly included or omitted from the accounts of the authority?
 - Could a false accounting entry escape detection? If so, how?
 - Are there any external fraud risk factors, such as benefits payments or collection of tax revenues, which are high risk of fraud?
- Are you aware of any organisational, or management pressure to meet financial or operating targets?
 - Are you aware of any inappropriate organisational or management pressure being applied, or incentives offered, to you or colleagues to meet financial or operating targets?

Appendix 4 – Auditor questions to the Audit Committee

In order to comply with the requirement of ISA (UK&I) 240, 260 and 315 to update my understanding of how the Audit Committee gains assurance over management processes and arrangements in respect of the Authority, Hammersmith & Fulham Pension Fund and Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust, I request that the Audit Committee provide a responses to the following questions.

- How do you exercise oversight of management's processes in relation to:
 - undertaking an assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud or error (including the nature, extent and frequency of these assessments);
 - identifying and responding to risks of fraud in the authority, including any specific risks of fraud which management have identified or that have been brought to its attention, or classes of transactions, account balances, or disclosure for which a risk of fraud is likely to exist;
 - communicating to employees its view on business practice and ethical behavior (for example by updating, communicating and monitoring against the authority code of conduct); and
 - communicating to you the processes for identifying and responding to fraud or error.
- How do you oversee management processes for identifying and responding to the risk of fraud and possible breaches of internal control? Are you aware of any breaches of internal control during 2011/12?
- How do you gain assurance that all relevant laws and regulations have been complied with? Are you aware of any instances of non-compliance during 2011/12?
- Are you aware of any actual or potential litigation or claims that would affect the financial statements?
- Have you carried out a preliminary assessment of the going concern assumption and if so have you identified any events which may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern?
- Are you aware of any instances of actual, suspected or alleged fraud during the period 1 April 2011 31 March 2012?

- Do you suspect fraud may be occurring within the authority?
 - Have you identified any specific fraud risks within the authority?
 - Do you have any concerns that there are areas within your authority that are at risk of fraud?
 - Are there particular locations within the authority where fraud is more likely to occur?
- Are you satisfied that internal controls, including segregation of duties, exist and work effectively?
 - If not where are the risk areas?
 - What other controls are in place to help prevent, deter or detect fraud?
- How do you encourage staff to report their concerns about fraud?
 - What concerns about fraud are staff expected to report?
- From a fraud and corruption perspective, what are considered to be high risk posts within your authority?
 - How are the risks relating to these posts identified, assessed and managed?
- Are you aware of any related party relationships or transactions that could give rise to instances of fraud?
 - How do you mitigate the risks associated with fraud related to related party relationships and transactions?
- Are you aware of any entries made in the accounting records of the authority that you believe or suspect are false or intentionally misleading?
 - Are there particular balances where fraud is more likely to occur?
 - Are you aware of any assets, liabilities or transactions that you believe were improperly included or omitted from the accounts of the authority?
 - Could a false accounting entry escape detection? If so, how?
 - Are there any external fraud risk factors, such as benefits payments or collection of tax revenues, which are high risk of fraud?
- Are you aware of any organisational, or management pressure to meet financial or operating targets?
 - Are you aware of any inappropriate organisational or management pressure being applied, or incentives offered, to you or colleagues to meet financial or operating targets?

Appendix 5 – Glossary

Accounting statements

The annual statement of accounts that the Authority is required to prepare, which report the financial performance and financial position of the Authority in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

Annual Audit Letter

Report issued by the auditor to the Authority after the completion of the audit that summarises the audit work carried out in the period and significant issues arising from auditors' work.

Annual Governance Report

The auditor's report on matters arising from the audit of the accounting statements presented to those charged with governance before the auditor issues their opinion and conclusion.

Annual Governance Statement

The annual report on the Authority's systems of internal control that supports the achievement of the Authority's policies aims and objectives.

Audit of the accounts

The audit of the accounts of an audited body comprises all work carried out by an auditor under the Code to meet their statutory responsibilities under the Audit Commission Act 1998.

Audited body

A body to which the Audit Commission is responsible for appointing the external auditor.

Auditing Practices Board (APB)

The body responsible in the UK for issuing auditing standards, ethical standards and associated guidance to auditors. Its objectives are to establish high standards of auditing that meet the developing needs of users of financial information and to ensure public confidence in the auditing process.

Auditing standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles and essential procedures with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the auditing standard concerned.

Auditor(s)

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

Code (the)

The Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies issued by the Audit Commission and approved by Parliament.

Commission (the)

The Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service in England.

Ethical Standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles relating to independence, integrity and objectivity that apply to the conduct of audits and with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the standard concerned.

Group accounts

Consolidated accounting statements of an Authority and its subsidiaries, associates and jointly controlled entities.

Internal control

The whole system of controls, financial and otherwise, that the Authority establishes to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, internal financial control and compliance with laws and regulations.

Materiality

The APB defines this concept as 'an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of the accounting statements as a whole. A matter is material if its omission would reasonably influence the decisions of an addressee of the auditor's report; likewise a misstatement is material if it would have a similar influence. Materiality may also be considered in the context of any individual primary statement within the accounting statements or of individual items included in them. Materiality is not capable of general mathematical definition, as it has both qualitative and quantitative aspects'.

The term 'materiality' applies only to the accounting statements. Auditors appointed by the Commission have responsibilities and duties under statute, as well as their responsibility to give an opinion on the accounting statements, which do not necessarily affect their opinion on the accounting statements.

Significance

The concept of 'significance' applies to these wider responsibilities and auditors adopt a level of significance that may differ from the materiality level applied to their audit of the accounting statements. Significance has both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

Those charged with governance

Those entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of the Authority. This term includes the members of the Authority and its Audit Committee.

Whole of Government Accounts

A project leading to a set of consolidated accounts for the entire UK public sector on commercial accounting principles. The Authority must submit a consolidation pack to the department for Communities and Local Government which is based on, but separate from, its accounting statements.

If you require a copy of this document in an alternative format or in a language other than English, please call: **0844 798 7070**

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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.

