

Appendix: Glossary

Accounting statements

The annual income and expenditure account, statement of balances or record of receipts and payments that a small body is required to prepare in accordance with, and in the form specified in, any annual return required by proper practices in relation to accounts.

This definition applies to small bodies only. Other audited bodies are required to prepare a statement of accounts. (See also 'Financial statements').

Act (the)

The Audit Commission Act 1998.

Annual audit letter

Report issued by the auditor to an audited body that summarises the audit work carried out in the period, auditors' opinions or conclusions (where appropriate) and significant issues arising from auditors' work.

Annual report

Although not required to do so, some local government bodies produce and publish other information, such as an annual report, alongside the financial statements. The annual report describes the aims and achievements of an audited body during a particular year and may include a summarised version of the financial statements.

Audit of the accounts

The audit of the accounts of an audited body comprises all work carried out by auditors in accordance with 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, comprising both the members of the body and its management (the senior officers of the body). Those charged with governance are the members of the audited body. (See also 'Members' and 'Those charged with governance'.)

Auditing Practices Board (APB)

The body responsible in the UK for issuing auditing standards, Ethical Standards and other 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, which contain basic principles and essential procedures with which auditors are required to 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*.

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 that apply to the conduct of audits and with which auditors are required to comply, except where otherwise stated in the standard concerned.

Financial statements

The annual statement of accounts or accounting statements that audited bodies are required to prepare, which summarise the accounts of the audited body, in accordance with regulations and proper practices in relation to accounts.

Small bodies are not required to prepare a statement of accounts. They are required to prepare accounting statements.

Internal control

The whole system of controls, financial and otherwise, that is established in order to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, internal financial control and compliance with laws and regulations.

Local government bodies

Bodies other than NHS bodies to which the Commission is responsible for appointing auditors, as set out in Schedule 2 of the Act. These include, for the purposes of applying the *Code*, local authorities, local councils (parish and town councils), police authorities, fire authorities, national park authorities and local probation boards and trusts.

Materiality (and significance)

The APB defines this concept as ‘an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of the financial 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 financial 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 in relation to the financial statements. Auditors appointed by the Commission have responsibilities and duties under statute, in addition to their responsibility to give an opinion on the financial statements, which do not necessarily affect their opinion on the financial statements. 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 in relation to the financial statements. Significance has both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

Members

The elected or appointed members of local government bodies who are responsible for the overall direction and control of the audited body. (See also ‘Those charged with governance’ and ‘Audited body’.)

Partner inspectorates and review agencies

The Commission’s partner inspectorates are those organisations that are responsible for carrying out inspections, including bodies with statutory inspection functions such as Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary. Review agencies include other bodies that have regulatory responsibilities in relation to local government bodies, including government departments, the government offices and relevant regulators of local government professions.

Regularity (of the expenditure and income of local probation boards and trusts)

Whether, subject to the concept of materiality, the expenditure and income of local probation boards and trusts have been applied for the purposes intended by parliament, and whether they conform with the authorities that govern them.

Remuneration report

Audited bodies are required to produce, and publish with the financial statements, a remuneration report that discloses the salary and pension entitlements of senior managers.

Small bodies

Audited bodies with either annual income or annual expenditure (whichever is the higher) below a financial threshold, which may change from time to time and is prescribed for the purposes of regulations made under section 27 of the Act. The financial threshold is prescribed for the purposes of determining the type of financial statements that a body is required to prepare and for other purposes.

Statement on internal control

Local government bodies are required to publish a statement on internal control (SIC) with their financial statements (or with their accounting statements in the case of small bodies). The disclosures in the SIC are supported and evidenced by the body's assurance framework. At local authorities the SIC is known as the Annual Governance Statement and is prepared in accordance with guidance issued by CIPFA. Police authorities also produce a SIC in accordance with relevant CIPFA guidance. Local probation boards and trusts are required to prepare a SIC in accordance with the requirements specified by HM Treasury in *Managing Public Money*.

Third sector

The third sector includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises and cooperative and mutual organisations.

Those charged with governance

Those charged with governance are defined in auditing standards as 'those persons entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of an entity'. In local government bodies, those charged with governance, for the purpose of complying with auditing standards, are:

- for local authorities – the full council, audit committee (where established) or any other committee with delegated responsibility for approval of the financial statements;
- for police or fire authorities – the full authority, audit committee (where established) or other committee with delegated responsibility for approval of the financial statements;
- for local probation boards and trusts – the board or audit committee; and
- for other local government bodies – the full authority or board or council, audit committee (where established) or any other committee with delegated responsibility for approval of the financial statements.

Audit committees are not mandatory for local government bodies, other than police authorities and local probation boards and trusts. Other bodies are expected to put in place proper arrangements to allow those charged with governance to discuss audit matters with both internal and external auditors. Auditors should satisfy themselves that these matters, and auditors' reports, are considered at the level within the audited body that they consider to be most appropriate.

Whole of Government Accounts

The Whole of Government Accounts initiative is to produce a set of consolidated financial accounts for the entire UK public sector on commercial accounting principles. Local government bodies, other than probation boards and trusts, are required to submit a consolidation pack to the department for Communities and Local Government which is based on, but separate from, their statutory accounts.

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We welcome your feedback. If you have any comments on this report, are intending to implement any of the recommendations, or are planning to follow up any of the case studies, please email: nationalstudies@audit-commission.gov.uk



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