

Use of resources advisory services

Responsibility for place shaping, the introduction of Local and Multi Area Agreements, the need for more effective partnership working and the continuing drive for shared efficiencies and solutions are reinforcing the need to do more for less. To meet these challenges effectively, councils need to have a clear strategy for use of their own and wider partnership resources.

For many years, local authorities have been required by legislation and guidance to provide value for money in their use of finances and in how they employ their assets, including their property and equipment and their people. In addition, this needs to be sustainable and have due regard for the local environmental agenda.

The challenge of continuous improvement in the use of resources is compounded by a high level of external scrutiny. The Audit Commission assesses and scores each authority's performance and publishes the results nationally. These scores form the backdrop for Comprehensive Area Assessment and have a major impact on external perception and reputation.

As part of its assessment the Audit Commission will consider the ethical framework within an authority, looking at how its Standards Committee has ensured this has been embedded. It will also review any investigations undertaken by the Standards Committee or Standards for England,

and how these reflect on governance procedures generally.

From our work with small and large authorities across the country, we have seen compelling examples of councils and their partners delivering excellent outcomes and increasing the value they offer through a firm grip on underlying resources. Many local authorities, however, are still trying to put the basics in place to support their first few steps.

Maximising use of resources

To meet these challenges effectively, councils need to have a clear strategy for the use of their own and wider partnership resources, bound together by strong governance arrangements.

At Grant Thornton, we recognise that these many factors create a unique set of challenges and opportunities for local authorities. In response to this, we have a specialist local government team who provide assurance and advice on the overall achievement and measurement of value for money and good governance,

with the ability to draw in a wider range of specialist advisory services to help local authorities where needed.

To support councils with their self-evaluation process we have developed an award winning Use of Resources/VFM diagnostic tool. Based on our considerable combined experience as the joint largest provider of audit services to local government in England and our local government consultancy work around corporate and service level VFM programmes, this tool supports a better understanding of the demand of the new use of resources framework, so that authorities can realize its full benefits and impacts.

To help councils be more proactive about improvement, rather than simply responding to assessors, we have also developed, in conjunction with CIPFA, a use of resources improvement programme for local authority officers. This is currently being piloted with East of England authorities via Improvement East, the local Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP).

Why Grant Thornton?

At Grant Thornton, we have worked with over 50 authorities in the last five years, helping them and their partners to realise new ideas and reinvigorate established processes, and to meet internal efficiency targets and external assessment requirements. Based in offices throughout the UK, our local government specialists have the resources and experience to provide leading edge solutions to today's challenges.

Our government advisory practice, with over 150 consultants, has advised local authorities for over 10 years. Our consultants not only have extensive experience working for public sector clients, but many have held senior positions in local government and the wider public sector. Combined with our position as the joint largest service provider to the Audit Commission and our work with CIPFA, we are closely aligned with working with government to deliver a public service that meets the needs of the 21st century.

Contact us

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