

Dear Councillor Brown,

Following on from the recent presentation of the Local Code of Corporate Governance, at Standards Board, I write to provide additional information on the inspection framework for local government. In addition to providing both background and context, the advice contained in this email describes both statutory and non-statutory regulatory activity.

Background and context: Abolition of the Audit Commission

In 2010, the then Coalition Government announced the abolition of the Audit Commission. Prior to its abolition, the Commission acted as the lead regulator of local authority functions and services. As part of its framework, the Commission tested the effectiveness of local authorities in developing an ambition for their areas, defining local priorities, utilising business capacity, managing performance and delivering verifiable outcomes. Following the passing of the [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#), local audit regulatory functions, previously discharged by the Audit Commission, were transferred to the National Audit Office.

Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary

In recent years, [Ofsted](#) has undertaken an expanded role for area-based multi-agency thematic inspection, working alongside the Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspection of Constabulary. Council services, impacted by the work of the above-mentioned inspectorates include: Children's Social Care, School Improvement, Children with Complex Needs, Youth Offending, Adults Social Care, Adult Learning, Legal Services, Human Resources and Policy and Governance.

The Planning Inspectorate

The [Planning Inspectorate](#) deals with planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, examinations of local plans and other planning-related and specialist casework in England and Wales. Council services impacted by the work of the Planning Inspectorate include: Planning, Regeneration & Place, Environment, Legal Services and Housing.

Sector-led improvement

In 2011, the Local Government Association established a [sector led improvement](#) framework. The aim of sector-led improvement is to provide a non-statutory appraisal *by* local government of local government. As part of this local authorities provide mutual assessment through a regime of peer reviews. Lewisham received a peer review under the LGA sector -led improvement framework in September 2014. The results of the review were reported to Mayor and Cabinet, early in 2015.

In addition to the LGA framework, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Care (ADASS) has established a similar self-improvement framework which looks at the effective functioning of adult safeguarding arrangements. Under this framework, Lewisham received an adults social care peer review in November 2016.

Law Society

[Lexcel](#) is the Law Society's kite mark for excellence in legal practice management and excellence in client care. Lewisham Council's Legal Services Division have been Lexcel accredited for 19 years. The most recent accreditation was achieved during August 2016.

Information Commissioner

All Council functions and services are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. The [Information Commissioners Officer](#) is the regulatory arm of FOIA. In December 2013 the Council was subject to an audit by the Information Commissioner.

Internal audit

With the passing of the Local Audit and Accountability Act of 2014, local authorities are empowered to source internal audit services from external suppliers. Since 2012 Lewisham has engaged Grant Thornton to perform this function. As part of its role, each year, Grant Thornton publish an [Annual Audit Letter](#) which provides opinions on the Council's accounts and ability to deliver value for money. In addition to this, each year, Internal Audit undertake a wider [programme of audit](#) across Council services and functions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries if you require additional information.

Yours sincerely

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