

CABINET

6 November 2013

ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2012/2013

Report of the Executive Director of Commercial & Corporate Services

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report details the external auditors (Mazars) Annual Audit Letter (AAL) covering the year 2012/2013. A copy is attached.

2.0 Description of Decision

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- Note and comment on the contents of this very positive report, and
- Refer the report to Council for their consideration.

3.0 Introduction

3.1 The Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice requires auditors to prepare an AAL and issue it to each audited body. The purpose of preparing and issuing AALs is to communicate to the audited body and key external stakeholders, including members of the public, the key issues arising from the auditors' work, which auditors consider should be brought to the attention of the audited body.

3.2 The AAL summarises the findings of the 2012/13 audit, which comprises of two elements:

- An audit of the Council's financial statements
- An assessment of the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources

4.0 Summary Position

4.1 The AAL is extremely positive overall providing a strong endorsement of the financial management and planning and governance arrangements in place across the Council.

4.2 The Auditor issued an unqualified audit opinion on the Council's financial statements and an unqualified Value for Money conclusion. The report confirms that the Council:

- Produced accounts for 2012/13 that gave a true and fair view of the council's financial position and that no objections to the accounts were received
- Accurately reported its financial performance to government via the Whole of Government Accounts process
- Had proper arrangements in place to secure value for money.
- Was financially resilient and had managed its financial position very well as both budget setting and close budget monitoring were considered robust which had culminated in an underspend of £6m despite having to successfully deliver continued significant financial savings in 2012/13.
- Is aware of the continued and significant reductions in funding it is facing and in this context is continuing to identify ways of ensuring service sustainability and new ways of working, the details of which are set out on page 7 of the Auditors AAL.

5. Alternative Options

5.1 Not applicable as the report is for information only.

6. List of Appendices

Appendix A - Sunderland City Council Annual Audit Letter 2012/2013