

Statement of Accounts 2019/2020 – Important Notification - regarding the Covid19 Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations 2020

This Notification applies to the audit of all local government bodies including the Fire Authority (and also to other bodies within the scope of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015) for the financial year ending 31st March 2020, (2019/2020 Accounts).

Background Information

In response to anticipated disruption to local authorities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued an amendment to the [Accounts and Audit Regulation \(2015\)](#) ('the 2015 Regulations') in April 2020. The [Accounts and Audit \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#) ('the 2020 Regulations') amend the 2015 regulations in respect of the timetable for publishing the Authority's draft and audited statement of accounts and other required information which is issued at the same time as the financial statements which includes the Statement by the s151 officer that the accounts published are unaudited and subject to change, the Narrative Statement and the Annual Governance Statement .

The 2020 Regulations has also removed the common inspection period which under the 2015 Regulations was required to include the first 10 working days of June when the accounts had to be published originally by 31st May 2020.

The new publication timetable

The new publication timetable is outlined in the table below:

	Original timetable	Revised timetable
Draft financial statements subject to audit	31 May 2020	31 August 2020
Final audited financial statements	31 July 2020	30 November 2020

Although the revised timetable allows greater flexibility to the Authority, the regulations make it clear that authorities can publish both draft and audited accounts before the revised deadlines set out above if they so wish.

The Authority however has made the decision to publish its accounts and financial statements in line the revised timetable.

What this means for public inspection rights

Although the common inspection period has been removed by the 2020 Regulations, public inspection rights set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 remain in place and are not affected by the 2020 Regulations.

The wording of the 2020 Regulations does not allow relevant authorities to simply pick a date on which to commence the period of public inspection. Instead, regulation 15(3) from the 2015 Regulations remains in place, which states that the period for the inspection of public rights commences on the day after the Authority has published its draft accounts, the Annual Governance Statement, the Narrative Statement and the Statement by the s151 officer that the accounts published are unaudited and subject to change.

For this Authority the following arrangements have been put in place:

The Authority is to publish the following documents, as required by Regulation 15(2) of the 2015 Regulations, on Monday 31st August 2020:

- The draft statement of accounts (subject to audit);
- A declaration signed by the Finance Director (the Authority's S151 Officer) that the accounts are unaudited and subject to change;
- The Annual Governance Statement; and
- The Narrative Statement.

In line with the 2015 Regulations, the period of public inspection will commence on Tuesday 1st September 2020 and the s151 officer will also publish on this date a separate Notification that details the period of the exercise of public rights and the other information required by regulation 15(2)(b) of the 2015 Regulations.