



STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2022/2023 (SUBJECT TO AUDIT)

REPORT OF THE FINANCE DIRECTOR

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an opportunity to review and question the draft Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2022/2023 (Subject to Audit) – (Appendix B), alongside the Finance Officer's Narrative Statement and the Annual Governance Statement that are both required to be published separately to the Accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Both of these statements are also included within the Authority's Statement of Accounts in line with best practice.
- 1.2 To provide members with details of the Statement of Accounts process and the key dates for the 2022/23 financial year in which local electors can challenge the accounts in accordance with the revised statutory timescales which have been impacted by the government's late decision to revert back to 31st May deadline after a very short consultation where most local authorities requested the government to change the deadline to 30th June 2023. The Authority's Accounts subject to audit are however later than the statutory deadline unfortunately and a separate Notification was issued on the Authority's website on 30th May 2023 to explain the reasons for the delay. This is detailed in **Appendix A** to this report for information as this is a requirement of the Regulations.
- 1.3 To provide members with the Letters of Assurance required by the external auditor as part of the final accounts process and specifically to approve the contents of the Letter of Assurance from those charged with Governance (**Appendix F**) and, to note the Letter of Assurance from those charged with discharging management processes and responsibilities (**Appendix G**).
- 1.4 It should also be noted that work continues on the Statement of Accounts 2022/23 and any changes will be tabled as necessary at the meeting (should this prove necessary) to ensure the best set of financial statements are presented for external audit.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Authority has to comply with the financial reporting requirements set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which are listed below for information. In summary local authorities must commence the public inspection period on or before the first working day of June 2023.

This means the draft unaudited accounts must be published by 31 May 2023 at the latest. The statutory period for the publication of the audited accounts has also been moved from 31 July 2023 to 30 September 2023 in accordance with revised government guidelines which were confirmed very late despite general opposition and views that the deadlines should have remained unchanged from the previous year mainly based on the fact some Authorities still hadn't had their 2021/22 Accounts signed off by the external auditor.

The Relevant Finance Officer (RFO) must certify that the accounts for 2022/2023 present a true and fair view of the financial position by no later than 31st May 2023 - **this has had to be amended to 30th June 2023 for this Authority despite best endeavours.**

There is also a set of requirements that the RFO must observe as follows:

The RFO must publish (including on the Authority's website) the following:

- The (certified) Statement of Accounts and an accompanying declaration that they are unaudited and subject to change;
- The Annual Governance Statement (in draft, if the Authority has not formally approved the Statement);
- The Narrative Statement;
- A statement that sets out:
 - The period for the exercise of public rights which must include the first 10 working days in June – however this has been amended to include the **first 10 working days of July 2023 and a Notification to the public published on 30th May 2023 on the Authority's website informing them of this revised date;**
 - Provide details of the manner in which the notice of intention to documents should be given;
 - The name and address of the auditor;
 - The provisions of section 26 and 27 of the Local Audit and accountability Act 2014;
- The RFO must also commence the period for the exercise of public rights and notify the auditor of the date on which the period commences. This period must be a single period of 30 working days, and as stated above, **must now include the first 10 working days in July for the 2022/2023 Statement of Accounts which is later than the statutory deadline.**

2.2 The requirement for the accounts, once audited, to be approved by members of this Committee would usually have been by 31st July 2023 however the government has amended the timescales so that the audited accounts can now be approved **by 30th September 2023 (for 2022/2023).**

2.3 The following requirements must also be observed:

- Following conclusion of the period for the exercise of public rights, the accounts must be:
 - Considered by members (Committee or meeting as a whole)
 - Re-confirmed by the RFO on behalf of the Authority that the Statement of Accounts present a true and fair view before the accounts are approved.
 - Approved by the same Committee or meeting
 - Signed – this must be by the person who presides over the meeting where the accounts are considered and approved.
- The approved and audited accounts, approved Annual Governance Statement, and the Narrative Statement, must be published (including on the Authority's website);
- An Authority must publish (including on the Authority's website) that the audit has been concluded and that the audited Statement of Accounts has been published. This must be by **30th September 2023**.

2.4 Quality checks continue on the accounts right up until the time they are received by this Committee for information in order to ensure that the draft Accounts subject to audit reflect the most accurate and best set of accounts possible. Any such changes will be tabled at the meeting.

3 Statement of Accounts 2022/2023 (Subject to Audit)

3.1 The draft financial statements for 2022/2023 subject to audit (**Appendix B**) are to be certified by the Finance Officer in accordance with the regulations.

3.2 Members should note that the Narrative Statement prepared by the Finance Officer is included within the Statement of Accounts and as members know this provides a very helpful summary of the main financial issues for the financial year 2022/2023 for the Authority and is there to help put the accounts, which are very complex by nature, into context. This has also been separately set out in (**Appendix C**) in accordance with the requirements.

3.3 Members, should they wish, are able to ask questions on the Authority's accounts and Narrative Statement at this stage before the audit has commenced, although there will be a further opportunity in September when the audited 2022/2023 accounts are to be formally considered for approval in accordance with the revised regulations.

3.4 In accordance with the requirements, the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), has to be published whether it has been approved or not by the Authority. A copy is attached in (**Appendix D**) to this report but simply replicates the AGS scrutinized by this Committee in May and approved by the June Authority meeting.

- 3.5 The statement required from the Authority that details 'the period for the exercise of public rights' is set out in Appendix E to this report.
- 3.6 The certified Accounts and the required Statements and Notices will be published on the Authority's web site on Friday 30th June 2023 (which are delayed when compared to the regulations which stipulated 31st May 2023 as previously explained).

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 To note the draft and unsigned Statement of Accounts 2022/2023 (subject to audit) and the separate Statements, which are set out in more detail in Appendices B to D of this report, in compliance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 4.2 To approve the contents of the Letter of Assurance from those charged with Governance (Appendix F) and,
- 4.3 To note the Letter of Assurance from those charged with discharging management processes and responsibilities (Appendix G).