

TITLE: Draft Statement of Accounts 2023/24

Committee: Audit Committee

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1.0 Issue

1.1. To note that the Council's draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 has been published on the Council's website.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1. That the Committee notes the report.

3.0 Background/Options

3.1 The format of the Statement of Accounts is prescribed by a range of regulations and reporting requirements together with a code of practice issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Since 2010/11, as part of the wider public sector move towards international accounting standards, all local authorities in the UK are required to produce their annual financial statements using International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

3.2 The Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015 (as amended) which apply to the preparation, approval and audit of the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2024 required the following:

- The draft Accounts must be certified by the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) by 31st May following the end of the financial year. It is confirmed that the accounts were signed off by this statutory deadline, being signed and loaded onto the Council's website on the 31st May 2024.
- The draft Accounts and any associated financial documentation are made available for public inspection for a period of 30 working days. The accounts are currently available for public inspection, this started on the 3rd June 2024 and will continue until the 15th July 2024. To this point, neither the Council nor Ernst & Young LLP (EY) as the Council's auditors, have received any communications from the public.
- By the 30th September:
 - The Accounts must be re-certified by the Responsible Financial Officer

- The Accounts must be approved by Members [Under the Council’s Constitution, it is the Audit Committee’s function to approve the Statement of Accounts]
- The Accounts must be published together with any certificate, opinion or report issued by the appointed auditor.
- or, if the above 3 bullets cannot be achieved a notice is to be published setting out the reasons for not doing so.

3.3 EY have programmed their work schedule to start the formal part of the Audit of the Council’s Statement of Accounts on the 22nd July 2024, but a significant amount of pre-audit work has already started as they collect the information needed to undertake their review. We expect the audit to be ready to report in November 2024.

3.4 Previous year audit – 2022/23.
 There however remains a significant amount of uncertainty nationally about the timetable of public sector audits. It had been expected that legislation would be passed to enable a resetting of the Local Audit Market, and where the audit of any years of accounts up to and including 2022/23 financial year was not completed by the 30th September 2024 (the backstop date) a modified (disclaimed) audit opinion could be issued by the auditors. However, with the general election being called for the 4th July, this legislation has not been passed and we wait to see if the new Government will support the same approach and what impact there will be on the backstop date.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

4.1. A further report will be brought to Committee once the audit has been completed and the Statement of Accounts ready for formal approval.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications No	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Statement of Accounts 2023/24

7.0 Background documents

None