

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

**Audit & Standards Committee
28 September 2023**

Report Title: Audited Statement of Accounts 2022/23

Submitted by: Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres and Growth

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To receive the final accounts and audit findings report for the financial year 2022/23.

Recommendation

1. The final accounts for the financial year 2022/23 be received and delegated authority given to the Service Director for Finance and the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee to sign off the Statement of Accounts once the Staffordshire Pension Fund Audit has been completed.
2. The audit findings report for the financial year 2022/23 be received.

Reasons

The Council is required to publish its audited accounts for the financial year 2022/23 by 30 September 2023, or where circumstances dictate, as soon as reasonably practicable after this date.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations require that for the 2022/23 accounting period the publication of authority accounts and supporting documents (together with any certificate or opinion of the local auditor) shall be no later than 30 September 2023 if the audit has been concluded.
- 1.2 The Accounts and Audit Regulations govern the way in which a local authority should present its financial affairs. The regulations require the Council to produce a statement of accounts for the financial year detailing its financial transactions for the year and its position at the year end and that this Statement be scrutinised and approved by an appropriate committee, in this case the Audit and Standards Committee. The Statement is produced in a standardised form in line with CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) guidelines. They set out procedures which must be followed with regard to public inspection rights, audit, approval and publication of the statement.
- 1.5 The Regulations require the draft Statement of Accounts to be certified by the responsible financial officer, the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer), as presenting a true and fair view of the Council's financial position by 31 May and this was done on 19 May 2023. During the period 1 June 2023 to 12 July 2023, the public had the right to inspect the accounts. No objections to the draft accounts were received.
- 1.6 The Council's external auditors Grant Thornton have advised that they expect to issue their final Audit Findings Report and opinion on the financial statements during the first two weeks of

November once they have received the outcome of the Staffordshire Pension Fund Audit and therefore this will be shared with Committee Members as soon as it has been received.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Since the last meeting of this Committee officers have continued to work closely with the external auditors to complete the audit.
- 2.2 Grant Thornton have advised that they expect to issue their Audit Findings Report including their opinion on the financial statements during the first two weeks in November. The accounts will be recertified by the Council's Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) and be made available for Members to inspect at this point.
- 2.3 The Committee are now asked to formally receive the audited accounts and the audit findings report. The annual audit letter will be presented to the Committee at the November meeting.
- 2.4 The National Audit Office has updated its guidance to auditors to allow them to postpone completion of their work on arrangements to secure value for money and to focus resources on the delivery of opinions on the financial statements. As a result the Auditor's Annual Report, including commentary on arrangements to secure value for money will be published no later than 3 months of the accounts opinion and will be reported to the Audit and Standards Committee on 5 February 2024.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 The final accounts for the financial year 2022/23 be received and delegated authority given to the Service Director for Finance and the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee to sign off the Statement of Accounts once the Staffordshire Pension Fund Audit has been completed.
- 3.2 The audit findings report for the financial year 2022/23 be received.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

- 4.1 Regular reporting of the Council's financial position is a key discipline supporting sound financial management and corporate governance.

5. **Options Considered**

- 5.1 Completion of the statement is best practice and demonstrates the transparency of the Council's Governance arrangements for 2022/23.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The Council must comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, in particular the requirement to publish the financial statements.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 There are no differential equality issues arising directly from this report.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial and resource implications arising directly from this report.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 If internal controls are not managed effectively and within the law, public resources will not be safeguarded from waste or properly accounted for.

9.2 If internal controls are not reviewed regularly, continuous improvement may not be exercised.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 Not applicable for this report.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This is not a key decision, the report is for informational purposes and is considered best practice.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Not applicable for this report.

13. **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Audited Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year 2022/23

Appendix 2: Audit Findings – Grant Thornton

Appendix 3: Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Letter of Representation 2022/23