

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO**

**Audit & Standards Committee**  
**30 September 2024**

**Report Title:** Audited Statement of Accounts 2023/24

**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 2023/24.

**Recommendation**

- 1. The final accounts for the financial year 2023/24 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 audit has been completed.**
- 2. The audit findings report for the financial year 2023/24 be received.**

**Reasons**

The Council is required to publish its audited accounts for the financial year 2023/24 by 30 September 2024, 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 2023/24 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 2024 if the audit has been concluded. Where it is not possible to publish the audited Statements by the deadline, the council must publish a statement giving reasons why this date has not been met. A statutory backstop date of 28 February 2025 has been introduced by the Government by which audits of all 2023/24 Statements must have been completed.
- 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 20 May 2024. During the period 1 June 2024 to 28 June 2024, the public had the right to inspect the accounts. No objections to the draft accounts were received.

1.6 The Council's external auditors KPMG have advised that they expect to issue their final Audit Findings Report and opinion on the financial statements by the 30 September 2024 however this may be slightly delayed until they have received the outcome of a national issue ,regarding the accounting for pension assets and the recognition of associated liabilities, 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 new external auditors, KPMG to complete the audit.

2.2 KPMG have advised that they expect to issue their Audit Findings Report including their opinion on the financial statements by 30 September 2024. 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 audit of the Statement of Accounts 2022/23 by Grant Thornton identified one recommendation for the Council which was that 'an individual transaction listing for Council Tax and NNDR debtors and creditors as at 31 March be run and retained for the purpose of year end audit testing'. This recommendation has been completed for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

2.4 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.

2.5 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 no later than 3 February 2025.

## 3. **Proposal**

3.1 The final accounts for the financial year 2023/24 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 outcome of a national issue ,regarding the accounting for pension assets and the recognition of associated liabilities, has been received and accounted for.

3.2 The audit findings report for the financial year 2023/24 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 2023/24.

## 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 The External Audit Arrangement via KPMG and the Fraud Hub supports UNSG and Climate Change objectives in a number of ways. Principally, through partnership working and supporting sustainable cities and communities via the correct use of public monies. The following UNSGs are supported.



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: Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year 2023/24

Appendix 2: Audit Findings – KPMG