



**Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue
Authority
Audit results report**

Year ended 31 March 2021

February 2022



EY

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16 February 2022



Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Dear Audit & Standards Committee members

Audit Results Report

We are pleased to attach our Audit Results Report, summarising the status of our audit for the forthcoming meeting of the Audit & Standards Committee. We will update the Audit & Standards Committee at its meeting scheduled for 3 March 2022 on further progress to that date and explain the remaining steps to the issue of our final opinion. The list of outstanding matters to conclude on our audit is shown at Appendix C.

Our responsibilities are to report to those charged with governance who are the Audit & Standards Committee which consider our audit results report on behalf of the Fire Authority and make appropriate recommendations to the statutory officers on the results of our audit and on the authorisation of the financial statements

The audit is designed to express an opinion on the 2020/21 financial statements and address current statutory and regulatory requirements. This report contains our findings related to the areas of audit emphasis, our views on Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority's accounting policies and judgements and material internal control findings. Each year sees further enhancements to the level of audit challenge and the quality of evidence required to achieve the robust professional scepticism that society expects. We thank the management team for supporting this process. We have also included an update on our work on value for money arrangements.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit & Standards Committee, other members of the Authority and senior management. It is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Audit & Standards Committee meeting on 3 March 2022.

Yours faithfully

Neil Harris
Associate Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Encl

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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated April 2018)" issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Audit & Standards Committee and management of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit & Standards Committee, and management of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit & Standards Committee and management Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01 Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Scope Update

In our Audit Planning Report presented at the 22 July 2021 Audit & Standards Committee, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements. We carried out our audit in accordance with this Plan, with the following exception:

- ▶ **Changes in materiality:** We updated our planning materiality assessment using the draft financial statements. Based on our materiality measure of gross revenue expenditure, our overall materiality assessment increased to £0.816 million (Audit Planning Report – £0.727 million). This resulted in updated performance materiality, at 75% of overall materiality, of £0.612 million, and an updated threshold for reporting misstatements of £0.041 million.
- ▶ **Change in risk rating:** We reduced the significant risk relating to Property plant & equipment (PPE) to a higher inherent risk as the majority of the asset population is valued at Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) which is not impacted by market changes. Furthermore, the population consists largely of fire stations and related training facilities which have remained stable.
- ▶ **Additional audit procedures as a result of Covid-19:** We identified additional procedures that did not result in an additional risk, but had the following impact on our audit strategy in respect of:
 - Information Produced by the Entity (IPE).** We identified an increased risk around the completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of information produced by the entity due to the inability of the audit team to verify original documents or re-run reports on-site from the Authority's systems. We undertook the following to address this risk:
 - ▶ Used the screen sharing function of Microsoft Teams to evidence re-running of reports used to generate the IPE we audited; and
 - ▶ Agreed IPE to scanned documents or other system screenshots.
- ▶ **Changes to reporting timescales:** As a result of Covid-19, new regulations, the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 No 263, were published and came into force on 31 March 2021. This announced a change to publication date for final, approved financial statements from 31 July to 30 September 2021 for all relevant authorities.

Status of the audit

Our audit work in respect of the Authority's opinion is substantially complete. Details of each outstanding item, actions required to resolve and respective responsibilities are included in Appendix C.

Given that the audit process is still ongoing, we will continue to challenge the remaining evidence in review and the final disclosures in the Narrative Report and Accounts which could influence our final audit opinion.

Audit differences

We will agree the final schedule of audit adjustments with management prior to issuing our audit opinion. To date, we have identified immaterial disclosure differences in the draft financial statements which we will discuss with management to determine whether they will adjust or not. These differences are not significant enough to draw to your attention. As the audit is not yet fully complete, further differences may be identified in relation to the outstanding areas noted above. Refer to section 04 for more details on one audit difference on the Authority's share of pensions asset which is above our reporting threshold. We bring this to your attention. An update will be provided to the Committee on any new differences identified subsequent to the release of this report which are material in nature.

Executive Summary

Auditor responsibilities under the new Code of Audit Practice 2020

Under the Code of Audit Practice 2020, we are still required to consider whether the Authority has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. The 2020 Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Authority a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Authority has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- **Financial sustainability:**
How the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- **Governance:**
How the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- **Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness:**
How the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

Status of the audit - Value for Money

In the Audit Plan to the Audit & Standards Committee, we reported that we had completed our value for money (VFM) risk assessment and not identified any risk of significant weakness against the three reporting criteria we are required to consider under the NAO's 2020 Code. We have revisited our assessment on completion of the audit of the financial statements and remain satisfied that we have not identified a risk of significant weakness. The documentation of our judgements is subject to final quality review procedures. Subject to this, we have substantially completed our VFM procedures and have no matters to report by exception in the auditor's report (see Section 03). We plan to issue the VFM commentary by the end of April 2022 as part of issuing the Auditor's Annual Report.

Other reporting issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement for consistency with our knowledge of the Authority. We have no matters to report as a result of this work.

We have not yet been able to perform the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) submission. This is because HM Treasury (HMT) are continuing to review the online 2020/21 WGA Data Collection Tool (DCT) and update the guidance that is available for preparers. Based on the last available update the DCT and guidance is not expected to be available before the Audit & Standards Committee. Therefore the 2020/21 WGA component instructions will not be available for auditors to consider until after the Audit & Standards Committee. Group Audit Instructions and the timetable for 2020/21 will necessarily follow any changes HMT make to the DCT and process. We are not able to issue our certificate until the Group Audit Instructions are issued, and we have completed any work required.

We have no other matters to report.

Executive Summary

Areas of audit focus

In our Audit Planning Report we identified a number of key areas of focus for our audit of the financial report of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority. This report sets out our observations and status in relation to these areas, including our views on areas which might be conservative and areas where there is potential risk and exposure. Our consideration of these matters and others identified during the period is summarised within the "Areas of Audit Focus" section of this report.

| Fraud Risk | Findings & Conclusions |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Misstatements due to fraud or error | We have not identified any evidence that management has overridden controls in order to prepare fraudulent financial statement balances or postings within the financial statements from the work completed to date. |
| Inherent risks | Findings & Conclusions |
| Valuation of other land and buildings | Our work in this area is not yet complete, but based on the work undertaken to date we have not identified any errors. |
| Pension liability valuation | We tested the Authority's pension liability valuation and assessed the work of the Authority's actuary, Barnet Waddingham LLP (LGPS) and Government Actuary's Department (GAD) for FFPS (Pension Funds Actuary). Our work is not yet complete, but based on the work undertaken to date we have not identified any errors. Our matters to report to date are included in Section 2. |
| Going concern disclosures | Our work in this area is in progress, but based on the work undertaken to date we are satisfied that the Authority's use of the going concern assumption is appropriate. |

We request that you review these and other matters set out in this report to ensure:

- ▶ There are no residual further considerations or matters that could impact these issues
- ▶ You concur with the resolution of the issue
- ▶ There are no further significant issues you are aware of to be considered before the financial report is finalised

There are no matters, other than those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Audit & Standards Committee or Management.



02

Areas of Audit Focus



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Misstatements due to fraud or error

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error. As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.

We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What did we do?

In response to this risk, we:

- Inquired of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks.
- Understood the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud.
- Considered the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud.
- Determined an appropriate strategy to address those identified risks of fraud which is reflected in the significant risks documented on this file.
- Performing mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including:
 - Testing journals at year-end to ensure there are no unexpected or unusual postings. This included searching for inappropriate journals posted by senior officers; journals with certain narrative descriptions which may allude to override; journals that do not balance to nil; and material journals posted at year end. We were satisfied that those journals tested did not contain evidence of management override.
 - Undertaking a detailed review of accounting estimates for evidence of bias (such as the valuation of land and buildings valuation, and the pension liability) and substantively testing unusual or unexpected transactions. No evidence of override was identified, and no unusual transaction have been identified from work completed to date.

What judgements are we focused on?

We focused on aspects of the financial statements which are open to estimation and judgment, which would facilitate management overriding controls:

- ▶ Journal entries subject to specific narrative descriptors, posted at certain times of the financial year or by certain individuals, and journals which exceed certain values;
- ▶ Material accounting estimates, such as the valuation of land and buildings, and pensions liability; and
- ▶ Unusual transactions anywhere in the financial statements.

What are our conclusions?

Our audit work has not identified any material issues, inappropriate judgements or unusual transactions which indicated that there had been any misreporting of the Authority's financial position, or that management had overridden control.

We have completed our journals testing. We are satisfied that journal entries had been posted properly and for genuine business reasons.

We have reviewed material estimates. Our work in these areas resulted in amendment to the financial statements, but we did not identify any indication of fraud.

There were no unusual transactions identified.



Areas of Audit Focus

Our response to areas of audit focus



Further details on procedures/work performed

What is the risk/area of focus?

Valuation of Land and buildings

The value of other land and buildings in PPE represent significant balances in the Authority's accounts and are subject to valuation changes and impairment reviews. Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques are required to calculate these balances held in the balance sheet.

ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

At 31 March 2021, the value of Land and buildings in PPE was £47.51 million; (2019/20: £38.99 million)

What did we do?

We:

- ▶ Considered the work performed by the Authority's external valuer, and confirmed that the scope of the work performed is adequate, they had the appropriate professional capabilities to complete the work and the results of their work is in line with our expectations.
- ▶ Challenged the assumptions used by the Authority's valuer by reference to external evidence and our EY valuation specialists guidance. This included considering significant or unusual movements in valuation. Additional work has been completed in this area, including detailed review of a sample of two assets by our own valuer.
- ▶ Sample tested key asset information used by the valuer in performing their valuation (e.g. building areas to support valuations based on price per square metre).
- ▶ Reviewed assets not subject to valuation in 2020/21 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated;
- ▶ Confirmed the valuation was completed on up-to-date information regarding each asset such that any specific changes to assets that have occurred in year had been communicated to the valuer.
- ▶ Reviewed and challenged where necessary any changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation.
- ▶ Tested the accounting entries posted via journal to ensure they have been correctly processed in the financial statements.

What are our findings and conclusion?

Our work in this area is in progress as we are still testing the samples selected. Once we have complete this work we will update the Audit & Standards Committee if any issues arise as a result of the completion of this work.



Areas of Audit Focus

Our response to areas of audit focus



Further details on procedures/work performed

What is the risk/area of focus?

Pension liability valuation

The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Authority to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by the Northamptonshire Pension Fund.

The Authority's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Authority's balance sheet. The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Authority by the actuary. Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

What did we do?

We:

- ▶ Liaised with the auditors of Bedfordshire Pension Fund to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to the Authority and were satisfied they had been properly prepared and therefore represented a sound base for the actuaries work;
- ▶ Assessed the work of the LGPS pension fund actuary and the Firefighters pension fund actuary, including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by the National Audit Office for all local government sector auditors, and considered reviews by the EY actuarial team; and
- ▶ Reviewed and tested the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Authority's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

What are our findings and conclusion?

One issue has arisen across all local government audits that needs to be resolved prior to us being able to fully conclude our work in relation to the impact of the new auditing standard on accounting estimates. We planned to take an audit approach to this estimate based on the procedures to evaluate management's process. The new auditing standard requires auditors to test the method of measurement of accounting estimates to determine whether the model is appropriately designed, consistently applied and mathematically accurate, and that the integrity of the assumptions and the data has been maintained in applying the model. Neither we, nor PWC as consulting actuaries commissioned by the NAO for all local government sector audits, are able to access the detailed models of the actuaries in order to evidence these requirements. Therefore, we have been required to modify our planned approach and undertake alternate procedures to create an auditor's estimate, to provide a different method of gaining assurance. We engaged our internal Pension specialist to undertake additional audit procedures in responses to the updated ISA540 regarding accounting estimates and did not identify any material differences on the roll-forward of the liabilities.

We also obtained the assurance report from the Northamptonshire Pension Fund Auditor and noted that there were differences relating to the Authority's share of an understatement of level 3 investment assets, largely due to differences between estimated and actual figures. Refer to section 04.

As our work in this area is in progress, we will update the Audit & Standards Committee if any issues arise as a result of the completion of this work.



Areas of Audit Focus

Our response to areas of audit focus



Further details on procedures/work performed

What is the risk/area of focus?

Going concern disclosures

There is a presumption that the Authority will continue as a going concern for the foreseeable future. However, the Authority is required to carry out a going concern assessment that is proportionate to the risks it faces. In light of the continued impact of Covid-19 there is a need for the Authority to ensure its going concern assessment, including its cashflow forecast, is robust and appropriately comprehensive.

The Authority is also required to ensure that its going concern disclosure within the statement of accounts adequately reflects its going concern assessment and in particular highlights any uncertainties it has identified. In addition, the auditing standard in relation to going concern (ISA570) has been revised with effect for the 2020/21 accounts audit.

What did we do?

We:

- ▶ Challenged management's identification of events or conditions impacting going concern.
- ▶ Tested management's resulting assessment of going concern by evaluating supporting evidence (including consideration of the risk of management bias).
- ▶ Reviewed the Authority's cashflow forecast covering the foreseeable future, to ensure that it has sufficient liquidity to continue to operate as a going concern including an assessment of any underlying need to borrow.
- ▶ Undertook a 'stand back' review to consider all of the evidence obtained, whether corroborative or contradictory, to allow us to draw our conclusions on going concern.
- ▶ Challenged the disclosure made in the accounts in respect of going concern and any material uncertainties.

What are our findings and conclusion?

Our work in this area is in progress. Based on the work undertaken to date, we are satisfied that the Authority's use of the going concern assumption is appropriate and that the Authority has access to sufficient working capital to support its operations for a period of at least 12 months from the date of our audit report.

We are reviewing the Authority's disclosures within the financial statements and will update the Audit & Standards Committee if any issues arise as a result of the completion of this work.



03 Audit Report



Audit Report

Draft audit report

DRAFT INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

Our opinion on the financial statements

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY - DRAFT

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The financial statements comprise the:

- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Balance Sheet;
- Movement in Reserves Statement;
- Cash Flow Statement;
- Related notes to the Financial Statements 1 to 31; and
- The firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Pension Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and related notes 1 to 7.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- ▶ give a true and fair view of the financial position of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority as at 31 March 2021 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- ▶ have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Comptroller and Auditor General's AGNO1, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Chief Finance Officer use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of 12 months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report. However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this statement is not a guarantee as to the authority's ability to continue as a going concern.



Draft Audit Report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Narrative Statement and Treasurers Report set out on pages 4 to 15, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the other information contained within the Accounts for the year 2020/21.

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of the other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- ▶ in our opinion the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Authority;
- ▶ we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we are not satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We have nothing to report in these respects.



Draft Audit Report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities set out on page 16, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Accounts for the year 2020/21, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Authority either intends to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect irregularities, including fraud. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both those charged with governance of the entity and management.

- We understood how Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority is complying with those frameworks by understanding the incentive, opportunities and motives for non-compliance, including inquiring of management, head of internal audit, those charged with governance and the monitoring officer and obtaining and reading documentation relating to the procedures in place to identify, evaluate and comply with laws and regulations, and whether they are aware of instances of non-compliance. We corroborated this through our reading of the authority's committee minutes, through enquiry of employees to confirm authority policies, and through the inspection of employee handbooks and other information. Based on this understanding we designed our audit procedures to identify non-compliance with such laws and regulations.



Draft Audit Report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Our procedures had a focus on compliance with the accounting framework through obtaining sufficient audit evidence in line with the level of risk identified and with relevant legislation.

- We assessed the susceptibility of the authority's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur by understanding the potential incentives and pressures for management to manipulate the financial statements, and performed procedures to understand the areas in which this would most likely arise. Based on our risk assessment procedures, we identified management override of controls to be our fraud risk.
- To address our fraud risk of management override of controls, we tested specific journal entries identified by applying risk criteria to the entire year end population of journals. For each journal selected, we tested specific transactions back to source documentation to confirm that the journals were authorised and accounted for appropriately.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2021, as to whether the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority had put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.



Draft Audit Report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed the work necessary to issue our assurance statement in respect of the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack. We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements or our work on value for money arrangements.

Until we have completed these procedures, we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Neil Harris (Key Audit Partner)
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)
Luton



04 Audit Differences





Audit Differences

Audit differences

Amounts actually recorded. These differences are classified as “known” or “judgemental”. Known differences represent items that can be accurately quantified and relate to a definite set of facts or circumstances. Judgemental differences generally involve estimation and relate to facts or circumstances that are uncertain or open to interpretation. We will report all audit differences above our reporting threshold of £0.039 million.

Summary of adjusted and unadjusted differences

Our audit procedures has identified one audit difference above our reporting threshold. At this stage, we bring this matter, on the Authority's share of pensions asset differences, to your attention. As we finalise the audit, management will determine whether the differences below will be adjusted to the 2020-2021 financial statements or not. On their own, these differences are not material to the financial statements and do not have an impact on the Authority's level of available to use reserves. We will agree the final schedule of audit adjustments with management prior to issuing our audit opinion. To date, we have identified immaterial disclosure differences in the draft financial statements which we will discuss with management to determine whether they will adjust or not. These differences are not significant enough to draw to your attention in this report. As the audit is not yet fully complete, further differences may be identified in relation to the outstanding areas noted above. An update will be provided to the Committee on any new differences identified subsequent to the release of this report which are material in nature.

Pensions differences identified from the work performed by the Pension Fund auditor.

- We obtained assurances from the Pension Fund auditors which identified an understatement of level 3 investment assets due to the most up to date information available in relation to valuations as at 31 March 2021 in comparison to the fund manager estimates. This has identified a reduction in the value of investment assets of £0.085 million.
- The Authority's share of the Pension Fund differences resulting in an understatement error benefits paid of £0.113 million.



05

Value for Money



Value for money

The Authority's responsibilities for value for money (VFM)

The Authority is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

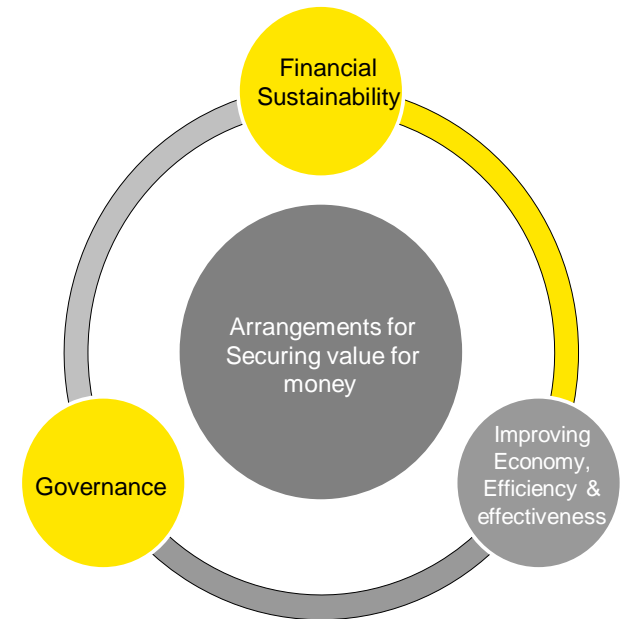
As part of the material published with its financial statements, the Authority is required to bring together commentary on its governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing its governance statement, the Authority tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements set out in the Cipfa code of practice on local authority accounting. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on its arrangements for securing value for money from their use of resources.

Risk assessment

We have previously reported to the Committee the outcome of our assessment of the risk of significant weaknesses in the Authority's VFM arrangements - that we had not identified any risks.

Status of our VFM work

We are in the process of completing our planned VFM procedures and to date have no matters to report by exception in the auditor's report. We plan to issue the VFM commentary as part of issuing the Auditors Annual Report.





06 Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement

We must give an opinion on the consistency of the financial and non-financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 with the audited financial statements

We must also review the Annual Governance Statement for completeness of disclosures, consistency with other information from our work, and whether it complies with relevant guidance.

Financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and published with the financial statements was consistent with the audited financial statements.

We have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and can confirm it is consistent with other information from our audit of the financial statements and we have no other matters to report.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO) on your Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) return. The extent of our review, and the nature of our report, is specified by the NAO.

We have not yet been able to perform the procedures required by the NAO on the WGA submission. This is because HM Treasury (HMT) are continuing to review the online 2020/21 WGA Data Collection Tool (DCT) and update the guidance that is available for preparers. Based on the last available update the DCT and guidance was not expected to be available until after the Audit & Standards Committee. Therefore the 2020/21 WGA component instructions will not be available for auditors to consider until after the Committee meeting. Group Audit Instructions and the timetable for 2020/21 will necessarily follow any changes HMT make to the DCT and process. We are not able to issue our certificate until the Group Audit Instructions are issued.

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Authority to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. "a report in the public interest"). We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Authority's financial reporting process. They include the following:

- Significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;
- Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit;
- Any significant matters arising from the audit that were discussed with management;
- Written representations we have requested;
- Expected modifications to the audit report;
- Any other matters significant to overseeing the financial reporting process;
- Related parties;
- External confirmations;
- Going concern; and
- Consideration of laws and regulations.

We have no matters to report.



07

Independence

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and the Authority, and its members and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to the Authority, its members and senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2020 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity

Services provided by Ernst & Young

The next page includes a summary of the fees due for the year ended 31 March 2021 in line with the disclosures set out in FRC Ethical Standard and in statute. Full details of the services that we have provided are shown below.

As at the date of this report, there are no future services which have been contracted and no written proposal to provide non-audit services has been submitted.

EY Transparency Report 2021

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2021:

[EY UK Transparency Report 2021 | EY UK](#)

Fees

Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

| | Proposed fee 2020/21 | Scale fee 2020/21 | Final Fee 2019/20 | Final Fee 2018/19 |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | |
| PSAA Scale Fee | 23,271 | 23,271 | 23,271 | 54,210 |
| Covid-19 impact on Going Concern (1) | 1,600 | TBC | 13,300 | |
| Additional work required to respond to the requirements of ISA540, including the use of EY Pensions (2) | 2,900 | TBC | - | |
| Value for Money arrangements (2) | 9,000 | TBC | - | |
| Scale fee plus in-year variations | 35,771 | TBC | 36,571 | 54,210 |
| Scale fee rebasing (3) | 17,468 | 17,468 | 17,468 | - |
| Total fees | 53,239 | TBC | 54,039 | 54,210 |

For 2019/20, PSAA have determined a fee variation of £13,300, therefore the total approved audit fee is £36,571.

As noted in the March 2021 Audit & Standards Committee meeting that we would report an adjusted baseline audit fee to PSAA. The increase related largely to increased risk and complexity facing all public sector bodies, adjusted for our knowledge and risk assessment for the Authority, changes and the incremental increase in regulatory standards, and our assessment of the Authority's readiness for audit, including data analytics, quality of working papers. The total fee is therefore reflective of these factors and will be considered by the PSAA. This is our assessment of the baseline fee and should not be seen as the same as the proposed fee for scope changes and additional work we have undertaken during the audit.

For 2020/21, the scale fee is further impacted by a range of factors which resulted in additional work. We set out an estimate of the potential additional fee for this in our Audit Plan. We have updated the table above to estimate the fee based on the work completed at the point of issuing this report. These figures could change as we finalise our remaining procedures, and we will update the Committee in our Auditor's Annual Report.

The additional work includes:

(1) Review of additional disclosures in relation to going concern as a result of Covid-19. These additional fees are subject to approval by PSAA.

(2) PSAA issued a document "Additional information for 2020/21 audit fees" in August 2021. PSAA commissioned external independent technical research for setting standardised fee variations to assess the expected impact on audit work programmes of a range of new and updated audit requirements. The figures included here are the minimum additional fee ranges set out in this document. Final fees will be confirmed once the audit is complete

(3) Changes in work required to address professional and regulatory requirements and scope associated with risk as reported in the previous year. This fee remains subject to approval by the PSAA.



08 Appendices

Appendix A

Audit approach update

We summarise below our approach to the audit of the balance sheet and any changes to this approach from the prior year audit.

Our audit procedures are designed to be responsive to our assessed risk of material misstatement at the relevant assertion level. Assertions relevant to the balance sheet include:

- ▶ Existence: An asset, liability and equity interest exists at a given date
- ▶ Rights and Obligations: An asset, liability and equity interest pertains to the entity at a given date
- ▶ Completeness: There are no unrecorded assets, liabilities, and equity interests, transactions or events, or undisclosed items
- ▶ Valuation: An asset, liability and equity interest is recorded at an appropriate amount and any resulting valuation or allocation adjustments are appropriately recorded
- ▶ Presentation and Disclosure: Assets, liabilities and equity interests are appropriately aggregated or disaggregated, and classified, described and disclosed in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. Disclosures are relevant and understandable in the context of the applicable financial reporting framework





There were no significant changes to our audit approach apart from the additional work we were required to undertake to address the requirements of the new auditing standard on accounting estimates. This primarily impacted out audit procedures on:

- The revaluation of land and buildings classified as Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE).
- Pension liability and asset valuation.




Appendix B

Required communications with the Audit & Standards Committee




There are certain communications that we must provide to the those charged with governance of UK entities. We have detailed these here together with a reference of when and where they were covered:

|  Our Reporting to you | | |
|--|---|---|
| Required communications |  What is reported? |   When and where? |
| Terms of engagement | Confirmation by the audit committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties. | The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies |
| Our responsibilities | Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter. | Audit planning report (July 2021) and Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Planning and audit approach | Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified. When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team. | Audit planning report (July 2021) and Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Significant findings from the audit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process | Audit results report (March 2022) |





Appendix B

| | |  Our Reporting to you |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Required communications |  What is reported? |  When and where |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with regulations, any actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified relevant to the audit committee ▶ Subject to compliance with regulations, any suspicions that irregularities, including fraud with regard to the financial statements, may occur or have occurred, and the implications thereof ▶ The valuation methods used and any changes to these including first year audits ▶ The scope of consolidation and exclusion criteria if any and whether in accordance with the reporting framework ▶ The completeness of documentation and explanations received ▶ Any significant difficulties encountered in the course of the audit ▶ Any significant matters discussed with management ▶ Any other matters considered significant | |
| Going concern | <p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty related to going concern ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The appropriateness of related disclosures in the financial statements | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Misstatements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Subsequent events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiry of the audit committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements. | Audit results report (March 2022) |




Appendix B

| | |  Our Reporting to you |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Required communications |  What is reported? |  When and where |
| Fraud | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements. ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit Committee responsibility. | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Related parties | <p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Independence | <p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence | <p>Audit planning report (July 2021)</p> <p>Audit results report (March 2022)</p> |

Appendix B

| | |  Our Reporting to you |
|--|---|--|
|  Required communications |  What is reported? |  When and where |
| | <p>Communications whenever significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p> <p>For public interest entities and listed companies, communication of minimum requirements as detailed in the FRC Revised Ethical Standard 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relationships between EY, the company and senior management, its affiliates and its connected parties ▶ Services provided by EY that may reasonably bear on the auditors' objectivity and independence ▶ Related safeguards ▶ Fees charged by EY analysed into appropriate categories such as statutory audit fees, tax advisory fees, other non-audit service fees ▶ A statement of compliance with the Ethical Standard, including any non-EY firms or external experts used in the audit ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between the Ethical Standard and Group's policy for the provision of non-audit services, and any apparent breach of that policy ▶ Where EY has determined it is appropriate to apply more restrictive rules than permitted under the Ethical Standard ▶ The audit committee should also be provided an opportunity to discuss matters affecting auditor independence | |
| External confirmations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures. | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Consideration of laws and regulations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the audit committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the audit committee may be aware of | Audit results report (March 2022) |




Appendix B

| | |  Our Reporting to you |
|--|---|--|
| Required communications |  What is reported? |  When and where |
| Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit. | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise | Audit results report (March 2022) |
| Auditors report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key audit matters that we will include in our auditor's report ▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report | Audit results report (March 2022) |

Appendix C

Outstanding matters

The following items relating to the completion of our audit procedures are outstanding at the date of the release of this report:

| Item  | Actions to resolve  | Responsibility  |
|--|---|--|
| Going concern disclosures | Final review processes and challenge of the Authority's going concern assessment and cash flow projections. | EY and Management |
| Review of estimates | Final review processes and challenge of the Authority's higher risk estimates relating to PPE and Pensions liability. | EY |
| Property, plant & equipment valuations | Work remains in progress, in relation to PPE valuations sample testing, review of the PPE existence support, review of gains and losses on revaluation, and impact on the related reserves. | EY |
| Value for Money | VfM conclusion remains in progress. We are yet to complete the VfM commentary which will be included in the Annual Audit Report. | EY |
| Reserves | EY to complete testing on the MiRS and related disclosure notes. | EY |
| Unrecorded liabilities (in relation to payables and provisions) | Extended unrecorded liabilities sample testing up to the date of signing, EY to complete testing on payables samples. | EY |
| Other Disclosures | EFA, Officer remuneration, Exit packages, | EY |
| Final review of completed audit procedures | EY to complete - this comprises our remaining quality review procedures of the audit working papers by the Engagement Manager and Partner-in-Charge. | EY |
| Receipt and review of the final version of the financial statements | Authority to prepare final version of accounts and EY to check | EY and Management |
| Update of subsequent events procedures to the date of our opinion | EY to complete at point of signing | EY |
| Receipt and review of the letter of representation | The Authority to prepare letter on headed paper and EY to review | EY and management |

In addition to the above, a number of pieces of evidence have recently been provided and are in the process of being reviewed by the audit team. These may lead to a small number of follow-up queries.

Until all our audit procedures are complete, we cannot confirm the final form of our audit opinion as new issues may emerge or we may not agree on final detailed disclosures in the Annual Report. At this point no issues have emerged that would cause us to modify our opinion. A draft of the current opinion is included in section 3.

Management representation letter - DRAFT

Management Rep Letter

Ernst & Young
400 Capability Green
Luton,
Bedfordshire,
LU1 3LU,
United Kingdom

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (“the Authority”) for the year ended 31 March 2021. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the Authority financial statements give a true and fair view of the Authority financial position of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority as of 31 March 2021 and of its financial performance (or operations) and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with, for the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of the Authority’s financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing, which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with, for the Authority the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Authority, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the Authority financial statements. We believe the Authority financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Authority in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the Authority financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the Authority financial statements are appropriately described in the Authority financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Authority, we believe that the Authority have a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 for the the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 for the Authority that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.
5. We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit

Management representation letter

Management Representation Letter DRAFT

and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the Authority's financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences identified and brought to our attention by the auditor because *[specify reasons for not correcting misstatement]*.

B. Non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for determining that the Authority's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible for identifying and addressing any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the Authority financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the Authority (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters involving financial statements;
 - ▶ related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the Authority's financial statements;
 - ▶ related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Authority's activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;
 - ▶ involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or

- ▶ in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
 - ▶ Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - ▶ Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
 - ▶ Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and all material transactions, events and conditions are reflected in the Authority financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Authority committees, including the Fire & Rescue Authority and Audit & Standards Committee (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: *[list date]*
4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Authority's related parties and all related party relationships

Management representation letter

Management Representation Letter

and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the year ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the year end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the Authority financial statements.

5. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

6. We have disclosed to you, and the Authority has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the Authority financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

7. From the date of our last management representation letter of 21 December 2020 through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate.

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the Authority financial statements.

2. We have no possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.

3. We have considered all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and guarantees given to third parties but have none to disclose.

E. Going Concern

1. Note 1 on page 16 of the Authority's financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

F. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to year end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the Authority financial statements or notes thereto.

H. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the Governance Statement and Narrative Report for the year 2020/21.

2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

Management representation letter

Management Representation Letter

I. Ownership of Assets

1. Except for assets recognised as right-of-use assets in accordance with IFRS 16 Leases, the Authority has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheets, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Authority's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral. All assets to which the Authority has satisfactory title appear in the balance sheet.
2. All agreements and options to buy back assets previously sold have been properly recorded and adequately disclosed in the Authority financial statements.
3. We have no plans to abandon lines of product or other plans or intentions that will result in any excess or obsolete inventory, and no inventory is stated at an amount in excess of net realisable value.
4. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts.

J. Reserves

1. We have properly recorded or disclosed in the Authority financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

K. Contingent Liabilities

1. We are unaware of any violations or possible violations of laws or regulations the effects of which should be considered for disclosure in the Authority financial statements or as the basis of recording a contingent loss (other than those disclosed or accrued in the Authority financial statements).

2. We are unaware of any known or probable instances of non-compliance with the requirements of regulatory or governmental authorities, including their financial reporting requirements, and there have been no communications from regulatory agencies or government representatives concerning investigations or allegations of non-compliance, except as follows:

(i) Matters of routine, normal, recurring nature (e.g., examinations by bank and insurance examiners, examinations by taxing authorities), none of which involves any allegations of noncompliance with laws or regulations that should be considered for disclosure in the Authority financial statements or as a basis for recording a loss contingency.

L. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the valuation of land, buildings and IAS19 pension liabilities, and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the Authority financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

M Estimates

Valuation of Land and Buildings Estimate

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the valuation of land and buildings estimate have taken into account all relevant information and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic of which we are aware.

Management representation letter

Management Representation Letter

2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the valuation of land and buildings estimate.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the valuation of Land and buildings estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to provide an accurate valuation of the Authority's land and buildings on behalf of the Authority.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the Authority's financial statements with respect to the accounting estimates, including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are complete and are reasonable in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the valuation of land and buildings.

IAS 19 Pensions Liability Estimate

6. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the IAS 19 pensions liability estimate have taken into account all relevant information and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic of which we are aware.
7. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the IAS 19 Pensions Liability estimate.
8. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the IAS 19 pensions liability estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to provide an accurate valuation of the Authority's pensions liability.
9. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimates, including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are complete and are reasonable in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

10. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the IAS 19 pensions liability.

N. Retirement benefits

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Yours faithfully,

(Chief Finance Officer)

(Chief Fire Officer)


(Chair of the Audit & Standards Committee)

Appendix E

Implementation of IFRS 16 Leases

In previous reports to the Audit Committee we have highlighted the issue of new accounting standards and regulatory developments. IFRS 16 introduces a number of significant changes which go beyond accounting technicalities. For example, the changes have the potential to impact on procurement processes as more information becomes available on the real cost of leases. The key accounting impact is that assets and liabilities in relation to significant lease arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases will need to be recognised on the balance sheet. IFRS 16 requires all substantial leases to be accounted for using the acquisition approach, recognising the rights acquired to use an asset.

IFRS 16 does not come into effect for the Authority until 1 April 2022. However, officers should be acting now to assess Authority's leasing positions and secure the required information to ensure The Authority will be fully compliance with the 2022/23 Code. The following table summarises some key areas officers should be progressing.

| IFRS 16 theme | Summary of key measures  |
|--|---|
| Data collection | Management should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Put in place a robust process to identify all arrangements that convey the right to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time. The adequacy of this process should be discussed with auditors. ▶ Classify all such leases into low value; short-term; peppercorn; portfolio and individual leases ▶ Identify, collect, log and check all significant data points that affect lease accounting including: the term of the lease; reasonably certain judgements on extension or termination; dates of rent reviews; variable payments; grandfathered decisions; non-lease components; and discount rate to be applied. |
| Policy Choices | The Authority needs to agree on certain policy choices. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether to adopt a portfolio approach ▶ What low value threshold to set and agree with auditors ▶ Which asset classes, if any, are management adopting the practical expedient in relation to non-lease components ▶ What is managements policy in relation to discount rates to be used? |
| Code adaptations for the public sector | Finance teams should understand the Code adaptations for the public sector. The Code contains general adaptations, (e.g. the definition of a lease); transitional interpretations (e.g. no restatement of prior periods) and adaptations that apply post transition (e.g. use of short-term lease exemption). |
| Transitional accounting arrangements | Finance teams should understand the accounting required on first implementation of IFRS 16. The main impact is on former operating leases where the authority is lessee. However, there can be implications for some finance leases where the Authority is lessee; and potentially for sub-leases, where the Authority is a lessor, that were operating leases under the old standard. |
| Ongoing accounting arrangements | Finance teams need to develop models to be able to properly account for initial recognition and subsequent measurement of right of use assets and associated liabilities. This is more complex than the previous standard due to more regular remeasurements and possible modifications after certain trigger events. |
| Remeasurements and modifications | Finance teams need to familiarise themselves with when the 'remeasurement' or 'modification' of a lease is required and what to do under each circumstance. A modification can lead to an additional lease being recognised. It is also important to know when remeasurements require a new discount rate is to be applied to the lease. |

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