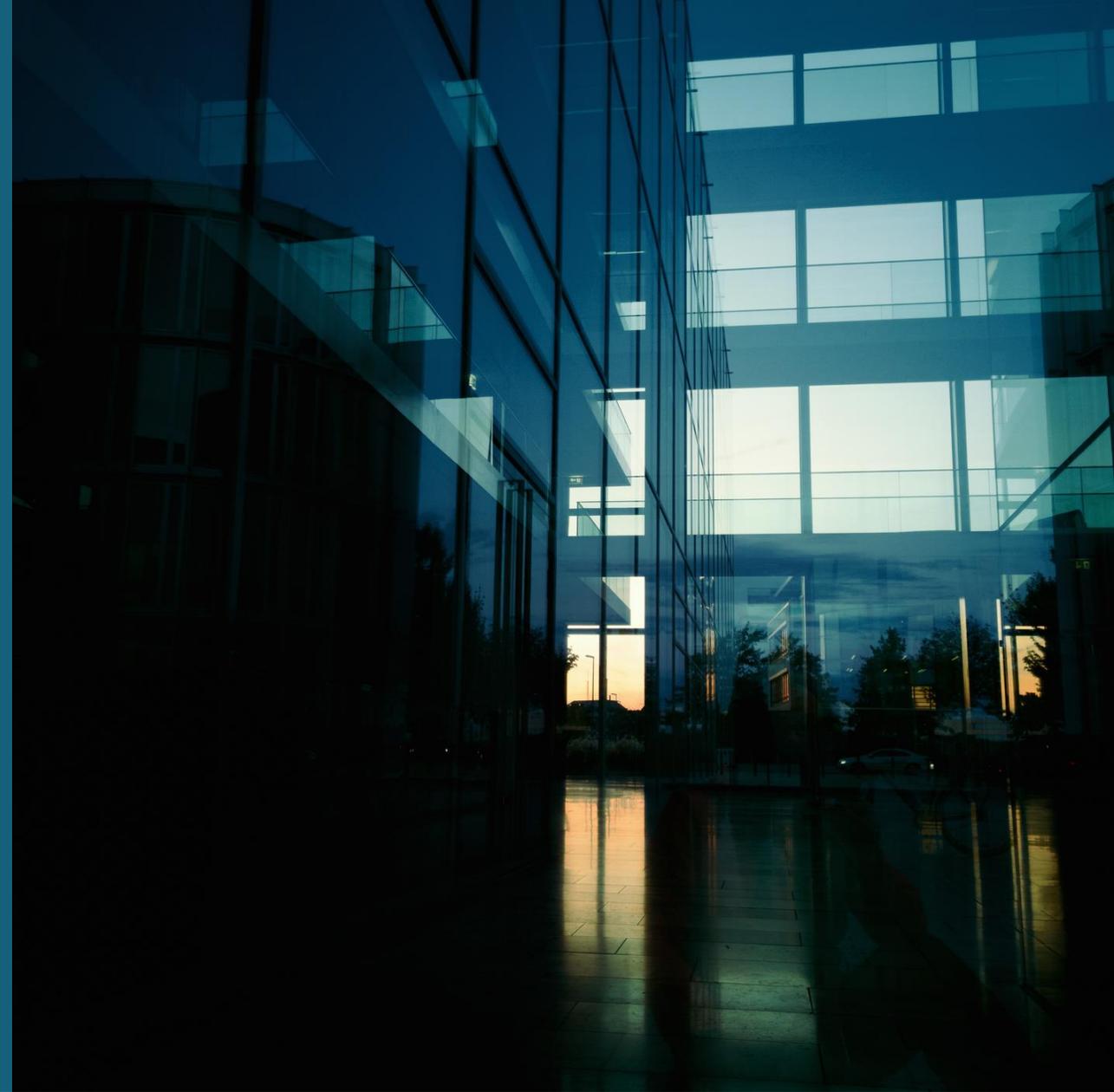


Audit Completion Report

Harborough District Council - Year ended
31 March 2021

April 2022



Contents

- 01** Executive summary
- 02** Status of the audit
- 03** Audit approach
- 04** Significant findings
- 05** Internal control recommendations
- 06** Summary of misstatements
- 07** Value for Money

Appendix A: Draft management representation letter

Appendix B: Draft audit report

Appendix C: Independence

Appendix D: Other communications

Our reports are prepared in the context of the 'Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' and the 'Appointing Person Terms of Appointment' issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors and addressed to the Council are prepared for the sole use of the Council and we take no responsibility to any member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party. Mazars LLP is the UK firm of Mazars, an international advisory and accountancy group. Mazars LLP is registered by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.



Audit and Standards Committee

Harborough District Council
The Symington Building
Adam & Eve St
Market Harborough
LE16 7AG

April 2022

Dear Committee Members

Audit Completion Report – Year ended 31 March 2021

We are pleased to present our Audit Completion Report for the year ended 31 March 2021. The purpose of this document is to summarise our audit conclusions.

The scope of our work, including identified significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement, was outlined in our Audit Strategy Memorandum. We have reviewed our Audit Strategy Memorandum and our audit approach concluded that the original significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement remain appropriate.

We would like to express our thanks for the assistance of your team during our audit.

If you would like to discuss any matters in more detail, then please do not hesitate to contact me at mark.surridge@mazars.co.uk.

Yours faithfully

Mark Surridge

Mazars LLP

Mazars LLP
First Floor,
Two Chamberlain Square,
Birmingham,
B3 3AX

01

Section 01:

Executive summary

1. Executive summary

Principal conclusions and significant findings

The detailed scope of our work as your appointed auditor for 2020/21 is set out in the National Audit Office's (NAO) Code of Audit Practice. Our responsibilities and powers are derived from the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as outlined in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, our audit has been conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and means we focus on audit risks that we have assessed as resulting in a higher risk of material misstatement.

In section 4 of this report, we have set out our conclusions and significant findings from our audit. This section includes our conclusions on the audit risks and areas of management judgement in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, which include:

- Management override of controls;
- Net defined benefit liability valuation;
- Valuation of property, plant and equipment; and
- COVID-19 grants recognition.

Section 5 sets out internal control recommendations and section 6 sets out audit misstatements.

Section 7 outlines our work on the Council's arrangements to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Status and audit opinion

We have substantially completed our audit in respect of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

At the time of preparing this report, significant matters remaining outstanding as outlined in section 2. We will provide an update to you in relation to the significant matters outstanding through issuance of a follow up letter.

Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of the remaining audit work, we have the following conclusions:



Audit opinion

We anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion, without modification, on the financial statements. Our proposed audit opinion is included in the draft auditor's report in Appendix B.



Value for Money

We anticipate having one matter to report regarding the arrangements that the Council has in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Further detail on our Value for Money work is provided in section 7 of this report.



Whole of Government Accounts (WGA)

We have not yet received group instructions from the National Audit Office in respect of our work on the Council's WGA submission. We are unable to commence our work in this area until such instructions have been received, which is due in June/July 2022.



Wider powers

The 2014 Act requires us to give an elector, or any representative of the elector, the opportunity to question us about the accounting records of the Council and to consider any objection made to the accounts.

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control recommendations

Summary of misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

02

Section 02:

Status of the audit

2. Status of the audit

Our work is substantially complete and there are currently no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion, subject to the outstanding matters detailed below.

Audit area	Status	Description of the outstanding matters
Whole of government accounts	●	We are awaiting further guidance from central government and the National Audit Office in relation to the 2020/21 process, therefore, this work is yet to start.
Completion and quality control procedures	●	Our work is subject to further quality control review procedures by the Engagement Lead and Audit Manager. In addition, some procedures, such as the review for post balance sheet events, the annual governance statement, going concern and management representations are ongoing, and will remain as such, through to the date of issuing the auditor's report.

-  Likely to result in material adjustment or significant change to disclosures within the financial statements.
-  Potential to result in material adjustment or significant change to disclosures within the financial statements.
-  Not considered likely to result in material adjustment or change to disclosures within the financial statements.



03

Section 03:

Audit approach

3. Audit approach

Changes to our audit approach

We provided details of our intended audit approach in our Audit Strategy Memorandum June 2021. We have not made any changes to our audit approach since we presented our Audit Strategy Memorandum.

Materiality

Our provisional materiality at the planning stage of the audit was set at £908k using a benchmark of 2% of gross operating expenditure (Group is £908k, using same benchmarks).

Our final assessment of materiality, based on the final financial statements and qualitative factors is £859k using the same benchmark (Group is £861k, using same benchmarks).

Specific materiality thresholds also used are:

Threshold	£'000s
Officer remuneration (Note 32)	5*

*Bandings within the note are £5k, so therefore a one band move is considered material

Reliance on internal audit

No reliance has been placed on internal audit for the 2020/21 financial audit. Enquiries have been undertaken to help aid the overarching control environment at the Council.

Use of experts

Information below was disclosed within our Audit Strategy Memorandum. No changes to our audit approach have been identified.

Item of account	Management's expert	Our expert
Property Plant and Equipment	External valuer, Wilks, Head and Eve	None. Third party evidence provided via the NAO to support our challenge of valuation assumptions.
Pensions	Hymans Robertson LLP Actuary for Leicestershire Pension Fund	PWC (Consulting actuary appointed by the NAO)
Financial Instrument disclosures	Link Asset Services Treasury management advisors	None.

Service organisations

International Auditing Standards (UK) (ISAs) define service organisations as third-party organisations that provide services to the Council that are part of its information systems relevant to financial reporting. We are required to obtain an understanding of the services provided by service organisations as well as evaluating the design and implementation of controls over those services. We have re-visited our assessment and concluded that Leicestershire Pension Fund does not meet the definition of a service organisation. This does not have a significant impact on our audit approach.



04

Section 04: **Significant findings**

4. Significant findings

In this section we outline the significant findings from our audit. These findings include:

- our audit conclusions regarding other significant risks and key areas of management judgement outlined in the Audit Strategy Memorandum and Progress Report;
- our comments in respect of the accounting policies and disclosures that you have adopted in the financial statements. On page 15 we have concluded whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the financial reporting framework and commented on any significant accounting policy changes that have been made during the year;
- any further significant matters discussed with management; and
- any significant difficulties we experienced during the audit.

Significant risks

Management override of controls	Description of the risk <p>This is a mandatory significant risk on all audits due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur.</p> <p>Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits.</p>
	How we addressed this risk <p>We addressed this risk through performing audit work over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accounting estimates impacting amounts included in the financial statements;• Consideration of identified significant transactions outside the normal course of business; and• Journals recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in preparation of the financial statements.
	Audit observations <p>Our considerations of estimates is set out on page 18. We did not identify any significant transactions outside the normal course of business. We applied a combination of audit judgement and computer aided audit tools to analyse and perform tests over journal entries.</p>
	Audit conclusion <p>No issues have been identified that need to be brought to the attention of Members.</p>



4. Significant findings

Defined benefit liability valuation	Description of the risk <p>The defined benefit liability relating to the Local Government pension scheme represents a significant balance on the Council's balance sheet. The Council uses an actuary to provide an annual valuation of these liabilities in line with the requirements of IAS 19 Employee Benefits. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with this valuation, we have determined there is a significant risk in this area.</p> <p>Relevant Account Balances (taken from the 2020/21 draft financial statements provided for audit):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note 38 – Net Pension liability - £37.6m
	How we addressed this risk <p>We addressed this risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• critically assessing the competency, objectivity and independence of the Leicestershire Pension Fund Actuary;• liaising with the auditors of the Leicestershire Pension Fund to understand the processes and controls in place to ensure data provided to the Actuary by the Pension Fund for the purposes of the IAS19 valuation is complete and accurate.• reviewing the appropriateness of the Pension Asset and Liability valuation methodologies applied by the actuaries, and the key assumptions included within the valuation. This included comparing them to expected ranges, utilising information by our consulting actuary; and• agreeing the data in the IAS 19 valuation report provided by the actuaries for accounting purposes to the pension accounting entries and disclosures in the Council's financial statements.
	Audit findings <p>Our work obtained the assurances we required with the Council obtaining an updated IAS19 valuation report from its actuary resulting in an adjustment to the financial statements. Following adjustment, we are satisfied that the audit risk has been mitigated and there are no other matters to report.</p>



4. Significant findings

Valuation of land & buildings

Description of the risk

Property related assets are a significant balance on the council's balance sheet. The valuation of these properties is complex and is subject to a number of management assumptions and judgements. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with such valuations, we have determined there is a significant risk in this area. This risk covers (figures have been taken from the draft 2020/21 financial statements):

- Other Land & Buildings (£46.4m - Note 14)
- Assets held for sale (£1.9m – Note 16)

Note: Investment properties are immaterial per the balance sheet.

How we addressed this risk

We addressed this risk by:

- critically assessing the Council's valuers scope of work, qualifications, objectivity and independence to carry out the required programme of revaluations;
- considering whether the overall revaluation methodologies used by the Council's valuers are in line with industry practice, the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Council's accounting policies;
- testing a sample of valuations;
- assessing whether valuation movements are in line with market expectations by using third party information to provide information on regional valuation trends; and
- assessing the approach that the Council adopts to ensure that assets are not subject to revaluation in 2020/21 are materially correct, including considering the robustness of that approach in light of the valuation information reported by the Council's valuers.

Audit findings

The Council reclassified £1.9m of assets from Assets Under Construction to Assets Held for Sale. The Code requires assets held for sale to be measured at the lower of carrying amount and fair value less costs to sell. The assets have been transferred at carrying value and were not adjusted to reflect the potential fair value, leading to an overstatement of £108k, which is recorded as an unadjusted misstatement.

The Council also included a 'material valuation uncertainty clause' in Note 4 of the financial statements to reflect the statement made by its valuer. The assets covered by this clause are immaterial and therefore we have concluded it not necessary to include an 'emphasis of matters' paragraph in our audit report.

No other significant issues arose from the work performed.

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of
misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

4. Significant findings

COVID-19 grants recognition	<p>Description of the risk</p> <p>Throughout 2020/21, the Government has provided substantial sums of financial support to local authorities and for local authorities to administer and distribute to businesses and people in the local area.</p> <p>Management have had to exercise a level of judgement in relation to these specific COVID-19 grants, covering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the extent to which the Council is acting as an agent or principal; and• whether conditions associated with the grants have been met at the reporting date. <p>This creates a financial reporting risk as to whether income is appropriately recognised in the financial statements.</p>
	<p>How we addressed this risk</p> <p>We addressed this risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reviewed the Council's approach to determine whether grants are or are not ringfenced for specified areas of expenditure; and• tested a sample of grant income recorded in the ledger to grant allocations/ notifications; and• challenged the Council's judgements as to whether it is acting as agent or principal in respect of the administration of individual grant funding streams, and the accounting treatment associated with these judgements; and• reviewed a sample of grants to ensure conditions to recognise the income in 2020/21 have been met or not. <p>Audit findings</p> <p>Our procedures have obtained the assurances we sought and there are no significant matters we wish to bring to Members' attention.</p>



4. Significant findings

Qualitative aspects of the Council's accounting practices

We have reviewed the Council's accounting policies and disclosures and concluded they comply with the 2020/21 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, appropriately tailored to the Council's circumstances.

Draft accounts were received from the Council and were of a good quality and were supported by working papers of a good standard.

Significant matters discussed with management

Significant matters discussed with management during the year include the on-going impact of COVID-19 on the Council's business, including any potential impact on risks of material misstatement.

This included the disclosures required regarding the key sources of estimation uncertainty that management has made in preparing the Statement of Accounts.

Significant difficulties during the audit

The audit was again carried out remotely, but there were no significant difficulties in carrying out our normal audit procedures and obtaining the audit evidence required to complete the audit.

Throughout the audit, we have had the full co-operation of management and the finance team through the provision of good quality working papers and responsiveness to our queries.

We continue to work with management to complete any remaining audit work and resolve audit queries and are grateful for the co-operation and support provided.

Audit fees

As set out in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, we identified the need for a variation to the published scale fee to take account of several matters. Our proposal is set out at Appendix E and takes into account:

- Additional testing as a result of changes arising from increased audit quality expectations involving the work on the valuation of land and buildings and on the local government pension scheme. This is consistent with the prior year.
- Additional testing as a result of the implementation of new auditing standards: ISA 220 (Revised): Quality control of an audit of financial statements; ISA 540 (Revised): Auditing accounting estimates and related disclosures; and ISA570 (Revised) Going Concern;
- Additional testing as a result of new significant audit risk relating to COVID-19 grants; and
- Additional work as a result of the new Code of Audit Practice and VFM reporting.

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of
misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

4. Significant findings

Wider responsibilities

Our powers and responsibilities under the 2014 Act are broad and include the ability to:

- issue a report in the public interest;
- make statutory recommendations that must be considered and responded to publicly;
- apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law; and
- issue an advisory notice under schedule 8 of the 2014 Act.

We have not exercised any of these powers as part of our 2020/21 audit.

The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account. No such objections have been raised

Possible delay in the audit certificate

The issue of the Audit Certificate confirms that we have discharged all of our audit responsibilities and that the audit is formally 'closed'. The Audit Certificate would normally be published in our Auditor's Report on the Statement of Accounts. We expect to issue the audit report but delay the issue of the Audit Certificate until the following procedures are complete:

- Whole of Government Accounts - The NAO has not yet issued its Group Instructions for local authority audits and this is not expected to arrive until June/July 2021.

We will update Audit and Standards Committee when more information is known but at this stage the draft Auditor's Report at Appendix B assumes that we are not able to issue the Audit Certificate at this stage.



05

Section 05:

Internal control recommendations

5. Internal control recommendations

The purpose of our audit was to express an opinion on the financial statements. As part of our audit, we have considered the internal controls in place relevant to the preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures to allow us to express an opinion on the financial statements but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control or to identify any significant deficiencies in their design or operation.

The matters reported are limited to those deficiencies and other control recommendations that we have identified during our normal audit procedures and that we consider to be of sufficient importance to merit being reported. If we had performed more extensive procedures on internal control, we might have identified more deficiencies to be reported or concluded that some of the reported deficiencies need not in fact have been reported. Our comments should not be regarded as a comprehensive record of all deficiencies that may exist or improvements that could be made.

Our findings and recommendations are set out below. We have assigned priority rankings to each of them to reflect the importance that we consider each poses to your organisation and, hence, our recommendation in terms of the urgency of required action. In summary, the matters arising fall into the following categories:

Priority ranking	Description	Number of issues
1 (high)	In our view, there is potential for financial loss, damage to reputation or loss of information. This may have implications for the achievement of business strategic objectives. The recommendation should be taken into consideration by management immediately.	0
2 (medium)	In our view, there is a need to strengthen internal control or enhance business efficiency. The recommendations should be actioned in the near future.	0
3 (low)	In our view, internal control should be strengthened in these additional areas when practicable.	0



06

Section 06:

Summary of misstatements

6. Summary of misstatements

This section outlines the misstatements identified during the course of the audit, above the trivial threshold for adjustment of £26k.

Unadjusted misstatements

For the unadjusted item below, we have not calculated the equivalent value for 2019/20, which may off-set the figure for the current year.

		Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Balance Sheet	
		Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)	Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)
1	Dr: CIES - Cost of services (subsequently reversed via unusable reserves)	108			
	Cr: Assets held for sale				(108)
The Council transferred £1.9m of assets from "Assets under construction" to "Assets held for sale", but did not adjust the carrying value in line with the Code leading to an overstatement in the balance sheet.					
Total Impact		108			(108)



6. Summary of misstatements

Adjusted misstatements

		Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Balance Sheet	
		Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)	Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)
1	Dr: Creditors			194	
	Cr: Debtors				(194)
As part of our testing we identified some ledger balances that should be reclassified between debtors and creditors					
2	Dr: Net Pension Liability			1,171	
	Cr: Pension Reserve				(1,171)
Being the balance sheet impact to account for the updated IAS19 pension fund valuation.					
Total Impact				1,365	(1,365)

A small number of disclosure amendments have been made in 2020/21 financial statements; none are individually significant.



07

Section 07: **Value for Money**

7. Value for Money

Approach to Value for Money

We are required to consider whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out and sets out the reporting criteria that we are required to consider. The reporting criteria are:

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

At the planning stage of the audit, we undertake work to understand the arrangements that the Council has in place under each of the reporting criteria and we identify risks of significant weaknesses in those arrangements. Although we describe this work as planning work, we keep our understanding of arrangements under review and update our risk assessment throughout the audit to reflect emerging issues that may suggest significant weaknesses in arrangements exist.

Our assessment of what constitutes a significant weakness is a matter of professional judgement, based on our evaluation of the subject matter in question, including adequacy of the Trust's responses. The National Audit Office's guidance states that a weakness may though be said to be significant if it:

- Exposes (or could reasonably be expected to expose) the body to significant financial loss or risk;
- Leads to (or could reasonably be expected to lead to) significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service or on the body's reputation;
- Leads to (or could reasonably be expected to lead to) unlawful actions; or
- Involves a failure to take action to address a previously identified significant weakness, such as failure to implement or achieve planned progress on action/improvement plans.

Our work includes performing a detailed risk assessment, drawing from a variety of sources, including, but not

limited to:

- Meeting with management;
- Considering the work of the Audit and Standards Committee;
- Reviewing supporting guidance from the National Audit Office, including indicators of significant weaknesses;
- Considering our understanding of sector developments and any local issues;
- Reading and reviewing Committee reports;
- Reviewing the Annual Governance Statement;
- Considering the outcomes from the work of internal audit;
- Reading risk registers and risk management reporting; and
- Considering the work of regulators and inspectorates.

Where our risk-based procedures identify actual significant weaknesses in arrangements we are required to report these and make recommendations for improvement. Where such significant weaknesses are identified, we report these in the audit report.

The primary output of our work on the Council's arrangements is the commentary on those arrangements that forms part of the Auditor's Annual Report.

Status of our work

Our draft audit report at Appendix B outlines that we have completed our work in relation to the Council's arrangements. As noted above, our commentary on the Council's arrangements will be provided in the Auditor's Annual Report.



7. Value for Money

Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements

Below, we have outlined the risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements that was reported to Audit and Standards Committee in March 2022 and the work undertaken to respond to this risk.

Risk of significant weakness in arrangements	Work undertaken	Results	Recommendation(s)
<p>Property acquisitions</p> <p>The Council commissioned a review from Internal Audit into historical property acquisitions between 2016 and 2019. The report was finalised in November 2021, with recommendations covering themes of valuation, governance and appraisal.</p> <p>We have read the report and determined that a risk of significant weakness in the Council’s arrangements exists in relation to governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the body ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency; and • how the body monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of officer or member behaviour. 	<p>Our work in relation to this matter will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed review the report and its project scope • discussing the findings with Internal Audit, Officers and, if relevant, Members • considering any implications on the financial statements and annual governance statement for 2020/21. 	<p>Property acquisitions</p> <p>In 2020 the Council requested a review of historical delivery of asset related major projects covering the period 2015 to 2019. The independent review identified significant weaknesses, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council’s Project Management Framework was ineffective, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that it is the responsibility of the “project author” to ensure that appropriate financial modelling is included within respective business cases, the project management framework does not set out the requirement to involve suitably qualified finance officers to validate or challenge the modelling. • Insufficient oversight of the Project Board over the major asset acquisitions and disposals, including monitoring project governance. 2. That the Council’s Property Acquisition and Disposal Policy was ineffective, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No explicit requirement for an independent valuation for each and every property related acquisition or disposal or that such valuation is taken to RICS’s Red Book standard. • No explicit requirement for all relevant land/property searches to be conducted, and all findings noted and acted upon, for all acquisition proposals which should be verified via the management/project governance structure to ensure assurances are informed and reliable. <p>As a result, there is a significant weakness in the Council’s arrangements in relation to how the body ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency that exposes it to a risk of significant financial loss and can be reasonably expected to lead to a significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service and the Council’s reputation.</p>	<p>The Council should ensure that all recommendations arising from the independent review of property acquisitions are implemented, including ensuring that the Property Acquisition and Disposal Policy and Project Management Framework are updated, and that the Audit and Standards Committee are assured on that actions have been taken.</p>



Appendices

A: Draft management representation letter

B: Draft audit report

C: Independence

D: Other communications

Appendix A: Draft management representation letter

Mazars LLP
First floor,
Two Chamberlain Square,
Birmingham,
B3 3AX

Dear Sirs

Harborough District Council - audit for year ended 31 March 2021

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Harborough District Council (the Council) for the year ended 31 March 2021 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 (the Code) and applicable law.

I confirm that the following representations are made on the basis of enquiries of management and staff with relevant knowledge and experience (and, where appropriate, inspection of supporting documentation) sufficient to satisfy ourselves that I can properly make each of the following representations to you.

My responsibility for the financial statements and accounting information

I believe that I have fulfilled my responsibilities for the true and fair presentation and preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Code and applicable law.

My responsibility to provide and disclose relevant information

I 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 material;

- Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and

Unrestricted access to individuals within the Council you determined it was necessary to contact in order to obtain audit evidence.

I confirm as Chief Financial Officer that I have taken all the necessary steps to make me aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that you, as auditors, are aware of this information.

As far as I am aware there is no relevant audit information of which you, as auditors, are unaware.

Accounting records

I confirm that all transactions that have a material effect on the financial statements have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements. All other records and related information, including minutes of all Council and committee meetings, have been made available to you.

Accounting policies

I confirm that I have reviewed the accounting policies applied during the year in accordance with the Code and International Accounting Standard 8 and consider these policies to faithfully represent the effects of transactions, other events or conditions on the Council's financial position, financial performance and cash flows.

Accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value

I confirm that any significant assumptions used by the Council in making accounting estimates, including those measured at current or fair value, are reasonable.

I confirm that I am satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme liabilities for IAS19 disclosures are consistent with my knowledge. I confirm that all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for. I confirm that all significant retirement benefits have been identified and properly accounted for (including any arrangements that are statutory, contractual or implicit in the employer's actions, that arise in the UK or overseas, that are funded or unfunded).

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of
misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft management representation letter

Contingencies

There are no material contingent losses including pending or potential litigation that should be accrued where:

- information presently available indicates that it is probable that an asset has been impaired or a liability had been incurred at the balance sheet date; and
- the amount of the loss can be reasonably estimated.

There are no material contingent losses that should be disclosed where, although either or both the conditions specified above are not met, there is a reasonable possibility that a loss, or a loss greater than that accrued, may have been incurred at the balance sheet date.

There are no contingent gains which should be disclosed.

All material matters, including unasserted claims, that may result in litigation against the Council have been brought to your attention. All known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements have been disclosed to you and accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the Code and applicable law.

Laws and regulations

I confirm that I have disclosed to you all those events of which I am aware which involve known or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, together with the actual or contingent consequences which may arise therefrom.

The Council has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that would have a material effect on the accounts in the event of non-compliance.

Fraud and error

I acknowledge my responsibility as Chief Financial Officer for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

I have disclosed to you:

- All the results of my assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud;
- All knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the Council involving:
 - management and those charged with governance;
 - employees who have significant roles in internal control; and

others where fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.

I have disclosed to you all information in relation to any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the Council's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

Related party transactions

I confirm that all related party relationships, transactions and balances, have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed to you in accordance with the requirements of the Code and applicable law.

I have disclosed the identity of the Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which I am aware.

Impairment review

To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing to indicate that there is a permanent reduction in the recoverable amount of the property, plant and equipment and intangible assets below their carrying value at the balance sheet date. I have considered the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's Investment Properties. An impairment review is therefore not considered necessary.

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of
misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft management representation letter

Charges on assets

All the Council's assets are free from any charges exercisable by third parties except as disclosed within the financial statements.

Future commitments

I am not aware of any plans, intentions or commitments that may materially affect the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities or give rise to additional liabilities.

Subsequent events

I confirm all events subsequent to the date of the financial statements, and for which the Code and applicable law require adjustment or disclosure, have been adjusted or disclosed.

Should further material events occur after the date of this letter which may necessitate revision of the figures included in the financial statements or inclusion of a note thereto, I will advise you accordingly.

Covid-19

We confirm that we have carried out an assessment of the on-going impact of the Covid-19 Virus pandemic on the Council, including the impact of mitigation measures and uncertainties, and that the disclosure in the Statement of Accounts fairly reflects that assessment.

Brexit

We confirm that we have carried out an assessment of the potential impact of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, including the potential outcomes at the end of the Implementation Period, and that the disclosure in the Statement of Accounts fairly reflects that assessment.

Going concern

To the best of my knowledge there is nothing to indicate that the Council will not continue as a going concern in the foreseeable future. The period to which I have paid particular attention in assessing the appropriateness of the

going concern basis is not less than twelve months from the date of approval of the accounts.

I have updated our going concern assessment in light of the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. I continue to believe that the Council's financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis and have not identified any material uncertainties related to going concern on the grounds that current and future sources of funding or support will be more than adequate for the Council's needs. We believe that no further disclosures relating to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern need to be made in the financial statements.

Annual Governance Statement

I am satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) fairly reflects the Council's risk assurance and governance framework and I confirm that I am not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS.

Narrative report

The disclosures within the Narrative Report fairly reflect my understanding of the Council's financial and operating performance over the period covered by the financial statements.

Unadjusted misstatements

I confirm that the effects of the uncorrected misstatements set out at Appendix A are immaterial, both individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole.

Yours faithfully

Chief Financial Officer



Appendix A: Draft management representation letter

Appendix A

		Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Balance Sheet	
		Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)	Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)
	Dr: CIES - Cost of services (subsequently reversed via CAA)	108			
1	Cr: Debtors				(108)
The Council transferred £1.9m of assets from "Assets under construction" to "Assets held for sale", but did not adjust the carrying value in line with the Code leading to an overstatement in the balance sheet.					
Total Impact		108			(108)



Appendix B: Draft audit report (subject to consultation)

Independent auditor's report to the members of Harborough District Council

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on the financial statements

We have audited the financial statements of Harborough District Council ('the Council') and its subsidiary ('the Group') for the year ended 31 March 2021, which comprise the Council and Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement(s), the Council and Group Movement in Reserves Statement(s), the Council and Group Balance Sheet(s), the Council and Group Cash Flow Statement(s), and the Collection Fund and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. 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 the Council and the Group as at 31st March 2021 and of the Council's and the Group's expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared 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 section of our report. We are independent of the Council and Group 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 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 Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial 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 Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Annual Governance Statement information included in the Annual Financial Report 2020/21 including the Statement of Accounts, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, 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 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 or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement for Accounts, the Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, 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. The Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) is also responsible for such internal control as the Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) is required to comply with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 and prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis, on the assumption that the functions of the Council will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) is responsible for assessing each year whether or not it is appropriate for the Council and Group to prepare its accounts on the going concern basis and disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern.

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of
misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

Appendix B: Draft audit report (subject to consultation)

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 material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Based on our understanding of the Council, we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to the Local Government Act 2003 (and associated regulations made under section 21), the Local Government Finance Acts of 1988, 1992 and 2012, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and we considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements.

We evaluated the Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls) and determined that the principal risks were related to posting manual journal entries to manipulate financial performance, management bias through judgements and assumptions in significant accounting estimates and significant one-off or unusual transactions.

Our audit procedures were designed to respond to those identified risks, including non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) and fraud that are material to the financial statements. Our audit procedures included but were not limited to:

- discussing with management and the Audit and Standards Committee the policies and procedures regarding compliance with laws and regulations;
- communicating identified laws and regulations throughout our engagement team and remaining alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout our audit; and
- considering the risk of acts by the Council and the Group which were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

Our audit procedures in relation to fraud included but were not limited to:

- making enquiries of management and the Audit and Standards Committee on whether they had knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- gaining an understanding of the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud;
- discussing amongst the engagement team the risks of fraud; and

- addressing the risks of fraud through management override of controls by performing journal entry testing.

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above and the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of irregularities including fraud rests with management and the Audit and Standards Committee. As with any audit, there remained a risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations or the override of internal controls.

We are also required to conclude on whether the Director: Finance and Assets (Responsible Financial Officer) use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate. We performed our work in accordance with Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statement and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom, and Supplementary Guidance Note 01, issued by the National Audit Office in April 2021.

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

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control recommendations

Summary of misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

Appendix B: Draft audit report (subject to consultation)

Report on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Matter on which we are required to report by exception

We are required to report to you if, in our view, we are not satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2021, we have identified the following significant weakness(es) in the Council's arrangements for the year ended 31 March 2021:

Significant weakness in arrangements	Recommendation(s)
<p><i>Property acquisitions</i></p> <p>In 2020 the Council requested a review of historical delivery of asset related major projects covering the period 2015 to 2019. The independent review identified significant weaknesses, including insufficient diligence in the preparation of business cases and approval of certain major asset related projects, which included the following:</p> <p>That the Council's Project Management Framework was ineffective, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising that it is the responsibility of the "project author" to ensure that appropriate financial modelling is included within respective business cases, the project management framework does not set out the requirement to involve suitably qualified finance officers to validate or challenge the modelling. Insufficient oversight of the Project Board over the major asset acquisitions and disposals, including monitoring project governance. <p>That the Council's Property Acquisition and Disposal Policy was ineffective, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No explicit requirement for an independent valuation for each and every property related acquisition or disposal or that such valuation is taken to RICS's Red Book standard No explicit requirement for all relevant land/property searches to be conducted, and all findings noted and acted upon, for all acquisition proposals which should be verified via the management/project governance structure to ensure assurances are informed and reliable. <p>As a result, there is a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements that exposes it to a risk of significant financial loss and can be reasonably expected to lead to a significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service and the Council's reputation.</p>	<p>The Council should ensure that all recommendations arising from the independent review of property acquisitions are implementing, including ensuring that the Property Acquisition and Disposal Policy and Project Management Framework are updated, and that the Audit and Standards Committee are assured on that actions have been taken.</p>

Responsibilities of the Council

The Council 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.

Auditor's responsibilities for the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We are required under section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Council 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 Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

We have undertaken our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2021.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception under the Code of Audit Practice

We are required by the Code of Audit Practice to report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make a recommendation under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we exercise any other special powers of the auditor under sections 28, 29 or 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Use of the audit report

This report is made solely to the members of Harborough District Council, as a body, in accordance with part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 44 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members of the Council those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's 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 members of the Council, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

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 Council's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack.

Mark Surrige, Key Audit Partner
For and on behalf of Mazars LLP

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of
misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

Appendix C: Independence

As part of our ongoing risk assessment, we monitor our relationships with you to identify any new actual or perceived threats to our independence within the regulatory or professional requirements governing us as your auditors.

We can confirm that no new threats to independence have been identified since issuing the Audit Strategy Memorandum and therefore we remain independent.



Appendix D: Other communications

Other communication	Response
Compliance with Laws and Regulations	<p>We have not identified any significant matters involving actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.</p> <p>We will obtain written representations from management that all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements have been disclosed.</p>
External confirmations	<p>We did not experience any issues with respect to obtaining external confirmations.</p>
Related parties	<p>We did not identify any significant matters relating to the audit of related parties.</p> <p>We will obtain written representations from management confirming that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. they have disclosed to us the identity of related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which they are aware; and b. they have appropriately accounted for and disclosed such relationships and transactions in accordance with the requirements of the applicable financial reporting framework.
Going Concern	<p>We have not identified any evidence to cause us to disagree with the Chief Financial Officer that Harborough District Council will be a going concern, and therefore we consider that the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation of the financial statements.</p>
Subsequent events	<p>We are required to obtain evidence about whether events occurring between the date of the financial statements and the date of the auditor's report that require adjustment of, or disclosure in, the financial statements are appropriately reflected in those financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.</p> <p>We will obtain written representations from management that all events occurring subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which the applicable financial reporting framework requires adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.</p>
Matters related to fraud	<p>We have designed our audit approach to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud. In addition to the work performed by us, we will obtain written representations from management, and Audit and Standards Committee, confirming that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. they acknowledge their responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud; b. they have disclosed to the auditor the results of management's assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud; c. they have disclosed to the auditor their knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the entity involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Management; ii. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or iii. Others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements; and d. they have disclosed to the auditor their knowledge of any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the entity's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

Appendix E: Fee Variation

Fee variation category	Definition	2019/20	2020/21	Recurrent to 2021/22?
Scale fee		32,272	32,272	
Pension Valuation	Additional work in relation to responding to increased regulatory challenge in auditing the IAS19 pension figures contained within the financial statements.	2,998	3,000	Yes
PPE Valuation	Additional work in relation to responding to increased regulatory challenge in auditing the PPE figures contained within the financial statements.	3,196	3,200	Yes
Technical Accounting issues	Additional work in relation to auditing figures in the financial statements which have been impacted by new/updated accounting standards e.g. IFRS9, IFRS16.	-	-	No
VFM commentary	See separate report which sets out the ranges for this work. https://www.psa.co.uk/additional-information-for-2020-21-audit-fees/	-	9,200	Yes
VFM additional risk	Additional work in relation to responding to significant VFM risks being raised in the audit year.	-	5,500	Possible
COVID-19	Additional work in relation to responding to the impact of Covid-19, both on the financial statements and performing of the audit. e.g. risk assessments/arrangement checklists performed, PPE/pensions valuations work undertaken (Emphasis of Matters), audits taking longer due to impact of remote working.	4,493	1,200	No
ISA540	See separate report which sets out the ranges for this work. https://www.psa.co.uk/additional-information-for-2020-21-audit-fees/	-	3,000	Yes
McCloud/ Goodwin	Additional work in relation to responding to the McCloud legal ruling which had implications for pension schemes.	539	-	No
Other	Additional work in relation to any work that is not separately covered by the categories shown here. Additional testing of Covid-19 grant income and expenditure	-	1,200	Possible
Sub-total		11,226	26,300	-
Total		43,498	58,572	-

Executive summary

Status of audit

Audit approach

Significant findings

Internal control recommendations

Summary of misstatements

Value for Money

Appendices

Mark Surridge

Mazars

Mazars is an internationally integrated partnership, specialising in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax and legal services*. Operating in over 90 countries and territories around the world, we draw on the expertise of 40,400 professionals – 24,400 in Mazars' integrated partnership and 16,000 via the Mazars North America Alliance – to assist clients of all sizes at every stage in their development.

*where permitted under applicable country laws.