



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Finance and Resources Committee

# **UPDATE ON FINAL AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22 AND 2022/23**

Report of the Treasurer to the Fire Authority

**Date:** 17 January 2025

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide an update to Members on the Final Audited Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members:

- Note that the Final Audited Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were signed and published by the statutory backstop date.
- Note the Final Audit Completion Report for 2021/22 and 2022/23 enclosed at Appendix A.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The draft Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 have been presented and noted by the Finance and Resources Committee on the 14 October 2022 and 16 June 2023 respectively.
- 1.2 The UK Government laid legislation setting statutory backstop dates, starting with 13 December 2024, to clear unaudited accounts up to Financial Year 2022/23. An update on the Audit Backlog Arrangements was presented to the Finance and Resources Committee on the 18 October 2024, where the following recommendation was approved to ensure the backstop requirements could be met for the Final Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23:
- Delegated authority for the Head of Finance/Treasurer (Section 151 Officer) and the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee to approve the External Auditors Completion Report for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and to sign the final 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts; with the completion report and any changes being presented to the next Finance and Resources Committee
- 1.3 This report provides an update to the Finance and Resources Committee on the actions taken under the delegated authority.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 The External Auditors Completion Report for 2021/22 and 2022/23 was accepted and the Final Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were signed by the Head of Finance/Treasurer (Section 151 Officer) and the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee on 5 December 2024.
- 2.2 The Audit Opinion was received on the 10 December 2024. The Authority published its signed Statement of Accounts (inc. Audit Opinion) on its website on the 12 December 2024, and therefore has met its statutory obligation as set out in paragraph 1.2.
- 2.3 There were no changes to the final published Statement of Accounts 2021/22 from the unaudited version presented to the Finance and Resources Committee October 2022.
- 2.4 All changes between the draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23 presented to the Finance and Resources Committee June 2023 and the final published Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 are detailed below:
- Movement between long and short term borrowing of £3.0m due to debt being incorrectly categorised in the draft accounts.
  - Pension Liability increasing by £2.455m, following the pension administrators issuing an updated report after the draft accounts.

- Technical adjustment of £161k reducing the net expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and increasing the technical adjustment between funding and accounting basis so having £nil effect on the General Fund Balance.

2.5 The Ernst and Young (EY) Completion Report for the years ended 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 is enclosed at Appendix A. The report issues a disclaimed opinion on the financial statements. The completion report includes the following as the basis for disclaimer of opinion:

- The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907), which came into force on 30 September 2024, requires the accountability statements for this financial year to be approved not later than 13 December 2024. This requirement meant that we were unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for our opinion as we had insufficient resources in the time available to perform all necessary procedures to support the local government audit reset.

2.6 The Ernst and Young (EY) Completion Report for the years ended 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 also includes their final commentary on the arrangements to secure Value For Money (VFM) in the use of our resources. The commentary concludes they have identified no risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements. Confirming the interim commentary on VFM was reported and noted by Fire Authority on the 26 July 2024.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The annual audit fee set for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts was originally £23,909 for each financial year. It has been previously reported that the fees would be increased significantly due to the updated audit regulations which required additional work to be undertaken by the auditors. Public Sector Audit Appointment (PSAA), who are responsible for issuing audit contracts, have reviewed the audit fee scales and had adjusted them to take account of the increased scope of the audit work required, the revised annual charge for 2022/23 is £32,648. It is not known at this time, the impact of issuing a modified/disclaimed opinion to meet the backstop dates on the fees. Any changes in fees will be subject to the approval of PSAA.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resource or learning and development implications arising from this report.

## **5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken. This report relates to how the Authority has met its statutory requirements rather than a new or amended policy.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental and sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report confirms that the Authority has been able to meet its statutory obligations in relation to its historic Statement of Accounts.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The production of Statement of Accounts is fundamental in demonstrating a sound financial position for any organisation. The issuing of a modified or disclaimed audit opinion where audits cannot be completed by a backstop date is uncomfortable for the sector. However, in the absence of viable alternatives, this is the agreed process. The Government has made it clear that local bodies should not be unfairly judged based on disclaimed or modified opinions, caused by the introduction of backstop dates that are largely beyond their control. Auditors are expected to provide clear reasons for the issuing of such opinions to mitigate the potential reputational risk that local bodies may face.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note that the Final Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were signed and published by the statutory backstop date.
- 10.2 Note the Final Audit Completion Report for 2021/22 and 2022/23 enclosed at Appendix A.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

Bev Bull  
**HEAD OF FINANCE AND TREASURER TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY**

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Completion Report for Those Charged  
with Governance

Years ended 31 March 2022 & 31  
March 2023

Report issued - 12 November 2024





Finance and Resource Committee  
Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Bestwood Lodge Drive  
Arnold  
Nottingham  
NG5 8PD

12 November 2024

Dear Finance and Resource Committee

Completion Report for Those Charged With Governance

Attached is our Completion Report for Those Charged With Governance. The purpose of this report is to provide the Finance and Resource Committee of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) with a detailed complete report covering our approach and outcomes of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 audits.

Given that Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024" (the SI) imposes a backstop date of 13 December 2024 by which date we are required to issue our opinion on the financial statements, we have considered whether the time constraints imposed by the backstop date mean that we cannot complete all necessary procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion and fulfil all the objectives of all relevant ISAs (UK).

This decision is in line with ISA 200: Failure to Achieve an Objective 24.

If an objective in a relevant ISA (UK) cannot be achieved, the auditor shall evaluate whether this prevents the auditor from achieving the overall objectives of the auditor and thereby requires the auditor, in accordance with the ISAs (UK), to modify the auditor's opinion or withdraw from the engagement (where withdrawal is possible under applicable law or regulation). Failure to achieve an objective represents a significant matter requiring documentation in accordance with ISA (UK) 230 (Revised June 2016).4 (Ref: Para. A77&A78)

Taking the above into account, for the years ended 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 we have determined that we cannot meet the objectives of the ISAs(UK) and we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit report.

In completing our work for these audit years we have taken into account Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024", Local Authority Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance. We have also taken into account the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice (including recent 2024 updates), the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements. Against this backdrop, we have also considered the Committee's service expectations.



The Finance and Resource Committee, as the Authority's body charged with governance, has an essential role in ensuring that it has assurance over both the quality of the draft financial statements prepared by management and the Authority's wider arrangements to support the delivery of a timely and efficient audit.

We consider and report on the adequacy of the Authority's external financial reporting arrangements and the effectiveness of the Finance and Resource committee in fulfilling its role in those arrangements as part of our assessment of Value for Money arrangements, and consider the use of other statutory reporting powers to draw attention to weaknesses in those arrangements where we consider it necessary to do so.

We draw the Finance and Resource Committee members and officers attention to the Public Sector Audit Appointment Limited's Statement of Responsibilities (paragraphs 26-28) which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements (see Appendix E).

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Finance and Resource Committee, and management, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

Yours faithfully



Hassan Rohimun

Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

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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. 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 July 2021)" issued by the PSAA (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/terms-of-appointment/terms-of-appointment-and-further-guidance-1-july-2021/>) 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 Finance and Resource Committee and management of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Finance and Resource Committee and management of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham 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 Finance and Resource Committee and management of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham 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 – System wide and local context

Context for the audit – Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) measures to address local audit delays

Timely, high-quality financial reporting and audit of local bodies is a vital part of our democratic system. It supports good decision making by local bodies and ensures transparency and accountability to local taxpayers. There is general agreement that the backlog in the publication of audited financial statements by local bodies has grown to an unacceptable level and there is a clear recognition that all stakeholders in the sector need to work together to address this. Reasons for the backlog across the system have been widely reported and include:

- Lack of capacity within the local authority financial accounting professions
- Increased complexity of reporting requirements within the sector
- Lack of capacity within audit firms with public sector experience
- Increased regulatory pressure on auditors, which in turn has increased the scope and extent of audit procedures performed


MHCLG (previously the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) has worked collaboratively with the FRC, as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop and implement measures to clear the backlog. Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024" (the SI), together with the updated NAO Code of Audit Practice 2024 and the Local Authority Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance, which have all been developed to ensure auditor compliance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), consist of three phases:

- ▶ Phase 1: Reset involving clearing the backlog of historic audit opinions up to and including financial year 2022/23 by 13 December 2024.
- ▶ Phase 2: Recovery from Phase 1 in a way that does not cause a recurrence of the backlog by using backstop dates to allow assurance to be rebuilt over multiple audit cycles.
- ▶ Phase 3: Reform involving addressing systemic challenges in the local audit system and embedding timely financial reporting and audit.

The National Audit Office (NAO) has amended the Code of Audit Practice to:

- ▶ Require auditors to issue audit opinions according to statutory backstop dates for historic audits, and place specific duties on auditors to co-operate during the handover period for the new PSAA contract for the appointment of local authority auditors covering the years 2023/24 to 2027/28.
- ▶ Allow auditors to produce a single Value for Money commentary for the period to 2022/23 and use statutory reporting powers to draw significant matters to the attention of Councils and residents.

As a result of the system wide implementation of backstop dates we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit opinion on the Authority's 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts. The proposed disclaimer of the Authority's 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts impacts the audit procedures that we have planned and undertaken to gain assurance on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial statements and the form of the audit report.



# Executive Summary – Local context

## Local Background and Context

The position at this Authority has developed over recent years resulting in unaudited financial statements for 31 March 2022 and 2023.

The main reasons for the Authority's final financial statements not being prepared, audited and signed to date include:

- ▶ The post pandemic timelines resulted in audit teams trying to move delayed audits on to completion, whilst finance teams were trying to catch up, deal with current priorities and plan for the future. This used a significant amount of our finite audit resource, leading to a lack of capacity to move onto the 2022/23 audit year.
- ▶ In addition, there were a number of new technical issues and challenges to address during this period, including, accounting for infrastructure assets, taking into account the updated pension fund valuations, which led to delays to the prior year 2020/21 audit being completed.
- ▶ The Authority has been in a position to present draft statements of account for audit within the regulatory timeframe in recent years.
- ▶ We commenced our audit for 2021/22 in July 2023, however we were unable to complete our audit procedures on:
  - ▶ The local government pension scheme liability closing balance at 31 March 2022 as we did not receive responses to our outstanding audit queries until 19 December 2023. When we received the additional information we did not have resources available in order to perform the work needed to complete the audit.
  - ▶ The valuation of property assets included in 'other land and buildings and investment property' because we did not receive all of the requested audit evidence from the Authority until 30 November 2023. When we received the additional information we did not have resources available in order to perform the work needed to complete the audit.
- ▶ As a result of the delays to the 2021/22 audit together with the wider requirements of the local audit system reset, we did not have the required resources available to complete the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the 2021/22 or 2022/23 financial statements before the 13th December 2024 backstop date. Therefore, we are disclaiming our opinion on the financial statements.





# Executive Summary – Report structure and work completed

## Report structure and work completed

This report covers the work we have completed to meet the requirements of the International Standards on Auditing (UK&I), (ISAs) and the Local Audit Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance (LARRIGs) along with the National Audit Office Value for Money Code (NAO VFM Code). It has been split into the following sections.

Section 1 – Executive Summary – this section setting out the national and local context and the structure of our report.

Section 2 – Work Plan – We have completed the following planning tasks:

- ▶ Required independence procedures.
- ▶ Set a level of materiality.
- ▶ Issued letters of inquiry to Management, Those Charged with Governance, the Head of Internal Audit and the Monitoring Officer.
- ▶ Updated our understanding of the business, including through review of responses to inquiry letters, minute review and in discussion in our internal planning meeting,
- ▶ Identified significant, inherent and other areas of higher risk or focus.
- ▶ Considered any other matters that may require reporting to regulators or which may result in a modification to the audit report e.g. non-compliance with laws and regulations, objections, significant weaknesses in arrangements for value for money, any matters that may result in the use of the auditor's powers.

Section 3 – Results and findings - Work completed to issue the disclaimer, findings and results:

- ▶ Review of the financial statements.
- ▶ Consideration of any matters that came to light during our planning and review procedures in relation to laws and regulations, fraud, related parties, litigation and claims, significant changes to contracts and systems, service organisations, which we report as appropriate.
- ▶ Reporting on any other matters that may require the use of the auditor's powers, formal reporting or a modification to the auditor's report e.g. non-compliance with laws and regulations, objections, significant weaknesses in arrangements for value for money, any matters that may result in the use of the auditor's powers.

Section 4 – Value for money reporting

- ▶ The value for money report covering the year to 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Section 5 - Appendices



# 02 Work Plan

# Work Plan – Audit Scope

## Audit scope

This Completion report covers the work that we performed in relation to:

- ▶ Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of the Authority give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2022 & 31 March 2023 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- ▶ Our commentary on your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources for the relevant period. We include further details on VFM in Section 4.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO), to the extent and in the form required by them, on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- ▶ Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- ▶ Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- ▶ The quality of systems and processes;
- ▶ Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and,
- ▶ Management's views on all of the above.

Given that Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024" (the SI) imposes a backstop date of 13 December 2024 by which date we are required to issue our opinion on the financial statements, we have considered whether the time constraints imposed by the backstop date mean that we cannot complete all necessary procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion and fulfil all the objectives of all relevant ISAs (UK).

This decision is in line with ISA 200: Failure to Achieve an Objective 24.

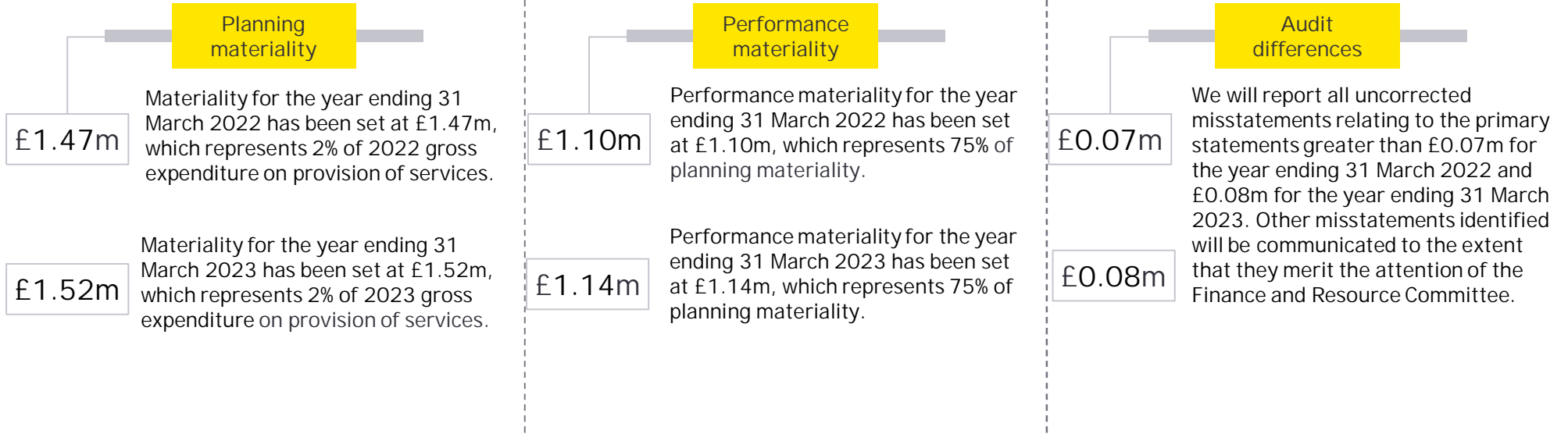
If an objective in a relevant ISA (UK) cannot be achieved, the auditor shall evaluate whether this prevents the auditor from achieving the overall objectives of the auditor and thereby requires the auditor, in accordance with the ISAs (UK), to modify the auditor's opinion or withdraw from the engagement (where withdrawal is possible under applicable law or regulation). Failure to achieve an objective represents a significant matter requiring documentation in accordance with ISA (UK) 230 (Revised June 2016).4 (Ref: Para. A77&A78)

Taking the above into account, for the years ended 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 we have determined that we cannot meet the objectives of the ISAs(UK) and we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit report.



# Work Plan - Materiality

## Materiality



In order to ascertain the significance of issues in the draft financial statements we have set materiality based on the published draft financial statements for 2021/22 and 2022/23. We determined that our audit procedures would be performed using a materiality set above. This level of materiality remains appropriate for the actual results for the financial year.

These levels are being used to assess our response to any issues identified in the Authority's financial statements.

# Work Plan – Significant, inherent and other risk areas

The following ‘dashboard’ summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters identified as part of our planning work. It seeks to provide Those Charged with Governance with an overview of our initial risk identification for the years.

## Audit risks and areas of focus.

Risk/area of focus	Applicable year(s)	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition: Inappropriate capitalisation of expenditure	All years covered by this report	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition. We have re-evaluated the perceived fraud risks and consider that this risk is more prevalent over the medium term and is likely to occur through the capitalisation of expenditure that should be accounted for in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES).
Misstatement due to fraud or error	All years covered by this report	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	There is a risk that the financial statements as a whole are not free from material misstatement whether caused by fraud or error. We perform mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks.
Valuation of Pension Liabilities - LGPS	All years covered by this report	Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	The accounting entries relating to the Local Government Pension Schemes are underpinned by assumptions and estimates. There is therefore an increased risk of misstatement and error. The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to a range of assumptions such as rates of pay and pension inflation, mortality and discount rates. The pension fund valuations separately involve external specialists, to provide these actuarial assumptions. A small movement in these assumptions could have a material impact on the balance sheet value.
Valuation of land and buildings		Higher inherent risk plus area of audit focus	No change in risk or focus	The Authority undertakes a rolling programme of valuations to ensure required assets are revalued at least every five years. The valuation of land and buildings is subject to a number of assumptions and judgements and a small movement in these assumptions could have a material impact on the financial statements.
Valuation of Pension Liabilities - Firefighters' Pension Scheme	All years covered by this report	Higher inherent risk and area of audit focus	No change in risk or focus	The accounting entries are underpinned by assumptions and estimates. There is therefore an increased risk of misstatement and error. The pension fund valuations separately involve external specialists, to provide these actuarial assumptions. A small movement in these assumptions could have a material impact on the value in the balance sheet.

# Work Plan - Independence

The FRC Ethical Standard 2019 and ISA (UK) 260 'Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance', requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

## Required communications

### Planning stage

- ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;
- ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;
- ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;
- ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence
- ▶ The IESBA Code requires EY to provide an independence assessment of any proposed non-audit service (NAS) to the PIE audit client and will need to obtain and document pre-concurrence from the audit committee/those charged with governance for the provision of all NAS prior to the commencement of the service (i.e., similar to obtaining a "pre-approval" to provide the service).
- ▶ All proposed NAS for PIE audit clients will be subject to a determination of whether the service might create a self-review threat (SRT), with no allowance for services related to amounts that are immaterial to the audited financial statements.

### Final stage

- ▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;
- ▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;
- ▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;
- ▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner
- ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;
- ▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and
- ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

# Work Plan - Independence

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

## Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Hassan Rohimun, your audit engagement partner and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

## Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in your company. Examples include where we have an investment in your company; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

None of the services are prohibited under the FRC's ES. In addition, when the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

At the time of writing, there are no non-audit fees. No additional safeguards are required.

A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4.

There are no self interest threats at the date of this report.

## Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

## Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of your company. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

## Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.





## 03 Results and findings



# Results and findings

## Status of the audit

Our audit work in respect of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority opinion is substantially complete. The following items relating to the completion of our audit procedures were outstanding at the date of this report.

### Final Closing procedures:

- ▶ Completion of subsequent events procedures;
- ▶ Receipt of a signed management representation letter

Given that the audit process is still ongoing, we will continue to consider existing and new information which could influence our final audit opinion, a current draft of which is included later in this section

## Value for Money

Our value for money (VFM) work is complete and reported in Section 4 of this report. We had identified no risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements. Having updated and completed the planned procedures in these areas we did not identify a significant weakness. See Section 4 of the report for further details.

## Audit differences

We have not identified any audit differences, either adjusted or unadjusted, as part of our audit. The Authority should ensure that in approving the Statement of Accounts, all prior year comparatives agree to the final set of prior year Statement of Accounts, or explanations for prior year adjustments have been set out by the Section 151 Officer.

## Other Reporting Issues

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

The Comptroller and Auditor General has confirmed that he plans to issue his opinion and certificate on the 2022-23 Whole of Government Accounts on 22 November 2024. Given we expect to issue our 2021/22 and 2022/23 audit reports after that date but before the statutory backstop of 13 December 2024, we therefore expect to be able to certify completion of the audit as part of our final 2021/22 and 2022/23 audit reports.

## 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 Council 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.

# Results and findings

## Areas of audit focus

In our Audit Plan we identified a number of key areas of focus for our audit of the financial report of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority . We concluded we would disclaim the audit and therefore have not completed detailed audit testing on these areas but instead have reported any matters that came to light from the work we did complete.

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

- ▶ There are no 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 Finance and Resource Committee or Board of Directors.

## Control observations

During the audit, we did not identify any significant deficiencies in internal control.

## Independence

Further to our review of independence in section 2 of this report we have not identified any issues to bring to your attention.

## 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;
- ▶ Findings and issues around the opening balance on initial audits (if applicable);
- ▶ Related parties;
- ▶ External confirmations;
- ▶ Going concern;
- ▶ Consideration of laws and regulations; and
- ▶ Group audits



Draft audit report 2021/22

Our opinion on the financial statements

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

### Disclaimer of Opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements and the firefighters' pension fund financial statements of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority 'the Authority' for the year ended 31 March 2022. The financial statements comprise the:

- Authority Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Authority Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Authority Balance Sheet,
- Authority Cash Flow Statement
- the related notes 1 to 41
- The firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement, and the related notes 1 to 2

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 2021/22 as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022).

We do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements of the Authority. Because of the significance of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

### Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907), which came into force on 30 September 2024, requires the accountability statements for this financial year to be approved not later than 13th December 2024. This requirement meant that we were unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for our opinion as we had insufficient resources in the time available to perform all necessary procedures to support the local government audit reset.

We commenced our audit in July 2023, however we were unable to complete our procedures on:

- The local government pension scheme liability closing balance at 31 March 2022 as there were audit queries outstanding; and

- The valuation of property assets included in 'other land and buildings and investment property' because we did not receive all of the requested audit evidence from the Authority until 30 November 2023. When we received the additional information we did not have resources available in order to perform the work needed to complete the audit.

### Matters on which we report by exception

Notwithstanding our disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements, performed subject to the pervasive limitation described above, we have nothing to report in respect of whether the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Authority.

### We report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- 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 (as amended)
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- 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 2022.

We have nothing to report in these respects

### Responsibility of the Treasurer

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Treasurer's Responsibilities set out on page 13, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Authority financial statements and the firefighters pension fund 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 2021/22 as

Draft audit report 2021/22 (continued)

## Our opinion on the financial statements

amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022), and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Treasurer determines 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 Treasurer 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 has no realistic alternative but to do so.

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.

### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report. However, because of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

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 Code of Audit Practice 2024 and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

### *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 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in December 2021, as to whether Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham 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

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2022.

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, Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham 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 (as amended) 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.

### Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) 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 Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) 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 Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

*Hassan Rohimun (Key Audit Partner)*  
*Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)*  
*Manchester*  
*Date*

Draft audit report 2022/23

## Our opinion on the financial statements

### INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

#### Disclaimer of opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements and the firefighters' pension fund financial statements of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority 'the Authority' for the year ended 31 March 2023. The financial statements comprise the:

- Authority Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Authority Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Authority Balance Sheet,
- Authority Cash Flow Statement
- the related notes 1 to 41 including a summary of significant accounting policies
- The firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement, and the related notes 1 to 2

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 2022/23 as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022).

We do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements of the Authority. Because of the significance of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

#### Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 requires the accountability statements for this financial year to be approved not later than 13th December 2024.

The audit of the 2021/22 financial statements for Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority was not completed for the reasons set out in our opinion on those financial statements dated xxxx. As a result of the delays to the previous year's audit together with the wider requirements of the local audit system reset, we did not have the required resources available to complete the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the 2022/23 financial statements before the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024 backstop date.

Therefore, we are disclaiming our opinion on the financial statements.

#### Matters on which we report by exception

Notwithstanding our disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements, performed subject to the pervasive limitation described above, we have nothing to report in respect of whether the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Authority.

#### We report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- 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 (as amended)
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- 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 2023.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

#### Responsibility of the Treasurer

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Treasurer's Responsibilities set out on pages 15, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Authority's financial statements and the firefighters pension fund 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 2022/23 as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022), and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Treasurer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Draft audit report 2022/23 (continued)

## Our opinion on the financial statements

In preparing the financial statements, the Treasurer 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 has no realistic alternative but to do so.

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.

### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report. However, because of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

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 Code of Audit Practice 2024 and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

### *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 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in January 2023, as to whether Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham 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 Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2023.

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, Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham 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 (as amended) 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.

### Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) 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 Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) 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 Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

*Hassan Rohimun (Key Audit Partner)*

*Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)*

*Manchester*

*Date*





# 04 Value for Money



# VFM - Executive Summary

## Purpose

Auditors are required to be satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We do not issue a 'conclusion' or 'opinion', but where significant weaknesses are identified we will report by exception in the auditor's opinion on the financial statements. In addition, auditor's provide an annual commentary on arrangements published as part of the Auditor's Annual Report. In doing so, we comply with the requirements of the 2020 Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03). The purpose of this commentary is to explain the work we have undertaken in respect of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years and highlight any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement. The commentary covers our findings for audit year 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as it was at the time, worked collaboratively with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop measures to address the delay in local audit. As part of the NAO consultation issued on 8 February 2024, there is a proposal to reduce the scope of the VFM reporting up to and including the 2022/23 financial year. However, the consultation stated that where auditors had begun or already undertaken work that no longer falls under the reduced scope (if agreed once the consultation closes), they may still report on it in accordance with Schedule 4. We are continuing to report Value for Money (VFM) in line with our full responsibilities as set out in the 2020 Code to ensure a smooth transition to the 2023/24 audit year when auditors are required to meet the full Code reporting responsibilities.

The report sets out the following areas which have been assessed up to the point of issuing this report:

- Any identified risks of significant weakness, having regard to the three specified reporting criteria;
- An explanation of the planned responsive audit procedures to the significant risks identified; and
- Findings to date from our planned procedures.

## Risks of Significant Weakness

In undertaking our procedures to understand the body's arrangements against the specified reporting criteria, we identify whether there are risks of significant weakness which require us to complete additional risk-based procedures. AGN 03 sets out considerations for auditors in completing and documenting their work and includes consideration of:

- our cumulative audit knowledge and experience as your auditor;
- reports from internal audit which may provide an indication of arrangements that are not operating effectively;
- our review of NFRA committee reports;
- meetings with the Head of Finance;
- information from external sources; and
- evaluation of associated documentation through our regular engagement with Fire Authority management and the finance team.

We completed our risk assessment procedures and did not identify any significant weaknesses in NFRA's VFM arrangements

# Executive Summary (continued)

## Reporting

Our commentary for 2021/22 and 2022/23 is set out over pages 25 to 31. The commentary on these pages summarises our understanding of the arrangements at the Authority based on our evaluation of the evidence obtained in relation to the three reporting criteria (see table below) throughout 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The detailed arrangements and processes underpinning the reporting criteria were reported in our Interim VFM Report that was presented to the Fire Authority Meeting on the 26 July 2024.

In accordance with the NAO's 2020 Code, we are required to report a commentary against the three specified reporting criteria. The table below sets out the three reporting criteria, whether we identified a risk of significant weakness as part of our planning procedures, and whether, at the time of this interim report, we have concluded that there is a significant weakness in the body's arrangements.

Reporting Criteria	Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?	Actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?
Financial sustainability: How the Fire Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Governance: How the Fire Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Fire Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified



# Value for Money Commentary

Financial Sustainability: How the Fire Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services 2021/22 and 2022/23

No significant weakness identified

The Fire Authority is required to have arrangements in place to ensure proper resource management and the primary responsibility for these arrangements, and reporting on the design and operation of these arrangements via the annual governance statement, rests with management. In accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the audited body is expected to have in place during the years ended 31 March 2022 and 2023.

Our risk assessment did not identify any risk of significant weakness in arrangements to secure financial sustainability.

2021/22

NFRA has adhered to governance processes for setting a balanced budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The budgets and MTFP were underpinned by assumptions that we deemed reasonable and well supported. The 2021/22 budget of £45.3m was approved by the Fire Authority in February 2021.

The balanced budget for 2021/22 was based on the following assumptions:

- pay award for Firefighters agreed at 1% and support at 1% pay award, including pay awards of 1% across the board with additional cost for 2021/22 of £0.125m.
- £1.573m of government grant to cover Business Rate loss of income due to Covid reliefs
- £2.3m to cover the expected increased costs of the firefighter pension employer contribution following the changes to the discount rates applied to the scheme.
- No planned use of General Fund Reserves in balancing the 2021/22 budget
- Council Tax - an increase of 1.95% for 2021/22 with a Band D council tax of £82.95

The NFRA's actual expenditure in 2021/22 was initial £201k underspent against the original budget representing a 0.99% of the budget, at its meeting on 24 June 2022, Finance and Resources Committee approved to use an additional £0.163m of unspent grants to be transferred to the Earmarked Reserves as per the final revenue and capital outturn report.

We note that as of 31 March 2022, the NFRA had a total Earmarked Reserves of £4.853 million due to a decrease of £0.857m for allocations of overspending and these are held either for unspent grant or set aside to fund specific areas of expenditure, usually of a one off nature and also held a General Fund Reserve of £5.191m against a minimum level set in the Reserves Strategy of £4.5m, compared to the previous year's minimum levels of General Fund Reserves which have remained between £3.8m and £4m between 2017/18 to 2020/21.

# Value for Money Commentary

Financial Sustainability: How the Fire Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services 2021/22 and 2022/23

No significant weakness identified

The NFRA's forecast contained several assumptions which impact on the level of its income and expenditure. A sensitivity analysis was undertaken to give some indication of the likely range of the Fire Authority's deficit position bounded by realistic worst- and best-case scenarios. These were predicted as follows:

- Best case scenarios for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 were modelled as £0.664m, £0.261m, £0.208m deficits respectively; and
- Worst case scenarios in 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 with deficits of £3.8m and an ongoing £4.2m thereafter.

The NFRA's financial performance in 2021/22 was positive as the Fire Authority managed to achieve an underspend and on overall, there do not appear to be any notable gaps in information underpinning management's plans. NFRA's financial resilience was not of concern for 2021/22 as there were no in-year budget deficits identified, with minimal use of reserves.

## 2022/23

For 2022/23, the Fire Authority approved a balanced budget of £46m in February 2022, following several years where General Fund reserves were required to balance the budget. The budgets and MTFP were underpinned by assumptions that we deemed reasonable and well supported.

The balanced budget for 2022/23 was based on below assumptions:

- Council tax- an increase of 1.95% for 2022/23 with a Band D council tax of £84.57
- Planned use of general fund reserves of £153k
- £1.9m of government grant to cover Business Rate loss of income due to Covid reliefs
- £2.3m to cover the expected increased costs of the firefighter pension employer contribution following the changes to the discount rates applied to the scheme.
- £748k one of New Service Grant
- Pay award of 3%

The NFRA's actual expenditure in 2022/23 was £45.170m, £352k of which was funded from earmarked reserves. This represents an underspend position of £836k (1.82% of the annual budget). After previously approved transfers to Earmarked Reserves have been actioned, the underspend was reduced to £236k. It was proposed that the remaining £236k is also transferred to Earmarked Reserves as per the final revenue and capital outturn report.

We note that as of 31 March 2023, NFRA had a total Earmarked Reserves of £5.337 million, a net figure of 0.484m was put into earmarked reserves during 2022/23. The increase was due to allocations of the underspending during the year these are held either for unspent grant or set aside to fund specific areas of expenditure, usually of a one-off nature and also held a General Reserve of £4.961m against a minimum level set in the Reserves Strategy of £4.5m, There were no plans to utilise the General Fund Reserve to support the revenue budget.

# Value for Money Commentary

Financial Sustainability: How the Fire Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services 2021/22 and 2022/23

No significant weakness identified

The NFRA's forecast for future years contained several assumptions which impact on the level of its income and expenditure. The assumptions are:

- That business rates in 2023/24 and beyond will grow at a rate of 1%;
- The 2022/23 tax base will be increase by 1.3% in 2023/24 to 2025/26;
- Future funding settlements will track pay inflation. These have both been assumed at 2%;
- There is a 3% pay increase across both firefighters and support staff for 2022/23. Any increase above this will be met from reserves. A pay increase of 2% has been assumed for 2023/24 onwards.

The sensitivity analysis for 2023/24 to 2026/27 contained three scenarios: scenario 1 being worst case, scenario 2 being most likely case and scenario 3 being best case. The table below shows the results of the sensitivity analysis:

Financial year	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
2023/24	£3.043m deficit	£2.145m deficit	£0.038m surplus
2024/25	£4.009m deficit	£2.727m deficit	£1.358m surplus
2025/26	£4.179m deficit	£2.558m deficit	£1.142m surplus
2026/27	£4.236m deficit	£2.254m deficit	£0.787m surplus

Financial risks identified are incorporated during the budget setting and the development of medium-term financial plan. The Head of Finance and Treasury, presents a budget plan to the Finance and Resources Committee and Fire Authority meetings with its underlying assumptions. The assumptions used are also challenged and scrutinised during these meetings. This alongside a regular refresh of the medium-term financial plan ensures the force has a financial plan that is dynamic and can adapt for any changes.

The financial performance of the Fire Authority is monitored through monthly budget monitoring reports by the Head of Finance and Treasury and Strategic Leadership Team. The Fire Authority savings plan contributed £1.6m to enable a balanced budget for 2022/23, these were mainly as a result of temporary savings predominantly related to the delay in recruiting both firefighters and support staff.

We have reviewed the financial resilience of the Fire Authority and have noted that the Fire Authority is at a risk of breaching its minimum reserve requirement in the 2024/25 year and may find it difficult to set a balanced budget without the use of reserves. Since the 2023/24 budget was approved, there have been significant additional financial pressures on the Fire Authority. Revised inflation and pay award assumptions have increased the amount of savings required from the efficiency strategy.

**Conclusion:** Based on the work performed, the Fire Authority had proper arrangements in place in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Fire Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks: 2021/22 and 2022/23

No significant weakness identified

The Fire Authority is required to have arrangements in place to ensure proper risk management and the primary responsibility for these arrangements and reporting on the design and operation of these arrangements via the annual governance statement rests with management. In accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the audited body is expected to have in place during the years ended 31st March 2022 and 2023.

Our risk assessment did not identify any risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements in governance.

We note that Fire Authority has a well-established and embedded risk management strategy which is managed at the corporate/strategic level by The Finance and Resources Committee which receive regular reports on risk exposures both in terms of existing and emerging risks. Members scrutinise the Corporate Risk Register and receive explanations for changes. The Committee is advised by the Head of Finance and the Head of Risk and Assurance on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer.

Risk management at the strategic / corporate level forms part of the overall responsibilities of The Finance and Resources Committee and Members of this committee receive update reports every six months. NFRA has an in-house financial team, managed by the Head of Finance and Treasurer, maintains the correct competencies and ensures that the Strategic Leadership Team receives all appropriate information to support the key decisions and objectives of the service.

Informed decision making and managing of risk is in part done via the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which is a 4-year plan approved by the Fire Authority. The MTFS sits alongside the strategic plan, which provides the framework for developing the annual budget for the coming year. Any projects put forward for additional funding as part of the budget process are evaluated against the key objectives set out in the Strategic Plan. The draft budget is scrutinised by the Finance and Resources Committee in January each year prior to final approval in February by Fire Authority. This process ensures that a realistic and affordable budget is achieved. The Fire Authority continued to ensure it had good arrangements for ensuring decisions are made in an informed manner and risks are adequately managed.

The NFRA's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) sets out a number of ways the Fire Authority is able to gain assurance over the effective operation of internal controls. These include a Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE 2016: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition, as well as the work of internal and external audit and other inspection bodies completed during the year.

## 2021/22

NFRA's Internal Audit Service is provided under a Service Level Agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council which provides independent assurance that the system is working effectively and draw any deficiencies in the system. The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2021/22 was reported to Finance and Resources Committee (acting in its role as Audit Committee) on 24 June 2022. Internal Audit issued one 'limited assurance' assessment in 2021/22 in respect of Asset Disposals and one with "None - due to insufficient evidence" in respect of Performance Management. The NFRA's Annual Governance Statement is considered to be compliant with the CIPFA code guidance.

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Fire Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks: 2021/22 and 2022/23

No significant weakness identified

The Fire Authority published their draft 2021/22 financial statements for audit on the 30 July 2022 in line with the Audit and Accounts regulations, and advertised and held an inspection period for members of the public in line with these regulations. The inspection notice for the 2021/22 draft financial statements was from 31 July 2022 instead of 01 August 2022, as the first day of the inspection period is meant to start on a working day after the draft financial statements are published. We do not believe that the public were significantly disadvantaged by this oversight. We confirm that the 2021/22 draft financial statements were arithmetically correct, agreed to the data in the general ledger, and prepared in line with the content required by the CIPFA Code. The NFRA has carried out bank reconciliations during the year.

2022/23

During the financial year 2022/23 budget monitoring remained robust at both strategic and production of regular financial monitoring reports for both Revenue budgets alongside monitoring of treasury activity against the Prudential Indicators for the year. These reports are reviewed by budget managers and are reported to the Strategic Leadership Team and quarterly to the Finance and Resources Committee.

NFRA's Internal Audit Service is provided under a Service Level Agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council which provides independent assurance that the system is working effectively and draw any deficiencies in the system. The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2022/23 were reported to Finance and Resources Committee (acting in its role as Audit Committee) on 16 June 2023. The Internal Audit issued no 'limited assurance' assessments in 2022/23.

The Fire Authority's Internal Audit opinion improved from reasonable assurance to substantial assurance. This means that the governance arrangements are effective at managing the risks and achieving the objectives, with no or few control weaknesses of significance. There were no significant control weaknesses which, in the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit, needed to be considered for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement.

The Fire Authority published their draft 2022/23 financial statements for audit on 31 May 2023 in line with the Audit and Accounts regulations, and advertised and held an inspection period for members of the public in line with these regulations from 31 July 2023 instead of 01 June 2023, as the first day of the inspection period is meant to start on a working day after the draft financial statements are published.

We confirm that the 2022/23 draft financial statements were arithmetically correct, agreed to the data in the general ledger, and prepared in line with the content required by the CIPFA Code. The Fire Authority has carried out bank reconciliations for 2022/23. Therefore, appropriate arrangements for financial reporting were in place for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, NFRA had proper arrangements in place in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to make informed decisions and properly manage its risks.



# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How NFRA uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

No significant weakness identified

The Fire Authority is required to have arrangements in place to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and the responsibility for these arrangements and reporting on the design and operation of these arrangements via the annual governance statement, rests with management. In accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the audited body is expected to have in place during the years ended 31st March 2022 and 2023.

Our risk assessment did not identify any risks of significant weakness in arrangements in place to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

2021/22

We note that performance against the Strategic Plan is reviewed and reported to Fire Authority each year in the Annual Statement of Assurance (ASOA). The 2021/22 Statement of Assurance was approved by Fire Authority in July 2022. Progress is monitored by the Programme and Performance Board and reviewed through Fire Authority governance.

The NFRA has a system of performance management and review embedded within its management structure and processes. The 2019/22 Strategic Plan set out the Fire Authority's key objectives and these are reflected in annual departmental business plans. These plans have been monitored by the Programme and Performance Board (which is made up of Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) members) and managed by the individual departmental management teams.

HMICFRS published PEEL inspection report dated 27 July 2022 for 2021/22 and the inspection assessed the performance of the Fire Authority and were rated as Good in all areas and acknowledged that the Fire Authority had worked hard on the areas identified for improvement in the 2019 report. It did identify a further four Areas for Improvement as follows:

- The Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk
- The Service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals are reliable to allow staff to access risk information
- The Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity
- The Service should assure itself that staff understand how to get wellbeing support

An action plan for addressing these areas was developed to address the issues raised. We note that that progress has been made since 2021/22 inspection and this shows that the Fire Authority is responding to the HMICFRS recommendations and does not highlight any significant weaknesses or issues which we consider would give rise to the need to consider significant weakness in the 2021/22 Value For Money arrangements.

We also note that during 2021/22 the Fire Authority moved into a Joint Headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police to complete the collaboration project which has been a three-year strategic action in order to enable both Authorities to work more closely in the future which is expected to deliver some efficiencies.

# Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How NFRA uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

No significant weakness identified

2022/23

The 2022/23 Statement of Assurance were approved by the Fire Authority in July 2023. Progress is monitored by the Programme and Performance Board and reviewed through the Fire Authority's governance. The 2022/25 Strategic Plan set out the Fire Authority's key objectives and these are reflected in annual departmental business plans. Performance and financial information are reviewed together as they in most if not all cases impact on each other. Areas where actual performance differs from the expected is identified by the finance team and analysed by the budget holders to understand why the performance and finance are not aligned.

The Fire Authority has a number of boards and committees which evaluate the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement. These include:

- Programme and Performance Board - The Programme and Performance Board has monthly meetings chaired by the Chief Fire Officer. These focus on the progress being made against the strategic objectives set by the Combined Fire Authority (CFA). It scrutinises performance reports and key performance indicators from all areas of the Service and oversees significant corporate projects.
- Service Delivery Evaluation and Assurance Group - This group meets quarterly to oversee the performance of the Prevention, Protection and Response departments. Risk and performance highlights are identified, with the aim of addressing any areas of concern and celebrating and learning from good performance.
- Strategic Leadership Team - Under the direction of the Chief Fire Officer, the Strategic Leadership Team is responsible for implementing the strategy and policy decisions taken by the CFA. The team meets weekly to maintain collective understanding of priorities, discuss emerging issues and determine whether further formal reports or business cases are required for consideration.

The Fire Authority has arrangements in place to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness. These derive from the Community Risk Management Plan (Strategic plan in 2021/22), setting out the Fire Authority's priorities and objectives. The Programme and Performance Board has monthly meetings chaired by the Chief Fire Officer; the board focuses on the progress being made against the strategic objectives set by the Combined Fire Authority (CFA). It scrutinises performance reports and key performance indicators from all areas of the Service and oversees significant corporate projects.

Setting meaningful objectives is a critical part of the Community Risk Management Plan and Annual Delivery Plan. The objectives maintained in the plans formed the basis for setting the budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23. Based on our review of the Narrative Statement together with the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2021/22 and 2022/23 the Fire Authority continues to improve in achieving its set objectives despite challenges faced by the Fire Authority.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Fire Authority had proper arrangements in place in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.





# 05 Appendices

# Appendix A – Management representation letter

## Management representation letter

This is the draft management letter template which Management will tailor and send back signed and dated prior to the opinion being issued.

## Management Rep Letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

[Date]

### Ernst & Young

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the [consolidated and parent] Authority financial statements of [name of entity] ("the [Group and] authority") for the year ended [balance sheet date]. 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 consolidated and parent Authority financial statements give a true and fair view of (or 'present fairly, in all material respects,') the [Group and] authority financial position of [name of entity] as of [balance sheet date] and of its financial performance (or operations) and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with, for the [Group and] the Authority, CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 20xx/xx (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our [consolidated and parent] Authority financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), 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 [Group and the parent] Authority, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 20xx/xx (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the [Group and] authority, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the consolidated and parent Authority financial statements. We believe the [consolidated and parent] 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 [Group and parent] Authority in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 20xx/xx (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)), and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the [Group and] authority financial statements are appropriately described in the [Group and] authority financial statements.
4. As members of management of the [Group and] authority, we believe that the [Group and] authority have a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with [applicable financial reporting framework] for the Group and [applicable financial reporting framework] for the Authority that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.



# Appendix A – Management representation letter

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5. *[When there are unadjusted audit differences in the current year]* We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the consolidated and parent Authority financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences because *[specify reasons for not correcting misstatement]*.
6. *[When the comparative figures have been restated]* The comparative amounts have been restated to reflect the below matter(s) and appropriate note disclosure of this (these) restatement(s) has (have) also been included in the current year's consolidated and parent Authority financial statements. *[Add a paragraph providing a brief description of each matter giving rise to a restatement and the amount(s) concerned.]* There have been no significant errors or misstatements, or changes in accounting policies, other than the matters described above, that would require a restatement of the comparative amounts in the current year's consolidated and parent Authority financial statements. Other differences in the amounts shown as comparative amounts from the amounts in the consolidated and parent Authority financial statements for the year ended *[date]* are solely the result of reclassifications for comparative purposes.
7. We confirm the *[Group and]* authority does not have securities (debt or equity) listed on a recognized exchange.
8. We have confirmed to you any changes in service organizations within the *[Group and]* authority since the last audited financial year.

## B. Non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the *[Group and]* authority's business activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible to identify and address any non-compliance with applicable laws or regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of a system of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and that we believe we have appropriately fulfilled those responsibilities.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the *[consolidated and parent]* Authority financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. *[When management is aware of the occurrence of non-compliance with laws or regulations, or has received allegations of non-compliance with laws and regulations.]* We have disclosed to you, and provided you full access to information and any internal investigations relating to, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, known to us that may have affected the *[Group or]* Authority (regardless of the source or form and including, without limitation, allegations by "whistle-blowers"), including non-compliance matters:
  - Involving financial improprieties
  - Related to laws or regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the *[consolidated and parent]* Authority financial statements
  - Related to laws or regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the *[consolidated and parent]* Authority financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the *[Group and]* authority's business, its ability to continue in business, or to avoid material penalties

# Appendix A – Management representation letter

## Management representation letter

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## Management Rep Letter

- Involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal control, or others
- 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 are reflected in the [consolidated and parent] Authority financial statements.
3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of shareholders, directors and committees of directors (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the [period] 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 [Group and] authority's related parties and all related party relationships 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 period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the [period] end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the [consolidated and parent] 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 [applicable financial reporting framework].
6. We have disclosed to you, and the [Group and] authority has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the [consolidated and parent] 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 through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you, to the extent that we are aware, any (1) unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or is reasonably likely to have occurred, 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 effect on the [consolidated and parent] Authority financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate, and (2) ransomware attacks when we paid or are contemplating paying a ransom, regardless of the amount.

# Appendix A – Management representation letter

## Management representation letter

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## Management Rep Letter

8. We have disclosed to you, and provided you full access to information and any internal investigations relating to, unauthorized access to our information technology systems that has a material effect on the [consolidated and parent] Authority financial statements, including disclosures.

### 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 [consolidated and parent] Authority financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Note [X] to the consolidated and parent Authority financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

### E. Going Concern

1. Note [X] to the consolidated and parent Authority financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Group and 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. Other than the events described in Note [X] to the [consolidated and parent] Authority financial statements, there have been no events subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the consolidated and parent Authority financial statements or notes thereto.

### G. Group audits

1. There are no significant restrictions on our ability to distribute the retained profits of the Group because of statutory, contractual, exchange control or other restrictions other than those indicated in the Group financial statements.
2. Necessary adjustments have been made to eliminate all material intra-group unrealised profits on transactions amongst parent Authority, subsidiary undertakings and associated undertakings.

### H. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the information contained within the Narrative Statement and also the Annual Governance Statement.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

### I. Climate-related matters

1. We confirm that to the best of our knowledge all information that is relevant to the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of climate-related matters has been considered and the [Group and] authority have reflected these in the consolidated and parent financial statements.

*Yours faithfully,*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Chief Financial Officer/Finance Director)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairman of the Audit Committee)



# Appendix B – 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.

The original fees for these years were based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ Our accounts opinion and value for money conclusion being unqualified;
- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Authority; and
- ▶ The Authority has an effective control environment
- ▶ The Authority complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular the Authority should have regard to paragraphs 26 - 28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly sets out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. These are set out in full in Appendix E.

Due to the reset enacted through Statutory Instrument (2024) No. 907 - The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024, the above approach is not relevant.

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
	£	£	£
Scale Fee – Code Work – Note 1	32,648	23,909	23,909
Determined Scale Fee Variation	TBC	TBC	TBC
<b>Total audit</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>
Other non-audit services	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total fees</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>

All fees exclude VAT

Note 1 - PSAA Ltd, in line with the joint statement issued DLUHC (as at that date) and the FRC is responsible for the determination of the final audit fee in respect of 2021/22 and 2022/23.

In doing so, PSAA Ltd will apply the principles that where auditors have worked in good faith to meet the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice in place at the time the work was conducted (and have reported on work that is no longer required), then they are due the appropriate fee for the work done, including where their procedures were necessary to conclude the audit by the legislatively imposed backstop date by way of a modified or disclaimed opinion and the body is due to pay the applicable fee.

# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee

We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the audit committee.

## 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	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	<p>Communication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The planned scope and timing of the audit</li> <li>▶ Any limitations on the planned work to be undertaken</li> <li>▶ The planned use of internal audit</li> <li>▶ The significant risks identified</li> </ul> <p>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</p>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures</li> <li>▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit</li> <li>▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management</li> <li>▶ Written representations that we are seeking</li> <li>▶ Expected modifications to the audit report</li> <li>▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
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"> <li>▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty</li> <li>▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements</li> <li>▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

## Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation</li> <li>▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods</li> <li>▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected</li> <li>▶ Material misstatements corrected by management</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity</li> <li>▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist</li> <li>▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Management;</li> <li>b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or</li> <li>c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected</li> <li>▶ Matters, if any, to communicate regarding management's process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud</li> <li>▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit Committee responsibility</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
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"> <li>▶ Non-disclosure by management</li> <li>▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions</li> <li>▶ Disagreement over disclosures</li> <li>▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations</li> <li>▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, integrity, objectivity and independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The principal threats</li> <li>▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness</li> <li>▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards</li> <li>▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Communication whenever significant judgements are made about threats to integrity, objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

# Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

## Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations</li> <li>▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 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</li> <li>▶ 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</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Representations	Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
System of quality management	How the system of quality management (SQM) supports the consistent performance of a quality audit	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Key audit matters that we will include in our auditor's report</li> <li>▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report</li> </ul>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance



# Appendix D - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations includes:

Any act or suspected act of omission or commission (intentional or otherwise) by the entity (including any third parties under the control of the entity such as subsidiaries, those charged with governance or management or an employee acting on behalf of the company), either intentional or unintentional, which are contrary to the prevailing laws or regulations

## Management Responsibilities:

“It is the responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity’s operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations, including compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations that determine the reported amounts and disclosures in an entity’s financial statements.”

ISA 250A, para 3

“The directors’ report must contain a statement to the effect that... so far as the director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company’s auditor is unaware, and he has taken all the steps that he ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company’s auditor is aware of that information.”

ISA 250A, para 3

“Management is responsible for communicating to us on a timely basis, to the extent that management or those charged with governance are aware, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations ...”

Audit Engagement Letter

Management’s responsibilities are also set out in the International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants’ International Code of Ethics (IESBA Code) Para 360.08

## Auditor Responsibilities

[The International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants’ International Code of Ethics \(IESBA Code\)](#) section 360 sets out the scope and procedures in relation to responding to actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.

Professional accountancy organisations who are members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) are required to adopt the IESBA Code of Ethics.

We as your auditor are required to comply with the Code by virtue of our registration with ICAEW.

“If the auditor becomes aware of information concerning an instance of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, the auditor shall obtain:

An understanding of the nature of the act and the circumstances in which it has occurred; and  
Further information to evaluate the possible effect on the financial statements

The auditor shall evaluate the implications of the identified or suspected non-compliance in relation to other aspects of the audit, including the auditor’s risk assessment and the reliability of written representations, and take appropriate action.”

ISA 250A, paras 19 and 22

## Examples of Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

### Matter

- ▶ Suspected or known fraud or bribery
- ▶ Health and Safety incident
- ▶ Payment of an unlawful dividend
- ▶ Loss of personal data
- ▶ Allegation of discrimination in dismissal
- ▶ HMRC or other regulatory investigation
- ▶ Deliberate journal mis-posting or allegations of financial impropriety
- ▶ Transacting business with sanctioned individuals

### Implication

- ▶ Potential fraud/breach of anti-bribery legislation
- ▶ Potential breach of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- ▶ Potential breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential GDPR breach
- ▶ Potential non-compliance with employment laws
- ▶ Suspicion of non-compliance with laws/regulations
- ▶ Potential fraud / breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential breach of sanctions regulations



# Appendix D - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR) (cont'd)

## What are the implications of NOCLAR matters arising?

Depending on the nature and significance of the NOCLAR matter the following steps are likely to be required, involving additional input from both management and audit.

This can have an impact on overall achievability of audit timeline and fees.

Across our portfolio of audits we have seen a steady increase in NOCLAR matters that need to be addressed as part of the audit over the past 3 years



### Management response:

Timely communication of the matter to auditors (within a couple of days)

Determine who will carry out any investigation into the matter – in-house or external specialists or mix of both

Scope the investigation, in discussion with the auditors

Evaluate findings and agree next steps

Determine effect on financial statements including disclosures

Prepare a paper, summarising the outcome of the investigation and management's conclusions

Communicate the outcome to Those Charged With Governance (TCWG) and to us as your auditors. Report to regulators where required.

### Key Reminders:

- ▶ Make sure that all areas of the business are aware of what constitutes actual or potential non-compliance and associated requirements
- ▶ Communicate with us as your auditors on a timely basis – do not wait for scheduled audit catch-ups
- ▶ Engage external specialists where needed
- ▶ Ensure that your investigation assesses any wider potential impacts arising from the matter, not just the matter itself.
- ▶ Plan upfront and consider any impact on overall accounts preparation and audit timeline – discuss the implications with us as your auditor

### Audit response:

Initial assessment of the NOCLAR matter and its potential impact

Initial consultation with risk team to determine responsive procedures and the involvement of specialists

Understand and agree scope of management's investigation with support from specialists as needed

Evaluate findings and undertake appropriate audit procedures

Determine audit related impact including accounting and disclosure and audit opinion implications

Document and consult on the outcome of our procedures

Communicate the outcome with management, TCWG and where necessary other auditors within the group or regulators

# Appendix E – PSAA Statement of Responsibilities

Our fee is based on the assumption that the Authority complies with PSAA’s Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. In particular the Authority should have regard to paragraphs 26-28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. We set out these paragraphs in full below:

## *Preparation of the statement of accounts*

*26. Audited bodies are expected to follow Good Industry Practice and applicable recommendations and guidance from CIPFA and, as applicable, other relevant organisations as to proper accounting procedures and controls, including in the preparation and review of working papers and financial statements.*

*27. In preparing their statement of accounts, audited bodies are expected to:*

- prepare realistic plans that include clear targets and achievable timetables for the production of the financial statements;*
- ensure that finance staff have access to appropriate resources to enable compliance with the requirements of the applicable financial framework, including having access to the current copy of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code, applicable disclosure checklists, and any other relevant CIPFA Codes.*
- assign responsibilities clearly to staff with the appropriate expertise and experience;*
- provide necessary resources to enable delivery of the plan;*
- maintain adequate documentation in support of the financial statements and, at the start of the audit, providing a complete set of working papers that provide an adequate explanation of the entries in those financial statements including the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the judgements and estimates made by management;*
- ensure that senior management monitors, supervises and reviews work to meet agreed standards and deadlines;*
- ensure that a senior individual at top management level personally reviews and approves the financial statements before presentation to the auditor; and*
- during the course of the audit provide responses to auditor queries on a timely basis.*

*28. If draft financial statements and supporting working papers of appropriate quality are not available at the agreed start date of the audit, the auditor may be unable to meet the planned audit timetable and the start date of the audit will be delayed.*

# Appendix F – Other Communications

## EY Transparency Report 2023

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 period ended 30 June 2023 and can be found here: [EY UK 2023 Transparency Report](#).

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