

Statement of Accounts 2023/24 – Delay Notice

This delay notice is published in accordance with regulation 9A(6) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended) ('the Regulations').

The Regulations require local authorities to have published, by 28 February 2025, a full set of accountability statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024, including:

- the Statement of Accounts together with the opinion and any certificate entered by the local auditor;
- the Annual Governance Statement; and
- the Narrative Statement.

The council published its draft unaudited Statement of Accounts (incorporating the Narrative Statement) on 28 February 2025. The Annual Governance Statement was also published on the same date.

Under the Regulations, publication of the draft unaudited Statement of Accounts triggers a period of 30 working days for the exercise of public rights. This period will run from 3 March 2025 to 11 April 2025, and further details are included in the Notice of Public Rights which was published alongside the draft unaudited Statement of Accounts.

The council's auditors are not able to issue their opinion on the Statement of Accounts until after the conclusion of the period for the exercise of public rights. As such, it has not been possible for the council to publish a full set of accountability statements in accordance with the 28 February 2025 deadline set out in the Regulations.

The key factors which led to the late publication of the draft unaudited Statement of Accounts, and the consequent delay to the publication of the accountability statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 were:

- a shortage of appropriately qualified resource within the council's Finance team following the departure/extended absence of key individuals, compounded by a sector-wide skills shortage which hampered the timely recruitment of replacements; and
- the knock-on impact of delays to the audit of the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts, which required additional quality assurance work to be carried out prior to publication.

Significant steps have already been taken by the council to address the resource shortages in the Finance team, including a restructure of the team effective from February 2025, and the successful permanent recruitment to key posts within the team. A recovery plan has been put into place and the council anticipates being able to

publish its draft 2024/25 Statement of Accounts on or before the statutory deadline of 30 June 2025.

In the meantime, the council acknowledges that it must publish its accountability statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 as soon as reasonably practicable. Following consultation with the council's external auditor, it is estimated that the statements will be published no later than 16 May 2025.

A copy of this notice has been sent to the Secretary of State.

Dated 10 March 2025

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