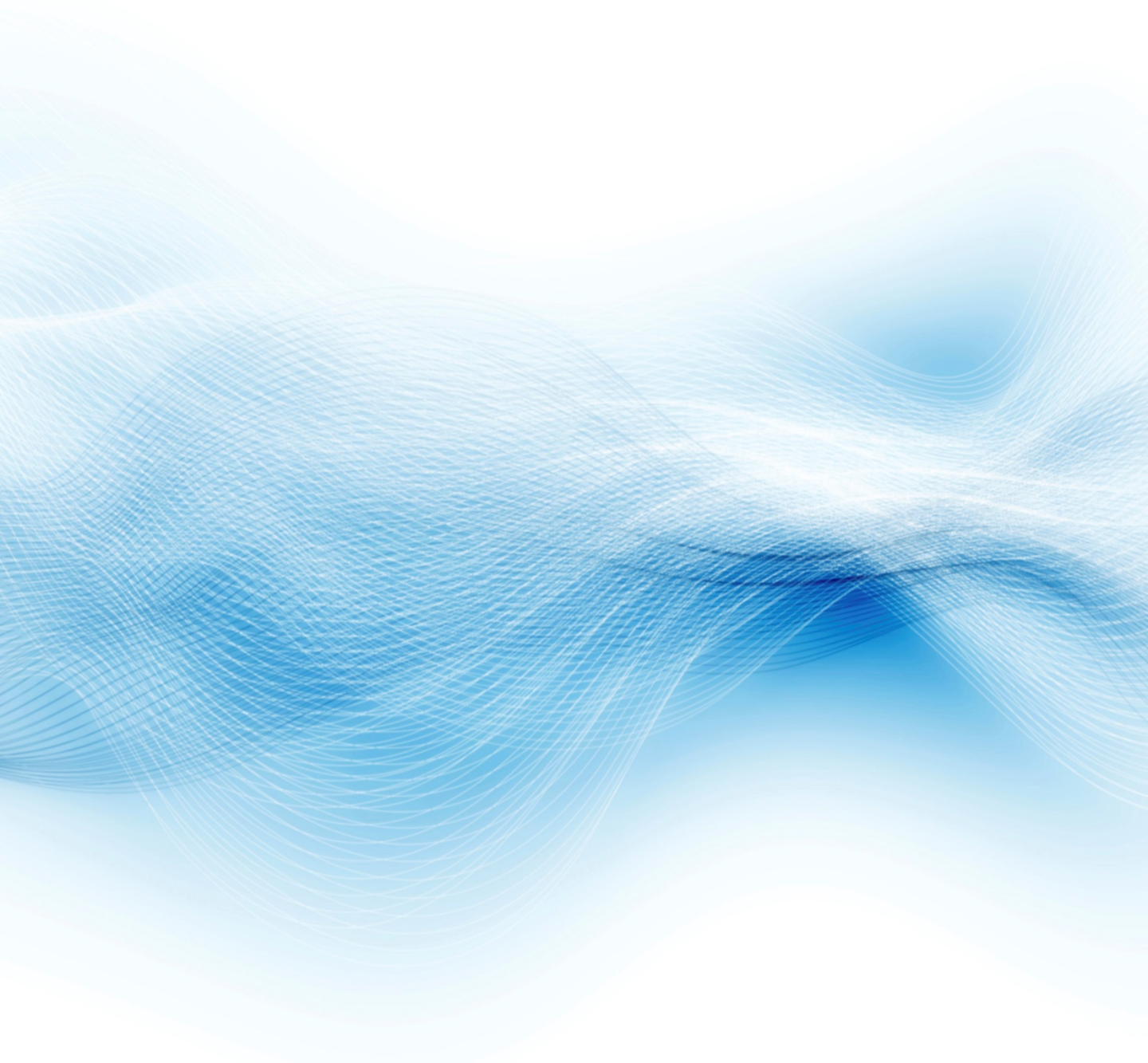




Audit Completion Report

West Lindsey District Council

Year ending 31 March 2020



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Our reports are prepared in the context of the 'Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' and the 'Appointing Person Terms of Appointment' issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited.

Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors and addressed to the Council are prepared for the sole use of the Council and we take no responsibility to any member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party.

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Governance and Audit Committee Members
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16 September 2020

Dear Members

Audit Completion Report – Year ended 31 March 2020

We are pleased to present our Audit Completion Report for the year ended 31 March 2020. The purpose of this document is to summarise our audit conclusions.

The scope of our work, including identified significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement, was outlined in our Audit Strategy Memorandum which we presented in January 2020. Since we issued our Audit Strategy Memorandum the UK has been subject to the challenges and restrictions of COVID-19. We have reviewed our Audit Strategy Memorandum and concluded that the original significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement remain appropriate.

One implication of COVID-19 for the Council was that the deadlines for submission of the draft and audited financial statements were pushed back to 31 August and 30 November respectively. Despite the revised deadlines we acknowledge the difficulties encountered by your team during accounts preparation and audit, and would like to express our thanks for the assistance of your team during our audit.

If you would like to discuss any matters in more detail then please do not hesitate to contact me on 07795 506 766.

Yours faithfully

Mark Dalton
Mazars LLP

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VAT number: 839 8356 73

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of this report and principal conclusions

The Audit Completion Report sets out the findings from our audit of West Lindsey District Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2020, and forms the basis for discussion at the Governance and Audit Committee meeting on 29 September 2020.

The detailed scope of our work as your appointed auditor for 2019/20 is set out in the National Audit Office's (NAO) Code of Audit Practice. Our responsibilities and powers are derived from the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and, as outlined in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, our audit has been conducted in accordance with International Standards of Auditing (UK) and means we focus on audit risks that we have assessed as resulting in a higher risk of material misstatement.

Sections 2 and 5 of this report outline the detailed findings from our work on the financial statements and our conclusion on the Council's arrangements to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Section 2 also includes our conclusions on the audit risks and areas of management judgement in our Audit Strategy Memorandum. The significant audit risks were:

- Management override of control
- Valuation of Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Properties and Assets Held for Sale
- Valuation of net pensions liability

Status of our work

As we outline on the following page, our work is substantially complete. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the outstanding work, at the time of issuing this report we have the following conclusions:

Opinion on the financial statements

We anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. Our proposed audit opinion is included in the draft auditor's report in Appendix B.

Value for Money conclusion

We anticipate concluding that the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Our draft auditor's report, including proposed conclusion, is provided in Appendix B.

Whole of Government Accounts (WGA)

The NAO has not yet issued its Group Instructions regarding the audit work required and its timetable for audit reporting. The Council is expected to again be below the threshold requiring a detailed review of your WGA submission, and we would expect to be able to provide the information required by NAO by the reporting deadline once confirmed.

Wider powers

The 2014 Act requires us to give an elector, or any representative of the elector, the opportunity to question us about the accounting records of the Council and to consider any objection made to the accounts. We have received no such objections or questions. Further details on the exercise of our wider powers are provided in section 2.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Status of our audit work

We have substantially completed our work on the financial statements and Value for Money conclusion for the year ended 31 March 2020. The matters outstanding at the time of preparing this report, including the normal review and completion processes, are summarised below. We will provide the Governance and Audit Committee with an update in relation to these matters in a follow-up letter, prior to signing the auditor's report.

Audit area	Status	Description of outstanding matters
Property, plant and equipment	●	We are anticipating further guidance on the form of the audit opinion wording that should be used against the backdrop of COVID-19. We currently expect that the declaration of uncertainty in property valuations caused by Covid19 will lead to an emphasis of matter paragraph in the audit opinion. We provide more information on this matter at page 7.
Pensions	●	Part of our assurance over the net pensions liability is derived from specified procedures commissioned from the external auditors of the Lincolnshire Pension Fund. We are yet to receive their final report for our consideration. The Council has not yet received its updated IAS19 valuation report following changes to the McCloud case which impact on its pension liability calculations. We provide more information on these matters at page 7.
Whole of Government Accounts (WGA)	●	NAO Group Instructions for local authority audits are not yet available and WGA returns and audit certificates cannot be issued at the present time. We provide more information on this matter at page 12.
Audit Quality Control and Completion Procedures	●	Our audit work is undergoing final stages of review by the Engagement Lead. In addition, there are residual procedures to complete, including addressing any review queries arising, updating post balance sheet event considerations to the point of issuing the opinion and obtaining final management representations.

Status

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

Our audit approach

We provided details of our intended audit approach in our Audit Strategy Memorandum presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in January 2020. We have not made any changes to our audit approach since we issued our Audit Strategy Memorandum.

Materiality

We set materiality at the planning stage of the audit at £850k using a benchmark of 2% of Gross Operating Expenditure. Our final assessment of materiality, based on the final financial statements and qualitative factors is £945k using the same benchmark. We set our trivial threshold (the level under which individual errors are not communicated to the Governance and Audit Committee), at £28k based on 3% of overall materiality.



2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

Misstatements and internal control recommendations

Section 3 confirms that we have no internal control recommendations to report to you.

Section 4 summarises the position in relation to any adjusted or unadjusted misstatements noted as part of our audit as at the time of issuing this report. If any additional misstatements are noted on completion of the outstanding work, these will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee in a follow-up letter.



2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Set out below are the significant findings from our audit. These findings include:

- our audit conclusions regarding significant risks and key areas of management judgement outlined in the Audit Strategy Memorandum;
- our comments in respect of the accounting policies and disclosures that you have adopted in the financial statements. On page 11 we have concluded whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the financial reporting framework and commented on any significant accounting policy changes that have been made during the year;
- any further significant matters discussed with management; and
- any significant difficulties we experienced during the audit.

Significant risks and key areas of management judgement

As part of our planning procedures we considered the risks of material misstatement in the Council's financial statements that required special audit consideration. Although we report identified significant risks at the planning stage of the audit in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, our risk assessment is a continuous process and we regularly consider whether new significant risks have arisen and how we intend to respond to these risks. No new risks have been identified since we issued our Audit Strategy Memorandum.

Significant risk

Management override of controls

Description of the risk

Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits.

How we addressed this risk

We addressed this risk through performing audit work over accounting estimates, journal entries and significant transactions outside the normal course of business or otherwise unusual.

Audit conclusion

Our audit procedures have not identified any material errors or uncertainties in the financial statements, or other matters that we wish to bring to Members' attention in relation to management override of controls.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Significant risk **Valuation of Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Properties and Assets held for Sale**

The Council's accounts contain material balances and disclosures relating to its holding of Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Properties and Assets held for Sale with the majority of these assets required to be carried at valuation. Due to high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with those held at valuation, we have determined there is a significant risk in this area.

How we addressed this risk

In relation to the valuation of property, plant & equipment, investment properties and assets held for sale we:

- Critically assessed the Council's valuer's scope of work, qualifications, objectivity and independence to carry out the required programme of revaluations;
- Considered whether the overall revaluation methodologies used by the Council's valuer's were in line with industry practice, the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Council's accounting policies;
- Reviewed the reasonableness of the indices applied by the valuer and considered any movement in valuation between the revaluation date and the year end;
- Critically assessed the treatment of the upward and downward revaluations in the Council's financial statements with regards to the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice; and
- Confirming that all assets have been revalued in the year; and
- Tested a sample of items of capital expenditure in 2019/20 to confirm that the additions were appropriately valued in the financial statements.

Audit conclusion

The procedures we have undertaken have not identified to date any material errors or uncertainties in the financial statements, or other matters that we wish to bring to Members' attention.

The Council's valuer has followed RICS guidance and as expected their valuation report concludes that, due the impact of COVID-19 on the property market, there is "material uncertainty" over the valuation of land and buildings and investment properties at the balance sheet date. This has been properly disclosed in the notes to the Statement of Accounts. We expect, in line with normal practice, to include reference to this disclosure as an 'emphasis of matter' in our audit report. Our draft Auditor's Report at Appendix B will be updated, once our internal consultation is complete, for any 'emphasis of matter' paragraph we include. The inclusion of an 'emphasis of matter' paragraph is not an audit opinion qualification.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Significant risk **Valuation of net pensions liability**

The Council's accounts contain material liabilities relating to the local government pension scheme. The Council uses an actuary to provide an annual valuation of these liabilities in line with the requirements of IAS 19 Employee Benefits. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with this valuation, we determined there is a significant risk in this area.

How we addressed this risk

In relation to the valuation of the Council's defined benefit pension liability we:

- Critically assessed the competency, objectivity and independence of the Lincolnshire Pension Fund's Actuary, Hymans Robertson;
- Liaised with the auditors of the Lincolnshire Pension Fund to gain assurance that the controls in place at the Pension Fund which support the IAS 19 valuation process were operating effectively;
- Test payroll transactions at the Council to provide assurance over the pension contributions which are deducted and paid to the Pension Fund by the Council;
- Reviewed the appropriateness of the Pension Asset and Liability valuation methodologies applied by the Pension Fund Actuary, and the key assumptions included within the valuation. This included comparing them to expected ranges, utilising information provided by PWC, the consulting actuary engaged by the National Audit Office; and
- Agreed the data in the IAS 19 valuation report provided by the Fund Actuary for accounting purposes to the pension accounting entries and disclosures in the Council's financial statements.

Audit conclusion

The procedures we have undertaken to date have not identified any material errors or uncertainties in the financial statements, or other matters that we wish to bring to Members' attention.

Part of our assurance over the net pensions liability is derived from specified procedures commissioned from the external auditors of the Lincolnshire Pension Fund. We are yet to receive their final report over the procedures we are seeking assurance over for our consideration.

The Council has also not yet received its updated IAS19 valuation report following changes to the McCloud case which impact on its pension liability calculations. We will update the Governance and Audit Committee if any significant reporting issues emerge from these areas.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Management judgement

Minimum Revenue Provision

Description of the management judgement

Local authorities are normally required each year to set aside some of their revenues as provision for debt in respect of capital expenditure financed by borrowing or long term credit arrangements, by reference to the prior year's closing Capital Financing Requirement. The Council borrowed £11m in 2018/19 to support its capital expenditure and has borrowed a further £5.5m in 2019/20.

The amount to be set aside each year is not prescribed although an overarching principle of prudence is expected to be adopted. This is supported by statutory guidance as to how this could be achieved and the Council is required to have regard to this in setting its MRP policy. Management judgement is therefore exercised in determining the level of its prudent provision.

Under its current policy the Council does not commit to set aside a MRP for commercial investment properties where the asset is expected to be held for a set period, at the end of which a capital receipt is expected to be realised and therefore funds will be available to repay borrowing. The Statutory Guidance issued by MHCLG states that there is a requirement to make MRP on capital expenditure financed by borrowing on investment properties. In our 2018/19 Audit Completion Report we stressed that it was important that the Council continues to ensure that, in departing from Statutory Guidance, it is able to demonstrate that it is continuing to act reasonably, that Members understand the implications, and that its approach is prudent.

How we addressed this judgement

We:

- Reviewed the Council's MRP policy against the statutory guidance;
- Assessed whether the provision had been calculated and recorded in accordance with the Council's policy;
- Assessed whether the amount provided for the period is appropriate, taking into account the Council's Capital Financing Requirement; and
- Challenged management's justification for the policy in the context of the Statutory Guidance and the Council's expenditure and borrowing..

Audit conclusion

Our audit procedures have not identified any material errors or uncertainties in the 2019/20 financial statements in relation to the Council's MRP. The total potential amounts of MRP not made (£419k) is not material for our audit opinion. We have though commented at page 11 and 16 on the importance of the Council keeping its current policy under review and ensuring it can continue to be justified in the context of MHCLG Statutory Guidance and any further revisions.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Management judgement

Group Accounts

Description of the management judgement

The Council has interests in companies and other entities that have the nature of joint ventures. Management's judgement in 2018/19 was that there was no material impact on the Statement of Accounts and Group Accounts were not prepared. It was expected that a similar line is to be followed for the Council's 2019/20 accounts.

How our audit addressed this area of management judgement

We reviewed the assessment carried out by management for 2019/20 and challenged the reasonableness of judgments management.

Audit conclusion

The procedures we have undertaken have not identified any material errors or uncertainties in the financial statements, or other matters that we wish to bring to Members' attention.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Qualitative aspects of the Council's accounting practices

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

Draft accounts were received from the Council by the 15 June 2020, well in advance of the national 31 August 2020 deadline. The accounts have required only minor amendments as a result of the audit and were supported by good working papers.

Significant matters discussed with management

Significant matters discussed with management during our audit and which had implications for our audit testing and reporting included:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the Council's business, including any potential impact on risks of material misstatement. This included the disclosures required regarding the key sources of estimation uncertainty that management has made in preparing the Statement of Accounts. The Council's valuer has followed RICS guidance and as expected their valuation report concludes that, due to the impact of COVID-19 on the property market, there is "material uncertainty" over the valuation of land and buildings and investment properties at the balance sheet date. This has been properly disclosed in the notes to the Statement of Accounts.
- The Council's adoption of the 'going concern' principle in preparing the Statement of Accounts. The 'going concern' status is confirmed through the 2019/20 local government accounting code, and must also follow International Accounting Standard (IAS) 1: Presentation of Financial Statements. We must comply with a revised ISA (UK) 570 Going Concern, effective for periods commencing on or after 15 December 2019. The above, combined with the impact of COVID-19, means an additional level of scrutiny is required over the going concern assertion in 2019/20. In particular management's explicit considerations of whether the financial statement disclosure for going concern should more explicitly describe the impact of COVID-19.
- The Council's Minimum Revenue Provision policy. We have discussed with management the Council's justification for continuing to depart from Statutory Guidance and confirmed that the impact is not material for 2019/20. We have reiterated at Section 5 of this report the need for the Council to demonstrate that it is continuing to act reasonably, that Members understand the implications of the policy, and that its approach is prudent.
- The restatement of 2018/19 balances to correct errors identified in the valuation of Plant, Property Equipment in previous years. Prior period adjustments are highlighted throughout the draft Statement of Accounts and summarised at note 6.
- The Council's response to relevant legal cases which impact on the valuation of certain pension liabilities. These included
 - The proposed remedy for the 'McCloud' case (which emerged initially in 2018/19 and was reported on in our previous Audit Completion Report) which is likely to have led to an overstatement of the original estimate of the Council's pension fund liability as at 31 March 2020. Management has requested an updated IAS19 valuation report from the Council's actuary for this matter and the impact is not expected to be material.
 - The 'Goodwin' case brought against the Secretary of State for Education earlier this year regarding discrimination owing to sexual orientation in the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The factors underpinning this case are likely to apply to the Local Government Pension Scheme and employers are being asked to determine whether there is a risk that their liabilities are materially misstated. Management has sought advice from its actuary in relation to this matter and concluded that the impact on this accounting estimate is not material and need not be included in the Council's pension liability estimates.
- Work required by our regulators and other risks emerging during the year. As a result of independent quality reviews, in particular by the Financial Reporting Council, of our audit work and that of other audit suppliers we have needed to increase the level of work we do on defined benefit pension schemes and valuation of property, plant and equipment. This and other issues emerging during the year have had an impact on the fee required to complete the audit and we will discuss any fee variation request with management on completion of our audit work and update the Committee. All fee variation requests are subject to approval from PSAA.

Significant difficulties during the audit

During the course of the audit we have had the full co-operation of management. Officers have been very helpful and responsive in addressing our audit queries. The changes to the Council's and Mazars' working arrangements' in response to COVID-19 and other pressures across the sector has led to a number of challenges during the year-end accounts closedown and audit process. There have understandably been some difficulties in carrying out our normal audit procedures and obtaining the audit evidence required but with the assistance of officers and strong remote working arrangements these have so far been resolved.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Wider responsibilities

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

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

We have not exercised any of these powers as part of our 2019/20 audit.

The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account. We have not received any questions or objections.

Possible delay in Audit certificate

The issue of the Audit Certificate confirms that we have discharged all of our audit responsibilities and that the audit is formally 'closed'. The Audit Certificate would normally be published in our Auditor's Report on the Statement of Accounts alongside the accounts opinion and value for money conclusion. The NAO has not yet issued its Group Instructions for local authority audits. If it looks like these Instructions are to be significantly delayed then we may agree with management to issue the Auditor's Report, but without the Audit Certificate. We would then issue the Audit Certificate separately as soon as we are able to do so. We will update the Governance and Audit Committee when more information is known but at this stage the draft Auditor's Report at Appendix B assumes that we are able to issue the Audit Certificate alongside the accounts audit opinion and value for money conclusion.



3. INTERNAL CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of our audit is to express an opinion on the financial statements. As part of our audit we have considered the internal controls in place relevant to the preparation of the financial statements. We do this in order to design audit procedures to allow us to express an opinion on the financial statement and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, nor to identify any significant deficiencies in their design or operation.

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

Based the audit work carried out this year, we have not identified any significant control deficiencies in 2019/20 that we are required to report to you and there were none reported in 2018/19 which we were required to follow up.



4. SUMMARY OF MISSTATEMENTS

We are pleased to report that no material misstatements have been identified during our audit.

A small number of disclosure amendments to the notes to the Statement of Accounts have been agreed with management to correct minor errors. None of these are significant and we are not required to highlight them in this report.

There are no unadjusted misstatements identified during the course of the audit above the trivial reporting threshold of £28k. As described at page 8 the Council is expecting to receive an updated IAS19 valuation report with an updated estimate for the net pensions liability. We will update the Governance and Audit Committee if the new IAS19 report results in any reportable misstatements.



5. VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION

Introduction

We are required to form a conclusion as to whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out in order to form our conclusion, and sets out the criterion and sub-criteria that we are required to consider.

The overall criterion is that, 'in all significant respects, the Council had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.' To assist auditors in reaching a conclusion on this overall criterion, the following sub-criteria are set out by the NAO:

- Informed decision making
- Sustainable resource deployment
- Working with partners and other third parties

Our approach

Our overall approach is set out in our Audit Strategy Memorandum and involves a detailed risk assessment at the planning stage to identify whether or not a Value for Money (VFM) risk exists. Risk, in the context of our VFM work, is the risk that we come to an incorrect conclusion rather than the risk of the arrangements in place at the Council being inadequate. As set out in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, for the 2019/20 financial year, we identified no significant audit risks. We did though identify the following as matters which we need to keep under close review during our audit and have summarised our findings on the following page:

- Commercialisation - we identified the need to continue to track the governance arrangements supporting the Council's investment decisions and consider the Council's justification for its MRP policy.
- Financial sustainability – we needed to consider the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and update our assessment of this risk area before forming our final VFM conclusion.

Before drawing our conclusion we have also:

- Updated our risk assessment for any new or emerging issues through discussions with management and updating our review of committee reports;
- Reviewed the Council's Annual Governance Statement for any significant issues; and
- Considered the Council's financial outturn position as presented in the Statement of Accounts.

From the work performed, no new significant VFM risks were identified and we have no additional matters to report.

In April 2020 NAO issued an update to its VFM guidance to auditors which set out how local auditors should approach considering the impact of COVID-19 on their 2019-20 VFM arrangements conclusion risk assessment. The guidance states that auditors should generally consider local bodies' arrangements and their response to the pandemic as part of their 2020/21 work on VFM arrangements, and that only where there is a clear indication of a significant failure of arrangements during the 2019/20 financial year as a result of COVID-19 would it be appropriate to raise a 2019/20 significant risk. We have not identified any significant failures in the Council's arrangements during 2019/20 and are satisfied that no additional significant VFM risks have been identified in relation to these matters.

The COVID-19 lockdown occurred in the final two weeks of the Council's financial year and the impact on the 2019/20 financial outturn was not significant. The 2019/20 £1.5m underspend for the year was in-line with earlier forecasts and has been transferred to general reserves to support future spending. At Quarter 1 of 2020/21 the Council was reporting an emerging significant shortfall in income from various sources and additional cost pressures. The Council had received central Government grant support and had reprofiled planned revenue and capital spend but net expenditure was forecast to be around £0.6m above the grant available, with the Council expecting to meet the shortfall from reserves. There was a recognition that any significant income collection issues were not likely to be fully clear until Quarter 2 reporting was underway. Also there was an acknowledgement that national funding reviews were unlikely to now take place, so creating more uncertainty for the medium term. Management is currently updating its 2020/21 budget and MTFS assumptions with a detailed report to be considered by Councillors in November 2020.

The Council's response to the pandemic will be a major focus of our 2020/21 audit and value for money assessment under the new Code of Audit Practice framework and supporting NAO guidance. We will continue to liaise with management and update our understanding of the Council's arrangements as part of risk assessment and reporting in the new financial year.

Our overall Value for Money conclusion

We have completed our procedures and, as set out in our draft auditor's report included at Appendix B, we intend to issue an unqualified Value for Money conclusion for the 2019/20 financial year.



5. VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION

We have summarised below the matters we identified in our 2019/20 Audit Strategy Memorandum as needing to be specifically kept under review as part of our ongoing value for money risk assessment.

Matter identified	Work undertaken	Conclusion
<p>Commercialisation - The Council has continued with its programme of commercial property investments. There is an approved £30m for these investments, with around £16m spent to the end of 2018/19 on 5 properties and a further £7m budgeted for 2019/20. This expenditure has been largely funded by internal and external borrowing. Under the Council's current MRP policy it proposes that the Council will not be making MRP provision for investment property expenditure, which is a departure from the relevant Statutory Guidance. We will continue to track the governance arrangements supporting these investment decisions and consider the Council's justification for its MRP policy.</p>	<p>The Council's total spend at the end of 2019/20 was around £21.6m with one additional property having been acquired during the year. The underlying governance arrangements have continued to operate throughout the year as expected. The actual investment returns have been in line with targets.</p> <p>The Council has continued to operate within its MRP policy and the total MRP not charged under the Statutory Guidance was not material. The Council has set up mitigating arrangements including establishing a Valuation Volatility Reserve regarding potential fall in the assets' values. It is important that the Council continues to ensure that, in departing from Statutory Guidance, it is able to demonstrate that it is continuing to act reasonably, that Members understand the implications, and that its approach is prudent. We will continue to discuss this aspect with management and will follow it up as part of our 2020/21 audit work.</p> <p>The Council is facing difficulties in 2020/21 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic with its tenants' experiencing trading challenges as a result of restrictions during and following the lockdown period. The Council is taking steps to protect its investments and working with tenants to agree rental payments. The potential impact on forecast income and target rental are being taken into account in the process of updating the Council's 2020/21 budget and MTFS.</p>	<p>We are satisfied that this has not given rise to a significant risk to the value for money conclusion.</p>
<p>Financial sustainability – the opening MTFP identified a likely funding gap of nearly £0.5m by 2023/24. The Council has continued to work on updating forecasts and modelling its funding requirements. We need to consider the progress made and update our assessment of this risk area before forming our final VFM conclusion.</p>	<p>The Council recognises the key issues are continuing to achieve efficiencies and generate income to balance its medium term financial plan, in the face of demand and cost pressures.</p> <p>A balanced budget was set for 2020/21 and the MTFP sets out the key assumptions on both income and expenditure as well as the savings required over the period.</p> <p>The budget gaps in 2021/22 onwards are regarded by management as manageable, although there is continuing uncertainty regarding the impact of the government's expected Fair Funding Review and future settlements.</p> <p>The Council needs to continue with the work in hand. The Council is revisiting these assumptions and its MTFS in the light of Covid-19 and expects to present an updated budget and MTFS in November 2020.</p>	<p>We are satisfied that this has not given rise to a significant risk to the value for money conclusion.</p>

APPENDIX A

DRAFT MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION LETTER

Mazars LLP
Park View House
58 The Ropewalk
Nottingham
NG1 5DW

xx September 2020

Dear Sirs

West Lindsey District Council - audit for year ended 31 March 2020

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of West Lindsey District Council (the Council) for the year ended 31 March 2019 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the Code) and applicable law.

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

My responsibility for the financial statements and accounting information

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

My responsibility to provide and disclose relevant information

I have provided you with:

- access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other material;
- additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
- unrestricted access to individuals within the Council you determined it was necessary to contact in order to obtain audit evidence.

I confirm as Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) that I have taken all the necessary steps to make me aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that you, as auditors, are aware of this information.

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

Accounting records

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

Accounting policies

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

Accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value

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

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DRAFT MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION LETTER

(CONTINUED)

Contingencies

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

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

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

There are no contingent gains which should be disclosed.

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

Laws and regulations

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

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

Fraud and error

I acknowledge my responsibility as Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

I have disclosed to you:

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

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

Related party transactions

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

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

Future commitments

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

Subsequent events

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

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

APPENDIX A

DRAFT MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION LETTER (CONTINUED)

Other matters

I can confirm in relation to the following matters that:

- Brexit - we have assessed the potential impact of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union and that the disclosure in the Narrative Report and note 3 to the Statement of Accounts fairly reflects that assessment.
- COVID-19 - we have assessed the potential impact of the COVID-19 Virus pandemic on the Council and the Statement of Accounts, including the impact of mitigation measures and uncertainties, and are satisfied that the Statement of Accounts and supporting notes fairly reflect that assessment.

Going concern

To the best of my knowledge there is nothing to indicate that the Council will not continue as a going concern in the foreseeable future. The period to which I have paid particular attention in assessing the appropriateness of the going concern basis is not less than twelve months from the date of approval of the accounts.

Unadjusted misstatements (if applicable)

I confirm that the effects of the uncorrected misstatements identified at the appendix to this letter are immaterial, both individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole.

Yours faithfully

Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151)

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APPENDIX B

DRAFT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Subject to completion of internal consultation

Independent auditor's report to the members of West Lindsey District Council

Report on the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of West Lindsey District Council ('the Council') and its subsidiaries ('the Group') for the year ended 31 March 2020, which comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Collection Fund and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of West Lindsey District Council as at 31st March 2019 and of the Council's expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities section of our report. We are independent of the Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151)' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Council's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

APPENDIX B

DRAFT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

Responsibilities of the Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer, the Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. The Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) is also responsible for such internal control as the Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Assistant Director, Finance Business Support and Property Services (S151) is required to comply with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 and prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis, unless the Council is informed of the intention for dissolution without transfer of services or function to another entity. The Chief Executive is responsible for assessing each year whether or not it is appropriate for the Council to prepare its accounts on the going concern basis and disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

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

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

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

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

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Conclusion on West Lindsey District Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

Conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2020, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, West Lindsey District Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Basis for conclusion

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued in April 2020, as to whether the Council had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined this criterion as that necessary for us to consider in satisfying ourselves whether the Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.

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

Responsibilities of the Council

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

APPENDIX B

DRAFT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

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

We are required under section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice requires us to report to you our conclusion relating to proper arrangements. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Use of the audit report

This report is made solely to the members of West Lindsey District Council, as a body, in accordance with part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 44 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members of the Council those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the members of the Council, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Certificate (to be confirmed)

We certify that we have completed the audit of West Lindsey District Council in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice.

Mark Dalton

For and on behalf of Mazars LLP

Park View House
58 The Ropewalk
Nottingham
NG1 5DW

September 2020

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APPENDIX C INDEPENDENCE

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

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



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