

**Audit Committee
Special meeting
Wednesday, 26 February 2025**

PART I

Statement of Accounts 2023/24

DOF

1 Summary

1.1 This report sets out the latest position for external audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.

1.1.1 The latest version of the Statement of Accounts 2023/24 is presented to the Committee for approval alongside the Letter of Representation.

1.1.2 The accounts will be signed and published on the Council's website ahead of the relevant backstop date of 28 February 2025.

2 Details

2.1 External Audit of Statement of Accounts 2023/24

2.1.1 The 2023/24 statement of accounts were reissued on 3 December 2024. The draft incorporated final amendments to opening balances from prior years, the final valuation received from the pension fund actuary in relation to the Council's pension asset and liability, and the valuations for the Council's fixed assets which were not available when the original draft was published at the end of May 2023. A period of public inspection ran from 3 December 2024 to 17 January 2025

2.1.2 The external audit has now been concluded. The Audit Completion Report for 2023/24 from Azets, the External Auditors for 2023/24, is elsewhere on the agenda. As previously discussed at Committee, this gives a disclaimed opinion due to the pervasive impact of the prior year disclaimers which impact opening balances and in-year movements.

2.1.3 As set out in the audit completion report, due to the timing of the backstop for the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/24 accounts, there has not been sufficient time for the auditors to complete all the standard audit work for 2023/24. However, Azets have prioritised available resources in carrying out audit procedures to provide them with audit information which can be accreted to futures audit periods in line with the guidance set out in the Local Authority Reset and Recover Implementation Guidance.

2.1.4 Further information on the plan to rebuild assurance over subsequent years is expected to be presented to the Committee in June, alongside the draft Audit Plan for 2024/25.

2.1.5 The Annual Audit Report (AAR) which will comment on the arrangements for value for money in respect of 2023/24 and includes reviewing the arrangements in place to monitor and mitigate the commercial, economic and other risks relating to the Council's investment in the Wimbledon income strip deal, has not yet been received.

2.1.6 The Following items have been updated in the final version of the accounts:

- Disclosure of Audit Fee Expense (Note 15)
- Minor presentation, formatting and disclosure issues

2.2 **Audit Backstop for Accounts up to and including 2022/23**

2.2.1 The final, disclaimed, accounts for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 were signed on 13th December 2024.

3 **Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 To approve the Statement of Accounts 2023/24 at Appendix 1.

3.2 To approve the Letter of Representation 2023/24 at Appendix 2

3.3 To agree that the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, can make further changes to the Statement of Accounts 2023/24 and the Letter of Representation for 2023/24 that may arise during the completion of the audit.

3.4 Agree that the Committee authorise and instruct the chair to sign the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 once finalised and signed by the Section 151 Officer to confirm that the Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of:

(a) The financial position of the authority at the end of the financial year to which it relates; and

(b) That authority's income and expenditure for that financial year.

4 **Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

None specific.

5 **Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

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Data Quality

Data sources:

None used in the preparation of the report

Background Papers

Statement of Accounts update to Audit Committee December 2024

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Statement of Accounts 2023/24

Appendix 2: Letter of Representation 2023/24