



Oldham
Council

Report to Audit Committee

2020/21 Annual Statement of Accounts

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Abdul Jabbar MBE – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member - Finance and Low Carbon

Officer Contact: Anne Ryans – Director of Finance

Report Author: Lee Walsh – Finance Manager (Capital and Treasury)
Ext. 6608

2 November 2021

Reason for Decision

The Audit Committee is charged with scrutiny and approval of the Statement of Accounts. This report presents an update the current position regarding the audit and approval of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts and an update on the outstanding audit issues presented previously to the Committee.

Executive Summary

The report presents an update on the Council's Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2020/21.

Members will recall that at the meeting of the Audit Committee on 29 July 2021, the Statement of Accounts was presented to the Committee for approval. However, there was still work outstanding on the Council's group accounts and the IT audit. The External Auditors also needed to have assurance with regard to the audit of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF). As such, the final approval of the accounts was delegated to the Vice Chair of the Audit Committee after consultation with the Director of Finance and on receipt of advice from the External Auditor.

The audit has now been concluded and the accounts were signed off on the 30 September 2021 in line with the statutory deadline. It must be noted that the Statement of Accounts had not significantly changed since the presentation to the Committee on 29 July 2021.

As part of the letter issued by Mazars LLP, "Conclusion of Pending Matters - Audit Completion Report", the External Auditors made 3 additional recommendations. Two recommendations are from the conclusion of the work on the IT audit with one recommendation in relation to group accounts.

Recommendations

Audit Committee members are recommended to note the content of the report and the letter from Mazars LLP "Conclusion of Pending Matters - Audit Completion Report".

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council is required to prepare a Statement of Accounts for each financial year in accordance with statutory timelines and accounting practices. The accounts are subject to scrutiny and approval by the Council's Audit Committee.
- 1.2 The Council submitted its draft financial statements to the External Auditors, Mazars LLP, on 6 June 2021 which was a little later than expected due to the impact of the pandemic. In order to facilitate the audit process, the Council made working papers available to the auditors prior to the handover of the Statement of Accounts. The public inspection period began on 17 June and concluded on 28 July 2021.
- 1.3 Following review by Mazars LLP the audited Statement of Accounts was considered at Audit Committee on 29 July 2021. This gave Members the opportunity to consider the key issues, understand any movements from the draft accounts and ask officers and the External Auditor any relevant questions. Members also considered the draft Audit Completion Report (ACR) prepared by the External Auditor.
- 1.4 However, at the meeting on the 29 July 2021, there was some outstanding items that needed to be completed. The outstanding items from the Council's perspective were:
- a) Work on the consolidation of the Council's Group Accounts
 - b) The completion of work on the IT audit

However, before Mazars can finalise the audit of the Council's pension fund liability they must have assurance with regard to the audit of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF). This item was beyond the influence of the Council.

- 1.5 Members were, however, content to accept the amended set of financial statements and delegated the approval of the Accounts to the Vice Chair of the Audit Committee after consultation with the Director of Finance on receipt of advice from the External Auditors.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The letter from the Auditors, Mazars LLP at Appendix 1 details the conclusion of the matters which were still outstanding in the Audit Completion Report presented on 29 July 2021. Following the completion of the final element of audit work on the Council's Group Accounts, the External Auditors have made one recommendation on the consolidation of the Group's Debtors and Creditors. The impact on the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts was not considered to be material therefore the accounts were not adjusted. However, the Council will incorporate the recommendation into the 2021/22 close down process. The IT audit was completed with two low priority recommendations for improvement identified.
- 2.2 Following the completion of the outstanding work, and in line with the authority delegated by Audit Committee, the Vice Chair of the Audit Committee approved and signed the Statement of Accounts on 30 September 2021 after consultation with the Director of Finance and after advice from the External Auditors. This was in line with the statutory deadline and enabled the Council to be one of only 9% of Local Authorities to have its accounts approved by the deadline.
- 2.3 Mazars LLP is yet to complete work on the Value for Money (VFM) opinion in respect of the Council's arrangements for the year ended 31 March 2021. This work is still

ongoing and at the time of preparing this report, the auditors have not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements that require them to make a recommendation, however they will continue to undertake work on the Council's arrangements and update the Audit Committee.

2.4 It is important to note that the audit process cannot be fully finalised until all the VFM work is finalised and the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) audit is completed. The WGA audit cannot be undertaken yet and is programmed for later in the year.

2.5 Following the conclusion of the VFM and WGA audit work the Council will advertise the completion of the 2020/21 audit process on its website and update Members of the Audit Committee.

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 The Audit Committee members can either choose to note the content of the report and the Auditors letter 'Conclusion of Pending Matters – Audit Completion Report' or not.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 The preferred option is that Audit Committee notes the content of the report and the Auditors letter "Conclusion of Pending Matters – Audit Completion Report".

5 Consultation

5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Council's External Auditors, Mazars LLP, in addition members of the public have the opportunity to inspect the Council's Statement of Accounts and supporting documents. The 30-day public inspection concluded on 28 July 2021.

5.2 The draft Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2020/21 was presented to the Audit Committee meeting of 29 June 2021 which was a key element of the consultation process. Formal presentation of the accounts to Members of the Audit Committee at the meeting on 29 July 2021 allowed the opportunity for a further review and scrutiny prior to the approval of the accounts. All questions and issues raised by Members were answered to the satisfaction of the Audit Committee.

5.3 In line with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, the Accounts will also be presented for noting to Cabinet and Council.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 Dealt with in the body of the report.

7 Legal Services Comments

7.1 There are no Legal implications.

8 Co-operative Agenda

8.1 Improving the quality and timeliness of the financial information available to citizens of Oldham supports the cooperative ethos of the Council.

9 Human Resources Comments

9.1 There are no Human Resource implications.

10 Risk Assessments

10.1 There are no risk implications as a result of this report.

11 IT Implications

11.1 There are no IT implications as a result of this report.

12 Property Implications

12.1 There are no Property implications.

13 Procurement Implications

13.1 There are no Procurement implications.

14 Environmental and Health and Safety Implications

14.1 There are no Environmental and Health & Safety implications as a result of this report.

15 Equality, Community Cohesion and Crime implications

15.1 There are no Equality, community cohesion and crime implications.

16 Equality Impact Assessment Completed?

16.1 Not Applicable

17 Key Decision

17.1 No

18 Key Decision Reference

18.1 Not Applicable.

19 Background Papers

19.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act:

File Ref: Background Papers are provided at Appendix 1.
Officer Name: Lee Walsh
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20 Appendices

20.1 Appendix 1 – Letter from Mazars LLP “Conclusion of Pending Matters – Audit Completion Report”

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30 September 2021

Dear Members

Conclusion of pending matters– Audit completion report

Following on from our recent meeting and as required by International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland), I am writing to communicate the conclusion of those matters that were marked as outstanding within the Audit Completion Report dated 27 July 2021.

The outstanding matters and the conclusions reached are detailed below:

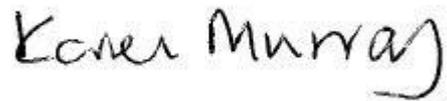
Matter	Conclusion reached
Income and Expenditure testing	We have completed our income and expenditure testing. There are no matters arising to report to the Committee.
Valuation of Property, Plant & Equipment and Investment Properties	We have completed our work on the Council's valuations of property, plant and equipment and investment property. There are no matters arising to report to the Committee.
Pension liability	<p>We have completed our work on the Council's pension liabilities. In addition to the audit procedures listed in our Audit Completion Report we also confirmed that the Pension Fund auditor work included comparing the asset values used for the actuarial valuation to those subjected to audit by the Pension Fund auditor.</p> <p>There are no matters arising to report to the Committee.</p>
PFI	We have completed our work on the Council's PFI disclosures. There are no matters arising to report to the Committee.

Matter	Conclusion reached
Financial instruments	We have completed our work on the Council's Financial Instrument disclosures. There are no matters arising to report to the Committee.
IT general controls testing	We have completed our testing of the Council's IT general controls. While there are no material issues identified we have raised two low priority recommendations for the Council to address. These are included in Appendix A to this letter.
Group consolidation	<p>We have completed our work on the Council's consolidation of group accounts.</p> <p>This completion work concluded that the Council has not correctly identified the debtor and creditor intra-group consolidation adjustments for its two consolidated subsidiaries, Miocare and Unity Partnerships. In producing its group accounts the Council should remove the transactions and balances that it has with these entities and which they have with the Council. Our analysis indicates that the group debtors balance appears to be overstated and is likely to include amounts that Miocare and Unity are owed from the Council which should be removed on consolidation. The Council has been unable to identify the precise value of the overstatement but we are satisfied the error could not be material since the total amount of debtors for these two entities is itself not remotely material. We have reported the total amount of the debtors for Miocare and Unity (£2.3m) as an unadjusted audit difference in Appendix A.</p> <p>We have also included a low priority recommendation in Appendix A to this letter for the Council to address in its closedown arrangements for 2021/22.</p>
Related party transactions	We have completed our work on the Council's related party transaction disclosures. There are no matters arising to report to the Committee.
Financial statements, Annual Governance Statement and letter of representation	We have received the final signed statements and the signed letter of representation. There are no matters arising to report to the Committee.

30 September 2021

If you wish to discuss these or any other points then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and a trailing flourish at the end of the name.

Karen Murray

Partner

Appendix A – Updated Audit Findings

Unadjusted audit difference

As reported above the audit work on the group consolidation has identified that the consolidation adjustments for the debtors has led to an error. The precise quantification of the error is not possible without significant additional work. The total value of debtors which may be affected is those relating to Unity Partnership and Miocare that have been consolidated, and these total £2.3m in the final financial statements. We are reporting that the total unadjusted difference is this value – which is not material – although it is likely that the actual audit difference is lower than that level. The impact of the error is that both Group debtors and creditors are overstated by the same amount, and there is no impact on the Group Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement or the overall Group Net Assets.

	CIES		Balance Sheet	
	Dr	Cr	Dr	Cr
Dr Group Creditors	-	-	£2.3m	-
Cr Group Debtors	-	-	-	£2.3m

Recommendation 1

Description of deficiency

The Council's closedown arrangements for the consolidation of its group entities includes a process to identify transactions and balances within the group entities. This involves interrogating the Council records to identify transactions and balances, however it does not include interrogation of the Miocare and Unity Partnership accounts and records or agreeing the entries between the three organisations.

Potential effects

The closedown arrangements may not identify all the transactions and balances within the group that should be removed on consolidation of the group accounts. This appears to be the case in 2020/21 from our analysis which shows that the Miocare and Unity Partnership debtors consolidated into the balance sheet are a greater value than the total amount of income consolidated into the CIES.

Recommendation

The Council should review its closedown processes for the group consolidation to incorporate liaison with the Miocare and Unity Partnership finance officers to identify all transactions and balances that are within the group and remove these on consolidation.

Recommendation 2

Description of deficiency

Our testing of Council's IT general controls identified that users with access to Agresso are normally configured to use a single sign on (SSO). However this is not configured for all users, and users Agresso passwords do not expire if they are not using a SSO.

Potential effects

Regular password changes is a best practice element of good password controls and not requiring them to be changed regularly weakens the password control environment.

Recommendation

The Council should ensure consistency in the password control requirements for all Agresso users regardless of whether they use single sign on or not.

Recommendation 3

Description of deficiency

Our review of the Council's IT Service Continuity Plan confirmed that it outlined the planned response to various scenarios in the case of not being able to access services. However the plan does not incorporate a specific IT disaster recovery strategy and indicates an assumption that the servers and broader network infrastructure is unaffected.

Potential effects

The reliance on IT network and server capacity and performance means that these are critical elements of the Council's control framework and should be subject to disaster recovery procedures. Not clearly articulating those procedures increases the risk that IT failures are not promptly and accurately resolved.

Recommendation

The Council should ensure that it clearly articulates its IT disaster recovery strategy and approach and should regularly test the disaster recovery approach.

Appendix B – Proposed Audit Report

See following pages

Independent auditor's report to the members of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on the financial statements

We have audited the financial statements of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council ('the Council') and its subsidiaries ('the Group') for the year ended 31 March 2021, which comprise the Council and Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statements, the Council and Group Movement in Reserves Statements, the Council and Group Balance Sheets, the Council and Group Cash Flow Statements, the Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement, the Statement of Movement in the Housing Revenue Account, the Collection Fund Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and the Group as at 31st March 2021 and of the Council's and the Group's expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Director of Finance's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Note 34 (1.1) of the financial statements explains how the Director of Finance formed their judgement that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis of preparation for the Council and the Group.

In accordance with Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statement and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom, our review of management's assessment of going concern was focused on the extent to which there are any indications that the functions of the Council and Group will not continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

Our audit procedures to evaluate the Director of Finance's assessment of the Council's and the Group's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting included but were not limited to:

- undertaking an initial assessment at the planning stage of our audit to identify events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Council's and the Group's ability to continue as a going concern in the context of the guidance in Practice Note 10;
- obtaining an understanding of the relevant controls relating to the Director of Finance's going concern assessment;
- making enquiries of the Director of Finance to understand the period of assessment considered by them, the assumptions they considered and the implication of those when assessing the Council's and the Group's continuation of service;
- obtaining and reviewing the Director of Finance's written going concern assessment; and
- considering whether the Director of Finance's assessment is proportionate to the risks associated with going concern for the local government sector.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Director of Finance with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Key audit matters

Key audit matters are those matters that, in our professional judgement, were of most significance in our audit of the financial statements of the current period and include the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) we identified, including those which had the greatest effect on: the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit; and directing the efforts of the engagement team. These matters were addressed in the context of our audit of the financial statements as a whole, and in forming our opinion thereon, and we do not provide a separate opinion on these matters.

We summarise below the key audit matters in forming our audit opinion above, together with an overview of the principal audit procedures performed to address each matter and, where relevant, key observations arising from those procedures. These matters, together with our findings, were communicated to those charged with governance through our Audit Completion Report.

Key audit matter	How our scope addressed this matter
<p>Valuation of Council Property, Plant and Equipment <i>Note 17 to the financial statements discloses information on the Council's holding of property, plant and equipment (PP&E) which includes £77.1m of Council Dwellings and £500.4m of Other Land & Buildings held at current value at 31 March 2021.</i></p> <p>The CIPFA Code of Practice requires that where assets are subject to revaluation, their year-end carrying value should reflect the current value at that date. The Council has adopted a rolling revaluation model which sees all such property, plant & equipment revalued in a five-year</p>	<p>Our audit procedures included, but were not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining an understanding of the skills, experience and qualifications of the valuer, and considering the appropriateness of the instructions to the valuer from the Council. • Obtaining an understanding of the basis of valuation applied by the valuer in the year. • Obtaining an understanding of the Council's approach to ensure that assets not subject to revaluation in 2020/21 are materially fairly stated.

Key audit matter	How our scope addressed this matter
<p>cycle. The valuation of property, plant & equipment involves the use of a management expert (the valuer) and incorporates assumptions and estimates which impact materially on the reported value. There are risks relating to the valuation process. The Council employs a valuation expert to provide valuations, however there remains a high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with the valuations of property, plant and equipment due to the significant judgements and number of variables involved. As a result of the rolling programme of revaluations, there is a risk that individual assets which have not been revalued for up to four years are not valued at the current value at the balance sheet date. In addition, as the valuations are undertaken through the year there is a risk that the current value of the assets could be materially different at the year end.</p> <p>Council Dwelling valuations are based on Existing Use Value, discounted by a factor to reflect that the assets are used for Social Housing (EUV-SH). The Social Housing adjustment factor is prescribed in MHCLG guidance, but this guidance indicates that where a valuer has evidence that this factor is different in the Council's area they can use their more accurate local factor. There is a risk that the Council's application of the valuer's assumptions is not in line with the statutory requirements and that the valuation is not supported by detailed evidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining an understanding of the Council's approach to ensure that assets revalued through 2020/21 are materially fairly stated at the year end. • Sample testing the completeness and accuracy of underlying data provided by the Council and used by the valuer as part of their valuations. • Using relevant market and cost data to assess the reasonableness of the valuation as at 31 March 2021. • Testing the accuracy of how valuation movements were presented and disclosed in the financial statements. <p>Our observations</p> <p>We obtained sufficient appropriate evidence to conclude that the valuation of land & buildings included in the financial statements is reasonable.</p>
<p>Valuation of Investment Property</p> <p><i>The Council's Balance Sheet discloses their Investment Properties to be valued at £18.8m at 31 March 2021.</i></p> <p>The CIPFA Code requires that where Investment Property assets are subject to revaluation, their year-end carrying value should reflect the fair value at that date. The valuation of Investment Property involves the use of a management expert (the valuer) and incorporates assumptions and estimates which impact materially on the reported value. There are risks relating to the valuation process.</p> <p>The Council employs valuation experts to provide valuations, however there remains a high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with the valuations of property, plant and equipment due to the significant judgements and number of variables involved.</p>	<p>Our audit procedures included, but were not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining an understanding of the skills, experience and qualifications of the valuer, and considering the appropriateness of the instructions to the valuer from the Council. • Obtaining an understanding of the basis of valuation applied by the valuer in the year. • Obtaining assurance on the appropriateness of the methodology and assumptions adopted by the Council's valuer. • Comparing the valuation to our external valuation expert's estimate of the valuation.

Key audit matter	How our scope addressed this matter
<p>Valuation of the Council's and the Group's Defined Benefit Net Pension Liability</p> <p><i>The Council's balance sheet discloses the Council pension liability to be valued at £444.2m at 31 March 2021 and comprises assets of £1,094.3m and liabilities of £1,538.5m.</i></p> <p><i>The Group Balance Sheet discloses the group pension liability to be valued at £467.9m at 31 March 2021 and comprises assets of £1,225.9m and liabilities of £1,654.0m.</i></p> <p>The net pension liability represents a material element of the Council and the Group balance sheet. The Council and its consolidated subsidiaries are admitted bodies of Greater Manchester Pension Fund, which had its last triennial valuation completed as at 31 March 2019. The valuation of the Local Government Pension Scheme relies on a number of assumptions, most notably around the actuarial assumptions, and actuarial methodology which results in the Council's and the subsidiaries' overall valuations. There are financial assumptions and demographic assumptions used in the calculation of the valuation, such as the discount rate, inflation rates and mortality rates. The assumptions should also reflect the profile of the Council's and the subsidiaries' employees, and should be based on appropriate data. The basis of the assumptions is derived on a consistent basis year to year, or updated to reflect any changes.</p> <p>There is a risk that the assumptions and methodology used in valuing the pension obligations are not reasonable or appropriate to the Council's or the subsidiaries' circumstances. This could have a material impact to the Council and Group net pension liability in 2020/21.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample testing the completeness and accuracy of underlying data used by the valuer as part of their valuations. <p>Our observations</p> <p>We obtained sufficient appropriate evidence to conclude that the valuation of investment properties included in the financial statements is reasonable.</p> <p>Our audit procedures included, but were not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining an understanding of the skills, experience and qualifications of the actuary, and considering the appropriateness of the instructions to the actuary from the Council. • Obtaining confirmation from the auditor of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund that the Pension Fund has designed and implemented controls to prevent and detect material misstatement. This included the controls in place to ensure data provided to the Actuary by the Pension Fund for the purposes of the IAS19 valuation of the gross asset and liability is complete and accurate. • Reviewing a summary of the work performed by the Pension Fund auditor on the Pension Fund investment assets, and evaluating whether the outcome of their work would affect our consideration of the council's share of Pension Fund assets. The Pension Fund auditor work included comparing the asset values used for the actuarial valuation to those subjected to audit by the Pension Fund auditor. • Reviewing the actuarial allocation of Pension Fund assets to the Council by the actuary, including comparing the Council's share of the assets to other corroborative information. • Reviewing the appropriateness of the Pension Asset and Liability valuation methodology applied by the Pension Fund Actuary, and the key assumptions included within the valuation. This included comparing

Key audit matter	How our scope addressed this matter
	<p>them to expected ranges, utilising information provided by PWC, consulting actuary engaged by the National Audit Office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreeing the data in the IAS 19 valuation report provided by the Pension Fund Actuary for accounting purposes to the pension accounting entries and disclosures in the Council's and Group's financial statements. <p>Key observations</p> <p>We obtained sufficient appropriate evidence to conclude that the valuation of the defined benefit pension liability included in the financial statements is reasonable.</p>

Our application of materiality and an overview of the scope of our audit

The scope of our audit was influenced by our application of materiality. We set certain quantitative thresholds for materiality. These, together with qualitative considerations, helped us to determine the scope of our audit and the nature, timing and extent of our audit procedures on the individual financial statement line items and disclosures, and in evaluating the effect of misstatements, both individually and on the financial statements as a whole. Based on our professional judgement, we determined materiality for the financial statements as a whole as follows:

	Council	Group
Overall materiality	£13.6m	£13.61m
Basis for determining materiality	Materiality has been determined as approximately 2% of gross expenditure at the surplus/deficit on provision of services level	
Rationale for benchmark applied	Gross expenditure at the surplus/deficit on provision of services level was chosen as the appropriate benchmark as this is a key measure of financial performance for the Council/Group and for users of the financial statements	
Performance materiality	£10.88m	£10.888m
Reporting threshold	£408,000	£408,000

As part of designing our audit, we determined materiality and assessed the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements. In particular, we looked at where the Director of Finance made subjective judgements such as making assumptions on significant accounting estimates.

We tailored the scope of our audit to ensure that we performed sufficient work to be able to give an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. We used the outputs of a risk assessment, our understanding of the Council and

Group, its environment, controls and critical business processes, to consider qualitative factors in order to ensure that we obtained sufficient coverage across all financial statement line items.

Our approach to auditing the Group was based on our understanding of the group structure and an assessment of the significance of individual components to the group financial statements. In summary:

- Full scope audit procedures were carried out on the Council which represents (99.2%) of the Group's total assets, (97.0%) of the Group's total liabilities, (99.8%) of the Group's income and (93.9%) of the Group's expenditure.
- Specific audit procedures were carried on the Defined Benefit Pension Liability of The Unity Partnership Limited and Miocare Group Community Interest Company which represents 2.4% of the Group's total liabilities.
- Analytical procedures were performed on the remaining entries in The Unity Partnership Limited and Miocare Group Community Interest Company which were included in the Group financial statements.

We also tested the consolidation process and carried out analytical procedures to confirm our conclusion that there were no significant risks of material misstatement of the aggregated financial information.

Other information

The Director of Finance 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.

Responsibilities of the Director of Finance for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Director of Finance's Responsibilities, the Director of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. The Director of Finance is also responsible for such internal control as the Director of Finance determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Director of Finance is required to comply with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 and prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis on the assumption that the functions of the Council will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.. The

Director of Finance is responsible for assessing each year whether or not it is appropriate for the Council and Group to prepare its accounts on the going concern basis and disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Based on our understanding of the Council we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to the Local Government Act 2003 (and associated regulations made under section 21) the Local Government Finance Acts of 1988, 1992 and 2012, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and we considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements.

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

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

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

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

- making enquiries of management and the Audit Committee on whether they had knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- gaining an understanding of the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud;
- discussing amongst the engagement team the risks of fraud; and
- addressing the risks of fraud through management override of controls by performing journal entry testing, reviewing management judgements and assumptions in significant accounting estimates, and reviewing any significant one-off or unusual transactions.

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

As a result of our procedures, we did not identify any key audit matters relating to irregularities. The risks of material misstatement that had the greatest effect on our audit, including fraud, are discussed under “Key audit matters” within this report.

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

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

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

Matter on which we are required to report by exception

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

We have not completed our work on the Council’s arrangements. On the basis of our work to date, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2021, we have not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We will report the outcome of our work on the Council’s arrangements in our commentary on those arrangements within the Auditor’s Annual Report. Our audit completion certificate will set out any matters which we are required to report by exception.

Responsibilities of the Council

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Other matters which we are required to address

We were appointed as the Council's auditor by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, in its role as appointing person under the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015, on 14 December 2017. The period of total uninterrupted engagement, including previous renewals and reappointments of the firm, is three years covering the audit of the financial years ending 31 March 2019 to 31 March 2021.

The non-audit services prohibited by the FRC's Ethical Standard were not provided to the Council or Group and we remain independent of the Council and Group in conducting our audit.

Our audit opinion is consistent with the additional report to the Audit Committee.

Use of the audit report

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

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed:

- the work necessary to issue our assurance statement in respect of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack; and

30 September 2021

- the work necessary to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Karen Murray, Key Audit Partner
For and on behalf of Mazars LLP
One St Peter's Square
Manchester
M2 3DE
30 September 2021