

Cheltenham Borough Council
Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee - 11 November 2020
Statement of Accounts 2019/20
Report of the Section 151 Officer

Accountable member	Councillor Rowena Hay, Cabinet Member for Finance
Accountable officer	Paul Jones, Executive Director – Finance & Assets
Accountable scrutiny committee	Audit Committee
Ward(s) affected	All
Significant Decision	Yes
Executive summary	The purpose of this report is to present the audited Statement of Accounts 2019/20 for formal approval. Members of the Committee will recall that Council previously agreed that the consideration and sign off of the statement of accounts is delegated to the audit committee and that no report is made back to council unless there are issues arising from the audit.
Recommendations	a) Audit Committee is requested to formally approve the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020. b) The Chair of the Audit Committee is recommended to sign the Statement of Accounts and the letter of representation.

Financial implications	As included in the Statement of Accounts 2019/20. Contact officer: Andrew Knott, Andrew.knott@publicagroup.uk, 01242 264121
Legal implications	<i>This report adopts relevant guidance issued in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 and 2011.</i> Contact officer:
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<i>None arising directly from this report.</i> Contact officer: Julie McCarthy , HR Manager, Publica Group Limited julie.mccarthy@publicagroup.uk, 01242 264355
Key risks	There are no risks arising from this report which need to be brought to the attention of members.
Corporate and community plan Implications	None

Environmental and climate change implications	None.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the council to prepare an annual statement of accounts by 31st May of each year. The Section 151 Officer must sign and date the draft statement of accounts, and certify that they present a true and fair view of the financial position of the council. There should then be a period of public inspection of the accounts. Due to Covid-19, these regulations were changed and the date amended to the 31st of July 2020 for the 2019/20 financial year.
- 1.2** The Regulations then require that the draft accounts be audited and for the audited statement of accounts to be considered and approved by way of a council committee by 31st July, following the year end. The Section 151 Officer must re-certify the audited statement of accounts prior to this meeting. Following approval by the committee, the statement of accounts is to be signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting. Council has delegated authority to the Audit Committee to review and approve the audited statement of accounts. Due to Covid-19, these regulations were changed and the date amended to the 30th of November 2020 for the 2019/20 financial year.
- 1.3** The Audit Committee review specifically considers whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed, the conclusion of the audit of the statements, and whether there are any issues that need to be brought to the attention of the Council. The Committee also considers whether the Annual Governance Statement fairly reflects the arrangements within the council and whether the suggested action plan will address any significant governance issues.
- 1.1** The 'Audit Findings' report from Grant Thornton to this meeting highlights any key changes to the original draft accounts presented for audit.

2. Background

- 2.1** The draft Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 was signed by the Section 151 Officer on 21st July 2020, with the work completed in accordance with the statutory deadline of 31st July 2020. The public inspection period operated from 3rd August 2020 to 11th September 2020 and a public notice to that effect was publicised on the Council's website.
- 2.2** From 2010/11 the Statement of Accounts has had to comply with a new code of accounting practice – the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local authority Accounting (the 'Code'), which fully incorporates International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

3. Auditor's Report

- 3.1** The council's external auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP, conducted a full audit of the financial statements and will issue a 'Report to those charged with governance (ISA 260) for 2019/20', which is anticipated to give the Statement of Accounts an unqualified audit opinion in relation to the Council's Statement of Accounts 2019/20.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1** The Council is required to formally approve its audited Statement of Accounts by 30th of November 2020. The Chairman of the Audit Committee is asked to approve the Statement on behalf of the Council.
- 4.2** A copy of the audited Statement of Accounts 2019/20 is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

Once approved, the audited statements will be published on the Council's website and notice advertised of the completion of the audit.

5. Letter of representation

- 5.1** As part of the approval process for the Statement of Accounts, the Council is required to provide a Letter of Representation to the external auditor. This is to confirm or notify any material factors that could affect the auditor's view of the accounts since formal closure at 31st March 2020.
- 5.2** Note 31 outlines contingent liabilities; these are issues that currently exist but had not materialised by 31st March 2020. As Section 151 Officer I can confirm there has been no resolution to date of these matters, nor any other changes that I need to report to the external auditor
- 5.3** It is seen as best practice for both the Section 151 Officer and the Chair of the Audit Committee to sign the Letter of Representation. A copy of this letter is given at Appendix 2 to this report.

Report author	Contact officer: Andrew Knott Andrew.knott@publicagroup.uk, 01242 264121
Appendices	Appendix A – Statement of Accounts 2019/20 Appendix B – Letter of representation
Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. External Audit Working paper files 2019/202. Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2019/20 Accounts3. Ledger records for 2019/20.