



Audit Completion Report

Durham County Council Pension Fund
Year ending 31 March 2019

CONTENTS

1. Executive summary
2. Significant findings
3. Internal control recommendations
4. Summary of misstatements

Appendix A – Draft management representation letter

Appendix B – Draft audit report

Appendix C – Draft consistency report

Appendix D – Independence

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

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Members of the Audit Committee
Durham County Council
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UE

31 July 2019

Dear Members

Audit Completion Report – Year ended 31 March 2019

We are pleased to present our Audit Completion Report for Durham County Council Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2019. 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 on 26 February 2019. We have reviewed our Audit Strategy Memorandum and concluded that the original significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement remain appropriate.

We 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 0191 383 6300.

Yours faithfully

Mark Kirkham
Partner
Mazars LLP

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VAT number: 839 8356 73

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of this report and principle conclusions

The Audit Completion Report sets out the findings from our audit of Durham County Council Pension Fund ('the Pension Fund') for the year ended 31 March 2019, and forms the basis for discussion at the Audit Committee meeting on 31 July 2019.

The detailed scope of our work as your appointed auditor for 2018/19 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.

Section 2 of this report outlines the detailed findings from our work on the financial statements. Section 2 also includes our conclusions on the audit risks and areas of management judgement in our Audit Strategy Memorandum, which include:

- management override of control; and
- valuation of unquoted investments.

Purpose of this report and principal conclusions

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, without modification, on the financial statements. Our proposed audit opinion is included in the draft auditor's report in Appendix B.

Consistency report

We anticipate concluding that the Pension Fund financial statements within the Pension Fund's annual report are consistent with Pension Fund financial statements within the statement of accounts of Durham County Council. Our draft consistency report is provided in Appendix C

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 Pension Fund and consider any objection made to the accounts.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Status of our audit work

We have substantially completed our work on the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2019, and there are no significant matters outstanding. We will provide the Audit Committee with an update in a follow-up letter, prior to signing the auditor's report., if any issues arise.

Our audit approach

We provided details of our intended audit approach in our Audit Strategy Memorandum in February 2019. We have not made any changes to our audit approach since we presented our Audit Strategy Memorandum.

Materiality

We set overall materiality at the planning stage of the audit at £28.86m using a benchmark of 1% of net assets available to pay benefits. We set a specific materiality for the fund account of £12.13m at the planning stage of the audit using a benchmark of 10% of benefits payable.

Our final assessment of overall materiality, based on the final financial statements is £29.82m, and our final specific materiality for the fund account is £12.65m, using the same benchmarks. We set our trivial threshold (the level under which individual errors are not communicated to the Audit Committee) at £0.90m based on 3% of overall materiality.

Misstatements and internal control recommendations

Section 3 sets out the internal control recommendations that we make.

Section 4 outlines the 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 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 7 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; 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 Pension Fund'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

In all entities, 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. Because of the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, we consider there to be a risk of material misstatement due to fraud and thus a significant risk on all audits.

How we addressed this risk

We addressed this risk by performing audit work in the following areas:

- accounting estimates impacting on amounts included in the financial statements;
- consideration of identified significant transactions outside the normal course of business; and
- journals recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in preparation of the financial statements.

Audit conclusion

Based on work completed to date, our work has provided us with the assurance we sought and has not highlighted any material issues to bring to your attention.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Significant risk

Valuation of unquoted investments for which a market price is not readily available

Description of the risk

As at 31 March 2019, the fair value of property unit trusts that were not quoted on an active market was £172 million, which accounted for 6% of the Pension Fund's net investment assets. As prices for these investments are not quoted in active markets, the values used in the accounts are estimated by fund managers, mostly based on Net Asset Value statements, updated for cash movements where appropriate, which is considered to be an appropriate methodology for these investments. This results in an increased risk of material misstatement.

How we addressed this risk

In addition to our standard programme of work in this area we have:

- agreed holdings from fund manager reports to the global custodian's report;
- agreed the valuation to supporting documentation including investment manager valuation statements, distribution and capital statements and audited accounts, where available;
- where audited accounts were available, we checked that they were supported by a clear opinion; and
- agreed the price to independent evidence, for those valuations not supported by valuation statements.

Audit conclusion

Our work has provided the assurance we sought and has not highlighted any material issues to bring to your attention.

Key areas of management judgement

Key areas of management judgement include accounting estimates which are material but are not considered to give rise to a significant risk of material misstatement. We have not identified any such judgements.

2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

Qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting practices

We have reviewed the Pension Fund'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 Pension Fund's circumstances.

Draft accounts were received from the Pension Fund on 31 May 2019 and were of a good quality.

Significant difficulties during the audit

During the course of the audit we did not encounter any significant difficulties and we have had the full co-operation of management.

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 2018/19 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. No such objections have been received in relation to the Pension Fund.

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 reported 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.

Our findings and recommendations are set out below. We have assigned priority rankings to each of them to reflect the importance that we consider each poses to your organisation and, hence, our recommendation in terms of the urgency of required action. In summary, the matters arising fall into the following categories:

Priority ranking	Description	Number of issues
1 (high)	In our view, there is potential for financial loss, damage to reputation or loss of information. This may have implications for the achievement of business strategic objectives. The recommendation should be taken into consideration by management immediately.	0
2 (medium)	In our view, there is a need to strengthen internal control or enhance business efficiency. The recommendations should be actioned in the near future.	1
3 (low)	In our view, internal control should be strengthened in these additional areas when practicable.	1

3. INTERNAL CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

Other recommendations on internal control – Level 2

Description of deficiency

At the planning stage we noted that while management reviews the risk register on a regular basis, the PF Committee Members had not reviewed the risk register since December 2016 and did not have plans to do so until March 2019. The Pension Fund Committee terms of reference, however, state that the Committee will review and monitor the Pension Fund Risk Register annually. This is not considered to be an opinion risk but we was highlighted so that the Committee could respond.

Potential effects

Inadequate oversight of risk management by the Pension Fund Committee.

Recommendation

The Council should ensure policies are complied with.

Management response

The risk register was presented to the March Pension Fund Committee and will be considered by the Pension Fund at least annually going forward.

3. INTERNAL CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

Other recommendations on internal control – Level 3

Description of deficiency

Our testing of IT general controls noted the following matters:

- There was no specific periodic review of active directory accounts. We were informed by ICT Management that a recent review of old active directory accounts (i.e. older than 12 months) has been undertaken but this was undertaken outside of the audit period (i.e. post 31st March 2019).
- Resource Link (payroll system) password parameters, such as minimum character length, were not in line with the policy requirements.

Compensating controls are in place and neither matter affected our audit approach.

Potential effects

There is inappropriate access to the Council's financial systems.

Recommendation

The Council should ensure policies are complied with.

Management response

ICT are notified of all leavers via an electronic alert from the HR system and immediately deactivate the user account, however on rare occasions, when the user is an agency worker, ICT are not always informed when the user leaves. HR are to remind managers to report agency workers as leavers through the HR system and with immediate effect will run weekly reports out of the Agency Worker system in order that ICT are notified automatically to deactivate these users.

Resourcelink can only be accessed once the user is logged into the council's network and Pulse Secure is required to access systems outside of the council network, using dual authentication and a random token number. Signing in to the Resourcelink system also requires knowledge of the user's personal employee number and the answer to a secondary personalised security question. Going forward ICT are working towards single sign on to access the council's network and are to increase the security of devices when users work outside of the council's network using 'mobile device management' software.

ICT are also reviewing the current password policy.

Follow up of previous internal control points

The only internal control point raised in the prior year was a level 2 point in relation to IT leaver access deficiency wherein three leavers (from 25 tested) still had access to Council IT systems after their leaving date.

We carried out the same testing for our 2018/19 audit and there were no unexplained cases where employees still had access to IT systems after their leaving date.

4. SUMMARY OF MISSTATEMENTS

We set out below the misstatements identified during the course of the audit, above the level of trivial threshold of £0.90m.

The table outlines the misstatements that were identified during the course of our audit which management has assessed as not being material either individually or in aggregate to the financial statements and does not currently plan to adjust.

Unadjusted misstatements 2018/19

	Fund Account		Net Assets Statement	
	Dr (£m)	Cr (£m)	Dr (£m)	Cr (£m)
1 Investment assets				1,026
Profit and loss on disposal of investments and change in market value of investments		1,026		

Our audit testing of unquoted pooled property investments identified an extrapolated difference between the fair value of unquoted pooled property investments in the accounts compared to the fair value provided to us by the fund manager at the time of audit, due to more up to date information being available at the time. The actual difference on the sampled items was £0.722m.

4. SUMMARY OF MISSTATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

Disclosure amendments

The following disclosure amendments were made:

Note 4, Statement of Accounting Policies: Paragraph referring to acquisition costs of investments being added to book cost at time of purchase was removed as acquisition costs are now included within management expenses.

Note 12, Management Expenses: Additional narrative added to disclosure to reflect the fact that the Pension Fund will be charged an audit fee variation of £4,800 in relation to IAS19 assurance work carried out to provide assurance to employer auditors. This will be recharged by the Pension Fund to the relevant employers.

Note 16, Financial Instruments: Amendment to remove the category 'loans and receivables', which is no longer a class of financial instrument under IFRS 9. The category has been replaced with 'financial assets at amortised cost'.

General: A number of other minor changes were made to the financial statements not requiring individual analysis.

APPENDIX A

DRAFT MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION LETTER

Durham County Council Pension Fund
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL

31 July 2019

Dear Mark

Durham County Council Pension Fund - audit for year ended 31 March 2019

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Durham County Council Pension Fund ('the Pension Fund') 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 2018/19 (the Code).

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.

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 Pension Fund you determined it was necessary to contact in order to obtain audit evidence.

I confirm as Corporate Director Resources 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 Pension Fund 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 the Code and International Accounting Standard 8 and consider these policies to faithfully represent the effects of transactions, other events or conditions on the Pension Fund'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 Pension Fund in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.

Executive summary

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of misstatements

Appendices

APPENDIX A

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 Pension Fund 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.

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 Pension Fund 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 Corporate Director Resources 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 Pension Fund 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 Pension Fund's statement of accounts communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

Assets

I confirm that all assets held are free from liens, charges or any other encumbrance.

Related party transactions

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

I have disclosed to you the identity of the Pension Fund'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 requires 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)

Going concern

To the best of my knowledge there is nothing to indicate that the Pension Fund 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

I confirm that the effects of the uncorrected misstatements as included in the auditor's draft Audit Completion Report are immaterial, both individually and in aggregate, to the statement of accounts as a whole.

Specific representation on unquoted investments

Unquoted investments are included in the net assets statement at the value provided by our fund managers which have been estimated in accordance with the guidelines used by the industry, and based on the latest information to hand at the time of the valuation. I am satisfied, based on the knowledge I have, with the valuations, and am not aware of any subsequent events that would have a material impact on the estimated value of the unquoted investments.

Yours sincerely

Corporate Director Resources

APPENDIX B

DRAFT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Independent auditor's report to the members of Durham County Council

Report on the financial statements

Opinion on the financial statements of Durham County Council

We have audited the financial statements of Durham County Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2019, which comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow 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 2018/19.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Durham County Council as at 31st March 2019 and of its 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 2018/19.

Opinion on the financial statements of Durham County Council Pension Fund

We have audited the financial statements of Durham County Council Pension Fund ('the Pension Fund') for the year ended 31 March 2019, which comprise the Fund Account, the Net Assets 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 2018/19.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of Durham County Council Pension Fund during the year ended 31 March 2019, and the amount and disposition of the Pension Fund's assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2019; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.

Basis for opinions

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 and the Pension Fund 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 opinions.

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 Corporate Director of Resources use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the Council's and the Pension Fund's financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Corporate Director of Resources has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Council's or the Pension Fund'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.

APPENDIX B

DRAFT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

Other information

The Corporate Director of Resources is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Annual Governance Statement and information included in the Statement of Accounts, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinions 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 Corporate Director of Resources for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the statement of the Corporate Director of Resources' Responsibilities, the Corporate Director of Resources is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Council's and Pension Fund's 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 2018/19, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. The Corporate Director of Resources is also responsible for such internal control as the Corporate Director of Resources determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Corporate Director of Resources is required to comply with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19 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 Corporate Director of Resources is responsible for assessing each year whether or not it is appropriate for the Council and the Pension Fund to prepare the 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 Council's and Pension Fund's 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 opinions. 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.

APPENDIX B

DRAFT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

Conclusion on Durham County 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 November 2017, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, Durham County Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2019.

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 November 2017, 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 2019.

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.

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 Durham County 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

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

Mark Kirkham
For and on behalf of Mazars LLP
Salvus House
Aykley Heads
Durham
DH1 5TS
31 July 2019

Executive summary

Significant findings

Internal control
recommendations

Summary of misstatements

Appendices

APPENDIX C

DRAFT CONSISTENCY REPORT

Independent Auditor's Statement to the Members of Durham County Council on the Pension Fund Financial Statements included within Durham County Council Pension Fund Annual Report

We have examined the Pension Fund financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 included within the Durham County Council Pension Fund annual report, which comprise the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes.

Opinion

In our opinion, the Pension Fund financial statements are consistent with the audited financial statements of Durham County Council for the year ended 31 March 2019 and comply with applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.

Respective responsibilities of the Corporate Director Resources and the auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Corporate Director Resources' Responsibilities, the Corporate Director Resources is responsible for the preparation of the Pension Fund's financial statements in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law.

Our responsibility is to report to the Members of Durham County Council as a body, whether the Pension Fund financial statements within the Pension Fund annual report are consistent with the financial statements of Durham County Council.

We conducted our work in accordance with Auditor Guidance Note 07 – Auditor Reporting, issued by the National Audit Office. Our report on the Pension Fund financial statements contained within the audited financial statements of Durham County Council describes the basis of our opinions on the financial statements.

Use of this auditor's statement

This report is made solely to the members of Durham County Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 paragraph 20(5) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members of Durham County Council those matters we are required to state to them and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than Durham County Council and Durham County Council's members as a body, for our audit work, for this statement, or for the opinions we have formed.

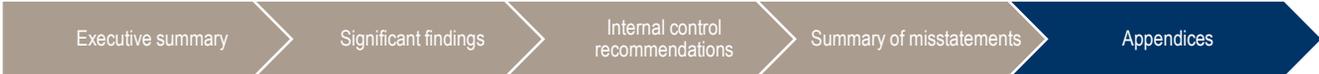
Mark Kirkham
For and on behalf of Mazars LLP

Salvus House,
Aykley Heads,
Durham
DH1 5TS
31 July 2019

APPENDIX D 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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