

Audit Committee

29 February 2016

Final Accounts Timetable for the year ended 31 March 2016



Don McLure, Corporate Director Resources

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the Final Accounts Timetable for 2015/16. This timetable details the deadlines for key actions to complete the Statement of Accounts in line with statutory deadlines.
- 2 The report is presented in accordance with paragraph 4.2.3 of the Committee's operational terms of reference which requires it **'to maintain an understanding of internal and external reporting requirements'**.
- 3 The key dates taken from the Final Accounts Timetable are attached at Appendix 2.

Background

- 4 The 'Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011' introduced a two stage approval process for the Statement of Accounts; the first stage is in June each year. The Regulations require that the responsible financial officer, by no later than 30 June, signs and certifies that the Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the County Council for the year to 31 March previous, subject to the views of the External Auditor.
- 5 The second stage, as set out in the Regulations, requires that on or before the 30 September, approval needs to be given to the Statement of Accounts by resolution of a committee, which for Durham County Council is the Audit Committee. This approval will take into account the views of the External Auditor. This is done so that the Statement of Accounts can then be published.
- 6 The 2011 Regulations have now been superseded by the 'Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015'. The new Regulations require that, from 2017/18, the first stage approval be completed by 31 May and the second stage by 31 July. Transitory provisions permit the current deadlines to continue for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

- 7 In order to ensure that the County Council can meet these statutory deadlines, the process of 'closing the accounts' must be closely managed and monitored. The Final Accounts timetable is a tool for the effective management and monitoring of this process.

The Timetable

- 8 Each year the timetable is compiled in Strategic Finance with input from services to ensure that deadlines are achievable and will lead to completion of a Statement of Accounts for signing by the Section 151 Officer by 30 June. New and amended processes are considered for the impact on the achievement of dates, as well as reference to the previous year's problems and meeting of deadlines.
- 9 Strategic Finance monitors the achievement of the dates in the timetable throughout the period February to September. Although every effort is made to meet every deadline set, there will inevitably be some delays that will lead to some of the deadlines being missed.
- 10 Strategic Finance will follow up all delays and missed deadlines to ensure that the overall timetable will be achieved, and identify improvements that can be made to the next year end process.
- 11 Final Accounts Monitoring Meetings are also held each week during April to May to ensure that practitioners apply accounting procedures consistently; best practice is shared; there is a shared understanding of any difficulties or delays that are happening, and to disseminate updated information quickly and consistently. These meetings are not shown in the timetable.
- 12 This process has been in operation for the closedown of the Accounts since 2011/12 and has successfully delivered the Statement of Accounts in line with the statutory deadline.
- 13 This continues to be of great importance due to the requirement for earlier deadlines for the preparation and audit of financial statements from 2017/18.

Recommendations and reasons

- 14 Members are asked to note the key dates in the Final Accounts Timetable for 2015/16 detailed in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance –

There are no direct financial implications arising for the Council as a result of this report, although by implementing the timetable, we are demonstrating efficient arrangements for the proper administration of the County Council's financial affairs and will meet the statutory deadline for the production of the Statement of Accounts.

Staffing -

None

Risk -

This report requires no decision and so a risk assessment has not been carried out.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty -

None

Accommodation -

None

Crime and Disorder -

None

Human Rights -

None

Consultation -

None

Procurement -

None

Disability Issues -

None

Legal Implications -

None

Appendix 2: Key dates from the Final Accounts Timetable

Task	Responsibility	Proposed completion date
Final Accounts Timetable and Guidance Notes issued to key personnel	Strategic Finance	Mon 22 Feb 2016
All cash posted up to and including 31 March	Financial Services – Revenues and Benefits	Thu 31 Mar 2016
Final Postings by Benefits Section	Financial Services – Revenues and Benefits	Thu 31 Mar 2016
Last creditors paysheet for 2015/16	Financial Services – Revenues and Benefits (Creditors)	Thu 31 Mar 2016
All stock checks completed at 31 March	Services	Thu 31 Mar 2016
All amounts banked by 31 March to be receipted in Oracle	Services	Thu 31 Mar 2016
Sending out of Related Party Declarations for Members and Senior Officers	Resources – Democratic Services	Fri 1 Apr 2016
Last Monthly Salaries and Wages information for 2015/16 processed into ledger	Payroll / Strategic Finance	Mon 4 Apr 2016
Details of Related Party Declarations for Members and Senior Officers to be returned to Democratic Services	Members / Senior Officers	Fri 15 Apr 2016
All Bank Reconciliations to 31 March completed	Strategic Finance	Fri 29 Apr 2016
Service Ledgers finalised and final reports produced and net revenue outturn for each Service Grouping notified to Strategic Finance	Financial Services / Strategic Finance	Thu 12 May 2016

Task	Responsibility	Proposed completion date
Analytical Review of service balance sheets and outturn to Strategic Finance	Financial Services	Fri 10 Jun 2016
Draft Statement of Accounts completed	Strategic Finance	Thu 16 Jun 2016
Draft Statement of Accounts to External Audit for Technical Review	Strategic Finance	Mon 20 Jun 2016
Chief Financial Officer to sign the Statement of Accounts	Strategic Finance / Corporate Director Resources	Thu 30 Jun 2016
Statement of Accounts to External Audit	Strategic Finance	Fri 1 Jul 2016
Start of Statement of Accounts Audit	External Audit	Fri 1 Jul 2016
Start of Inspection Period (proposed)		Mon 1 Jul 2016
Unaudited Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) return to External Audit and CLG – provisional	Strategic Finance	Fri 8 Jul 2016
Cabinet – Overall Outturn Report considered	Strategic Finance	Wed 13 Jul 2016
Audit Committee Meeting to consider report on the Statement of Accounts	Audit Committee	Fri 29 Jul 2016
End of Inspection Period (proposed)		Fri 12 Aug 2016
Audit Committee Meeting – approval of Statement of Accounts – Statutory deadline date	Strategic Finance	Fri 30 Sep 2016
Publication of Accounts – Statutory deadline date	Strategic Finance	Fri 30 Sep 2016
Audited Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) return to CLG – provisional	Strategic Finance	Fri 30 Sep 2016