

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Statutory Statement of Accounts 2019/20	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Scrutiny Audit and Value for Money Council Services Committee – 9th September 2020	

Is this an Executive Decision:	NO	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	YES	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	[]		

Essential Signatories:

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE

Monitoring Officer: **Angela Wakefield**

Date Signature

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

Date Signature

**OPEN/
AGENDA**

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee

Date: 9th September 2020

TITLE:	Statutory Statement of Accounts 2019/20	
PORTFOLIO:	Leader/Finance	
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Sal Khan	
CONTACT OFFICER:	Lisa Turner, Chief Accountant	ext. No. X1399
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider the Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 following the work undertaken by the Council's external auditors and to recommend their approval.
- 1.2 To recommend the letter of representation on behalf of the authority.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In accordance with the Audit and Accounts regulations the statutory annual accounts for 2019/20 are appended to this report. Members of the committee are asked to scrutinise these accounts and subsequently recommend their approval to the Audit (approval of Statement of Accounts) Committee, immediately following this meeting. The Audit and Accounts Regulations require that the Council formally approve the accounts each year, this function has been delegated to the Audit (approval of Statement of Accounts) Committee.

- 2.2 The accounts have been subject to audit by our external Auditors (Grant Thornton), and a summary of their conclusions are set out within the Audit Findings Report (elsewhere on the Agenda). Subject to the finalisation of their work, the outcome of the audit work has once again been very positive.
- 2.3 Members should also note that, in accordance with the relevant regulations, the accounts have been placed on deposit for public inspection between 2nd July 2020 and 12th August 2020.
- 2.4 The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) consolidates the legal requirements as to the form of the accounts. Officers, in compiling the accounts, have adopted the code.
- 2.5 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the statutory timescales for approving the accounts have been deferred. Whilst the deadline for approving the audited accounts is 30th November, there is a significant benefit from a resources perspective from achieving this as early as possible. In presenting these audited accounts to this Committee (and subject to their approval) the Council has achieved this well in advance of the revised deadline.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 The Council's Financial Statements are appended to this report. The outcome of the work undertaken by the auditor has once again been very positive and a summary of these findings is set out within the Audit Findings Report (elsewhere on the agenda). The unadjusted items highlighted by the external auditors relate to the estimated liability associated with the local government pension scheme (administered by Staffordshire County Council) and matters outside of the Council's direct control:
- Within the draft accounts the actuary had estimated the return on assets and a subsequent report based on actuals has identified that this was overstated by £0.457m.
 - Since the draft accounts were published there has been a consultation released by Central Government in relation to the McCloud case, which members will be familiar with from 2018/19. As a result of this, the actuary has indicated that the impact of McCloud on the Council Pension liability is likely to be £0.140m lower than stated in the draft accounts.
- 3.2 The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the 'Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20' published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
- 3.3 Key elements of the accounts include: -
- **Statement of Responsibilities** – this outlines the responsibilities of the Council and the Head of Service (Section 151 Officer) in preparing the accounts and also of members in approving the accounts.

- **Statement of Accounting Policies** – this details the legislation and the principles on which the Statement of Accounts has been prepared.
- **Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account** - this reports the net costs for the year of all the functions for which the Council is responsible. As such, this statement is fundamental to the understanding of the Council's activities and provides details of how costs are financed from both general government grants and income from local taxpayers. However, this statement measures the authority's financial performance in terms of the resources consumed and generated over the period, but the authority is required by law to set its budget and raise council tax on a different accounting basis. As such there are a number of statutory adjustments that are presented in the Movement in Reserves Statement to reflect the movement on the General Fund Balance.
- **Movement in Reserves Statement** - this statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other reserves. It reconciles the position shown within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the "net worth" shown in the Balance Sheet.
- **Balance Sheet** - this explains the Council's financial position at the year-end. It provides details of the balances and reserves at the authority's disposal, its long-term indebtedness, the long term and net current assets employed in operations and summarised information on the fixed assets held.
- **Cash Flow Statement** - this shows the inflows and outflows of cash arising from transactions with third parties for revenue and capital purposes.
- **Collection Fund** - this reflects the statutory requirement for the authority to maintain a separate account providing details of receipts of Council Tax and Business Rates and the associated payments to precepting authorities and distributed resources under the Business Rates Retention Scheme.
- **Annual Governance Statement** - This outlines the governance framework within which the Council operates, including internal control arrangements. The statement reports on any significant identified weaknesses, the actions undertaken to rectify these, where applicable.

3.4 For several years now the accounting code of practice has required a expenditure and funding analysis to be incorporated into the accounts. The provides a reconciliation of the figures reported to management/Cabinet in compliance with statutory requirements as part of the Outturn and those published to meet accounting standards and shown within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This is set out in note 4 to the accounts.

3.5 The draft letter of representation is appended to this report and the committee is asked to recommend approval of it on behalf on the authority. This letter is a formal record of representations made by the Council to our external auditors.

4. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The financial statements underpin all corporate priorities by demonstrating a healthy financial position, providing a strong foundation to enable the authority to meet its objectives.

5. Report – Commentary on Statement of Accounts

5.1 Income and Expenditure Account (Page 11)

5.1.1 The General Fund under-spend was £0.023m (page 2 of the accounts). Cabinet have approved this sum to be set aside within earmarked reserves. As a consequence, the movement on the general fund balance is neutral (as shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement). The General Fund balance therefore remains at £1.3m, which is consistent with the approved medium term financial strategy.

5.1.2 The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement reports a surplus on the provision of services for the year of £0.2m. There is also a net amount required to be credited to the General Fund balance for the year shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement of £1.7m. These two items are offset by a net transfer to earmarked reserves of £1.9m. Movement on reserves during the year are shown at note 9 to the accounts.

5.1.3 The comparative figures for 2018/19 have been adjusted to reflect the latest management structure, as reported within the quarter four outturn report to Cabinet, to ensure a like for like comparison.

5.2 Movement in Reserves (Pages 12 & 13)

5.2.1 As set out above, the surplus or deficit shown within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is offset by the various reconciling items to ensure that the movement on General Fund reserves reflects statutory requirements.

5.2.2 The Statement demonstrates that usable reserves have increased by £1.9m to £17.6m. This largely relates to the increase in earmarked reserves, as indicated earlier. The main increase in earmarked reserves relates to the surplus on the Business Rates Retention Scheme. The level of reserves are reviewed each year as part of the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.2.3 In the current climate, in which we have seen unprecedented funding reductions, face significant uncertainty in relation to future funding levels and have additional pressures arising from the pandemic, reserves are seen as a strong indicator of financial resilience and sustainability.

5.2.4 Unusable reserves are largely those that are kept to manage the accounting processes for long term assets and retirement benefits. These have increased during 2019/20, largely arising from the change in the pension fund liability (as set out in more detail below).

5.3 Balance Sheet (Page 12)

- 5.3.1 Property, Plant and Equipment - Primarily the land and buildings owned by the Council. The figure of £32.4m (£33.8m - 2018/19) is derived from a variety of independent valuations intended to reflect the worth of the assets to the Council - not necessarily the sum for which they could be sold. The reduction in 2019/20 (£1.4m) includes the reclassification of Land at Dove Way (£1.25m) from Surplus to Held for Sale.
- 5.3.2 The Council has short-term investments (excluding deposits held in call accounts) of £19.9m (£15.1m 2018/19). Cash and cash equivalents stood at £13m (£10.6m 2018/19). The increase in this combined figure largely relates to the increase in reserves and increased working capital (including section 106 funding received during the year and a significantly higher balance on the Collection Fund).
- 5.3.3 Long Term Borrowing stands at £10.7m (£10.7m 2018/19), with short term borrowing remaining at £0.6m.
- 5.3.4 Provisions have reduced from £3.1m to £2.2m, mainly relating to the NNDR appeals and claims following annual review.
- 5.3.5 The Pension Scheme liability reduced as at 31st March 2020 from £60.3m (31st March 2019) to £47.2m (31st March 2020). The pension fund liability is calculated by a firm of actuaries and is based on a number of assumptions. These assumptions change from one year to the next in relation to the prevailing economic conditions. The pension liability represents the underlying long term commitment that the authority has to pay future retirement benefits. The fund is regularly assessed to determine the level of future contributions necessary to ensure that it is funded in the long term and any increase in these contributions must be met from the Council's budget. The current Medium Term Financial Strategy includes provision for future increases.
- 5.3.6 Capital Grants received in advance represent capital grants whereby the conditions attached to the grant have not yet been fully satisfied. These amounts include section 106 deposits from developers.
- 5.3.7 Other long Term liabilities relate to the outstanding sums due in relation to finance leases. The authority has acquired a number of vehicles under finance lease arrangements. This liability has reduced during 2019/20 to £0.3m (£0.9m 31st March 2019) due to planned in year repayments in line with the lease agreements. The remaining sum will be written down as repayments are made to the supplier.

5.4 Cash Flow Statement (Page 13)

- 5.4.1 This statement summarises the movements in cash holdings during the year in common with the presentation required for commercial companies, although the statement is of less significance in the Local Authority context. .
- 5.4.2 Whilst the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is compiled on an accruals basis (i.e. goods and services are accounted for when they are received or provided), the cash flow statement demonstrates the movement in actual cash paid and received during the year.

5.5 **Collection Fund Account (Page 81)**

5.5.1 The Collection Fund shows an in year surplus of £3.8m, this includes a deficit of £0.3m in relation to Council Tax and a surplus of £4.1m in relation to Business Rates. However, it should be noted that these positions are after making transfers out associated with prior year surpluses (£0.8m in relation to Council Tax and £2.0m in relation to Business Rates).

5.5.2 Overall, after taking into account the balance brought forward from 2018/19, the Collection Fund has a surplus of £7.2m, (Surplus £3.4m – 2018/19) which will be redistributed to the respective authorities in future years.

5.6 Overall the accounts presented within the Financial Statements show a healthy position. Through the adoption of proper accounting practices, and the ongoing identification of and actions to mitigate against financial risks, this provides a crucial foundation for the Council to be able to achieve its objectives.

6. **Financial Considerations**

This section has been approved by the following member of Financial Management Unit: Lisa Turner.

6.1 This report relates solely to the authorities financial position and activities during 2019/20.

7. **Risk Assessment and Management**

7.1 The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows.

7.2 Positive (Opportunities/Benefits):

7.2.1 The Council is committed to the efficiency agenda and has established a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). These accounts reflect a robust financial position which supports the organisation in meeting its objectives going forward.

7.3 Negative (Threats)

7.3.1 Inadequate or incorrect financial reporting may result in misrepresentation of the Council's financial position and impact on the underlying financial position.

7.4 The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register.

8. **Legal Considerations**

This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: Linda Durham.

8.1 There are no significant legal issues arising from this report.

9. Equality and Health

9.1 **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

9.2 **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed.

10. Human Rights

10.1 There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

11. Sustainability (including climate change & change adaptation measures)

11.1 Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) No

12. Recommendation(s)

12.1 To recommend to the Audit (approval of Statement of Accounts) Committee that:

- a) the Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 and the letter of representation, as appended to this report, be approved subject to any adjustments that may be necessary following the conclusion of the external auditors work and authority be delegated to the Chair to sign the accounts accordingly.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix A: Statutory Statement of Accounts 2019/20.

13.2 Appendix B: Letter of Representation 2019/20.