

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

We have audited the financial statements of Redditch Borough Council (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2016 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement, the Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement, the Collection Fund and the related notes. 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 2015/16.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act 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 audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members 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 Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources Responsibilities, the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources 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 2015/16, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Opinion on financial statements

In our opinion the financial statements:

- present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2016 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16 and applicable law.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited financial statements in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement is consistent with the audited financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required to report to you if:

- in our opinion the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with the guidance included in 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: a Framework' published by CIPFA/SOLACE in June 2007; or
- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Act; or
- we make a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Act; or
- we exercise any other special powers of the auditor under the Act.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources

Respective responsibilities of the Authority and auditor

The Authority 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.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Act to be satisfied that the Authority 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 Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Scope of the review of the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General as required by the Act (the "Code"), having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2015, as to whether the Authority 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 these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code in satisfying ourselves whether the Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through the economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether in all significant respects the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources.

Basis for qualified conclusion

In considering the Authority's arrangements for securing efficiency, economy and effectiveness we identified the following matters:

Budget Reporting

The Authority's reporting of performance against its budget throughout the year is unclear, with unexplained movements in the budget between months. Reports to Members during the year do not clearly explain the reasons for variances from budget or enable them to understand the key drivers of the Authority's financial performance.

This matter is evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for understanding and using appropriate and reliable financial and performance information to support informed decision making and performance management; and for reliable and timely financial reporting that supports the delivery of strategic priorities.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

The Authority updated its MTFS covering the period to 31 March 2019, in line with the annual planning process. However, the MTFS does not provide sufficient detail on the use of the Authority's reserves to enable Members to make informed decisions on the adequacy of its reserves and the sustainability of services.

This matter is evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic purposes and maintain statutory functions.

Governance Arrangements

We made two written recommendations under section 11 of the Audit Commission Act 1998 in 2014/2015 in respect of the two issues raised above. As identified in the above paragraphs the Authority has not made sufficient progress in addressing our recommendations to improve the arrangements in place. This matter is evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for acting in the public interest, through demonstrating and applying the principles and values of sound governance.

Qualified conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2015, except for the effects of the matters described in the Basis for qualified conclusion paragraphs, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Authority has put in place proper

arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Certificate

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Code until we have completed the work necessary to issue our Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) Component Assurance statement for the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Richard Percival

Richard Percival
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

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27 September 2016