

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

18 January 2023

Present:

Councillors Brazil (Chair), Hendy, Prowse, Roome, Sellis, Thomas and Randall-Johnson (vice McGeough).

Apologies:

Councillors Kerley.

* **AGC/22/15 Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2022 be signed as a correct record.

* **AGC/22/16 Statement of Accounts 2021-22**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance, People & Estates (Treasurer) (AGC/23/1) to which was appended the Authority's Financial Statements (including a narrative statement and Statement of Accounts) for the financial year ended 31 March 2022.

RESOLVED that the final Statement of Accounts for 2021-22 be approved and published on the Authority's website alongside the external auditor's final findings, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 10(1) (as amended by Regulation 10(2)(b)) of the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended).

*(See also Minutes *AGC/22/17 and *AGC/22/18 below)*

* **AGC/22/17 Audit Findings for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority for the Year Ended 31 March 2022**

The Committee received for information a report from the external auditor (Grant Thornton) on its final audit findings on the Authority's Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Barrie Morriss, representing Grant Thornton, commented that this had been a complex process this time. He drew attention to the points highlighted at Section 2 of the report in terms of significant risks identified, related to:

- The management override of controls;
- the posting of journals to the ledger and the subsequent approvals process;
- valuation of land and buildings;
- Improper revenue recognition;
- Preparation of Group financial statements and related disclosure; and
- Pension fund liabilities.

Attention was also drawn to Appendix C of the report setting out the audit adjustments and Appendix D setting out the audit fees which had increased as a result of the complex nature of this process.

The external auditor anticipated, based on its findings, that it would issue the Authority with an unmodified audit report and that its opinion was that the Authority's Financial Statements:

- gave a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2022;
- had been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/ALASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom; and
- had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Appendix G of the Audit Findings also set out the letter explaining the reason for the delay in submission of the Value for Money (VFM) work and Auditor's Annual Report in accordance with the 2020 Code of Audit of Practice.

*(See also Minutes *AGC/22/16 above and *AGC/22/18 below).*

* **AGC/22/18** **2021-22 Letter of Representation**

The Committee considered the Letter of Representation on the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022.

RESOLVED that the Committee Chair and the Director of Finance, People & Estates (Treasurer) be authorised to sign, on behalf of the Authority, the Letter of Representation to the external auditor (Grant Thornton) on the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022.

*(See also Minutes *AGC/22/16 and *AGC/22/17 above).*

* **AGC/22/19** **Annual Statement of Assurance 2021-22**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Governance & Digital Services (AGC/23/2) to which was appended the final 2021-22 Annual Statement of Assurance for the Authority. The document had been prepared in accordance with relevant legislative and best practice requirements (including the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the Fire and Rescue National Framework and the CIPFA/SOLACE good governance framework).

The Committee noted that the Annual Statement of Assurance had been submitted for external verification with the Authority's financial statements for 2021-22. The external auditor (Grant Thornton) had identified some issues with the Annual Statement of Assurance which had been adjusted subsequent to approval of the draft Annual Statement of Assurance and as identified in report AGC/23/2.

RESOLVED that the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2021-22 be approved and published on the Authority's website.

* **AGC/22/20** **Internal Audit Charter and Strategy 2022-23 and Planning 2023-24**

The Committee received for information a report of the Head of the Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) setting out details of the way in which it would be delivering its internal audit service to the Authority following the transfer of this responsibility under the shared service agreement approved on 10 June 2022.

The report also set out details of DAPs Audit Charter and Strategy and gave an overview of the planning process for the Internal Audit Plan for 2023-24.

* **AGC/22/21** **Internal Audit Follow Up: Home Fire Safety Visits**

The Committee received for information a report which provided an update on the internal assurance requested at the previous meeting under the Community Safety – Fire Prevention audit - specifically on the number of Home Fire Safety Visits undertaken to date in 2022-23 as compared with the performance target of 18,000 visits. It was noted that the Service had completed 14,554 visits by 31 December 2022 and that it was on track to deliver the target set.

*** DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**