

Report title: Approval of the Council's final accounts for 2023/24

Meeting:	Corporate Governance and Audit Committee
Date:	31 January 2025
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Graham Turner
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	No
Purpose of Report The report updates Members on the final accounts and audit processes for 2023/24 and asks Members of this Committee to approve the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 including the final version of the Annual Governance Statement.	
Recommendations Consideration of this report by the committee is required to comply with the Council's duties under the Accounts and Audit regs 2015 (as amended by the Accounts and Audit Amendment Regulations 2021) which require the audited Statement of Accounts to be published by 30 September. Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are recommended to approve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Statement of Accounts 2023/24 (Appendix A) including the Annual Governance Statement (Appendix B), with the Chair of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee certifying the Statement of Responsibilities on page 19 upon completion of the audit. (ii) The draft Letter of Representation (Appendix C), with the Chair signing the final version on behalf of the Committee upon completion of the audit. 	
Reasons for Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the 2023/24 Audited Statement of Accounts. 	
Resource Implications: N/A	
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Kevin Mulvaney – 20 January 2025
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Sam Lawton – 20 January 2025

Electoral [wards](#) affected: All
Ward Councillors consulted: All
Public or private: Public

Have you considered GDPR: Yes – there is no personal data within the budget details and calculations set out in this report and accompanying Appendices

1 Summary

The report updates Members on the final accounts and audit processes for 2023/24 and asks Members of this Committee to approve the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 including the final version of the Annual Governance Statement.

The preparation of the Statement of Accounts is a statutory requirement and local authorities are now required to have them signed by the Section 151 Officer by 31 May and published with an Audit Certificate by 30 September, following the end of the financial year.

- 1.2 Despite the significant challenges to the Council's finance team dealing with multiple competing demands, the draft accounts were completed and signed by the Council's Service Director - Finance on 28 June 2024. The six week public inspection period for the draft accounts ran from 28 June to 9 August 2024. An objection was raised separately by two local electors in this period and was subsequently formally accepted by the Council's auditors, Grant Thornton.
- 1.3 The current position is that work is ongoing by Grant Thornton to resolve the objections, and they will conclude their audit once the objections have been resolved, and then issue its audit certification at that point.
- 1.4 The audit of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts is substantially complete and the Council's auditors, Grant Thornton, have issued their Draft Audit Findings Report (ISA 260). The Annual Governance Statement was approved by this Committee earlier on today's agenda. Following consideration of this report, the Committee is responsible for the approval of the Council's Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement.

2 Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 The process for producing the accounts went smoothly and the draft accounts were signed on 28 June 2024 by the Service Director- Finance. This is after the statutory sign off deadline of 31 May 2024 and as previously advised, this was a result of numerous contributing factors, including capacity constraints within the accountancy team. The draft accounts have been available to view on the Council's website.
- 2.2 The six week period when the public are permitted to inspect the accounts started on 28 June and finished on 9 August. During the period, local electors

can ask the auditor questions about or raise objections to items in the accounts.

- 2.3 An objection was raised separately by two local electors in this period, related to Council and West Yorkshire Pension Fund investments. The objection was formally accepted by the Council's auditors, Grant Thornton.
- 2.3 It is anticipated that Grant Thornton will issue an unqualified opinion on the Council's Statement of Accounts. Grant Thornton have issued their Draft Audit Findings Report (ISA 260). The report summarises significant findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from their audit work throughout the year and will have been presented to Members earlier at this meeting.
- 2.4 The auditor's report comments that the Council produces high quality and materially correct financial statements, the quality of working papers provided was good and queries have been responded to in an acceptable timeframe. No material misstatements have been identified. The accounts have been amended for typographical corrections and a few minor disclosure errors. A final version of the Statement of Accounts is contained in Appendix A.
- 2.5 In line with the new Code of Audit Practice, the Auditor's Annual Report (the value for money (VFM) report), which provides a judgement on performance, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit, will follow on separately.
- 2.6 The Council's Annual Governance Statement was approved earlier on this meeting's agenda and will be published alongside the Statement of Accounts 2023/24. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have formally signed the Statement.
- 2.7 The auditor seeks a Letter of Representation from the Section 151 Officer and the Chair, including confirmation that this Committee has considered this item and the comments in the Annual Governance Report. A draft copy is included as Appendix B.
- 2.8 It is important that the Council has sound financial, governance and resources management arrangements in place to ensure that resources are available and used to support the Council's priorities, improve services and secure value for money for our taxpayers. Specifically in respect of financial statements members are expected to "exercise collective responsibility for, and prioritise, financial reporting and demonstrate robust challenge and scrutiny". To assist councillors in this regard, a copy of the Unaudited Statement of Accounts was provided to members of this committee.

3 Implications for the Council

Council funds support the delivery of the following Council objectives and priorities:

3.1 Working with People

N/A

3.2 Working with Partners

N/A

3.3 Placed based working

N/A

3.4 Climate Change & Air Quality

N/A

3.5 Improving Outcomes for Children

N/A

3.6 Financial Implications

N/A

3.8 Legal Implications

N/A

3.7 Other (eg Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

The Annual Statement of Accounts are subject to external validation by appointed auditors to ensure that Council funds are also properly accounted for.

4 Consultation

The main consultation has been with Grant Thornton leading to their report.

5 Engagement

N/A

6 Options

6.1 Options Considered

N/A

6.2 Reasons for Recommended Option

N/A

7 Next steps and timelines

The accounts will be formally published. The conclusion of the audit will be advertised on the Council's website.

8 Contact Officer and Relevant Papers

James Anderson Head of Accountancy

9 Appendices

Appendix A Statement of Accounts 2023/24

Appendix B Annual Governance Statement

Appendix C Draft Letter of Representation

10 Service Director Responsible

Kevin Mulvaney Service Director – Finance