

Agenda Item No 7
Audit & Standards Committee
12 June 2024

Title: Audit of Accounts 2023/24
Lead Officer: Steven Leathley (01926 456843)
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Chilvers
Wards of the District directly affected: All

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	04/06/24	Councillor Chilvers
Finance	04/06/24	Steven Leathley
Legal Services		
Chief Executive	04/06/24	Chris Elliott
Director of Climate Change	04/06/24	Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)	04/06/24	Andrew Rollins
Section 151 Officer	04/06/24	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	04/06/24	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group		

Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes

Summary

The External Auditors, Azets, have prepared their Draft Audit Plan for 2023/24 for members' consideration.

Recommendation(s)

- (1)** That Committee Agree the 2023/24 Draft Audit Plan (Appendix A).
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1 Audit of Accounts 2023/24

- 1.1 Warwick District Council have changed External Auditors from Grant Thornton, to Azets for the auditing of the 2023/24 statement of accounts.
- 1.2 The auditors have submitted the External Audit Plan for 2023/24 (Appendix A). Members are requested to agree the plan and may wish to seek assurance from officers and auditors that all is being done to ensure the statutory requirement will be met.
- 1.3 The Audited Accounts statutory deadline for published accounts is 30 September 2024, however, with the uncertainty surrounding the requirements to achieve the Government backstop for previous years outstanding accounts, it is likely that as part of the catch-up process, the Audit may take longer and therefore provision is in place for this to be reported to Audit and Standards Committee in November (date to be confirmed). The next confirmed date for Audit & Standards Committee is currently 7 January 2025.
- 1.4 The auditors have commenced work on the audit, starting in November 2023 with the interim audit, and are scheduled to complete the main audit over agreed dates between September and October 2024.
- 1.5 Due to the dates agreed above, a decision has been taken to delay the publication of the Draft Statement of Accounts 2023/24, which was due to be posted on our website by 31 May 2024. This will give additional time to review the statements and make changes necessary to accommodate amendments relating to the ongoing work on prior year statements.
- 1.6 As in previous years External Audit, Azets will use is being making active use of Inflo. This is an on-line portal to securely share documents between Warwick District Council teams and the External Auditors. Inflo has worked well with our previous External Auditors, allowing leads on both sides to keep track on audit progress, therefore all parties are keen to continue with this for 2023/24.

2 Alternative Options

- 2.1 None.

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 The proposals are in line with current legislation where applicable.

4 Financial Services

- 4.1 The agreed planned fee charged for the 2023/24 Audit of the Accounts is £153,840, as agreed by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), who tendered for the audit work for the vast majority of local authority audits. The auditors have included in their report how they propose to charge £189,466, an additional £23,076 (18%) above the agreed scale fee, the two additional items

are, New auditing standards (IAS315 and ISA240) and Group Accounts (full breakdown shown on page 17 – Fees of Appendix A). This fee may increase depending on the amount of work created to complete the Audit from the proposed back stop position.

5 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation.
- 5.2 Delivering valued, sustainable services.
- 5.3 Low cost, low carbon energy across the district.
- 5.4 Creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities of the future.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 None.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

- 7.1 Not relevant. **8**

Data Protection 8.1

- Not relevant. **9**

Health and

Wellbeing

- 9.1 Not relevant.

10 Risk Assessment

- 10.1 The requirement for external auditors is part of the assurance framework under which all local authorities operate. The audit of the accounts and associated grant claims seeks to provide assurance to all stakeholders that the Council's finances, as reported in the Accounts, are being properly managed.

Background papers:

Appendix A – Warwick District Council 202324 audit plan - draft