

# Public Document Pack



## AUDIT COMMITTEE

27 NOVEMBER 2019

TABLED PAPER

### PART 1

3. **2018/19 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

Appendix 2 – Letter of Representation.

Pages 3 - 8

**Paper tabled at the meeting on 27 November 2019**

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[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

Neil Harris  
Ernst & Young  
400 Capability Green  
Luton  
LU1 3LU

**Draft Letter of representation (as of 27 November 2019)**

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the consolidated and council financial statements of Stevenage Borough Council ("the Group and Council") for the year ended 31 March 2019. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the consolidated and council financial statements give a true and fair view of the Group and Council financial position of Stevenage Borough Council as of 31 March 2019 and of its financial performance (or operations) and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our consolidated and council financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing, which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

**A. Financial Statements and Financial Records**

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Group and Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the consolidated and council financial statements. We believe the consolidated and council financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Group and the Council in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19 and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the consolidated and council financial statements.

3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the Group and Council financial statements are appropriately described in the Group and Council financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Group and Council, we believe that the Group and Council have a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
5. We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule (Appendix 1), accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the consolidated and council financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences identified and brought to our attention by the auditor because the treatment used is consistent with the valuation in prior years and consistent with other assets of this type. As such, officers believe that the valuation should not be adjusted and that the approach taken by its external valuer (WHE) is reasonable

**6. B. Non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud**

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for determining that the Group and Council's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible for identifying and addressing any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the Group or Council (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
  - involving financial statements;
  - related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the consolidated or Council's financial statements;
  - related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Group or Council's activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;
  - involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or
  - in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

**C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions**

1. We have provided you with:

- Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
  - Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
  - Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the consolidated and council financial statements.
  3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Queensway LLP board held through the year to the most recent meeting on the 13-10-2019 and of the Council, and committees including the Council, Executive and Audit Committee (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: 16-10-2019 (Council) 20-11-2019 (Executive). 27-11-2019 (Audit)
  4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Group and Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the year ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the year end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements.
  5. We believe that the significant assumptions we used in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.
  6. We have disclosed to you, and the Group and Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the consolidated and council financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

#### **D. Liabilities and Contingencies**

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the consolidated and council financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Note 28 to the consolidated and council financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

#### **E. Subsequent Events**

1. Other than as described in Note 6 to the consolidated and council financial statements, there have been no events subsequent to year end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the consolidated and council financial statements or notes thereto.

## **F. Group audits**

1. There are no significant restrictions on our ability to distribute the retained profits of the Group because of statutory, contractual, exchange control or other restrictions other than those indicated in the Group financial statements.
2. Necessary adjustments have been made to eliminate all material intra-group unrealised profits on transactions amongst council, subsidiary undertakings and associated undertakings.

## **G. Other information**

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the Financial Report including the Statement of Accounts.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

## **H. Ownership of Assets**

1. Except for assets capitalised under finance leases, the Group and Council has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheet, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Group and Council's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral. All assets to which the Group and Council has satisfactory title appear in the balance sheet.
2. All agreements and options to buy back assets previously sold have been properly recorded and adequately disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements.
4. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts. Except as disclosed in Note 18 to the consolidated and council financial statements, we have no other line of credit arrangements.

## **I. Reserves**

1. We have properly recorded or disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

## **J. Use of the Work of a Specialist**

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate for the Council:
  - a. the value of property, plant and equipment and investment properties,
  - b. the value of the pension liability,
  - c. the value of the business rates appeals provision,and for the Group:
  - d. the value of the Queensway property asset,

and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the consolidated and

council financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

## **K. Estimates**

### **Property Valuation and Business Rate Appeal Estimate**

1. We believe that the measurement processes, including related assumptions and models, used to determine the accounting estimate(s) have been consistently applied and are appropriate in the context of the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19
2. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the property valuation estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to utilise these assets on behalf of the entity.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the business rates appeal provision estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to utilise the provision on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the consolidated and council financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate(s) are complete and made in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.
5. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimates and disclosures in the consolidated and council financial statements due to subsequent events.

## **L. Retirement benefits**

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

*Yours faithfully,*

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(Chair of the Audit Committee)

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(Chief Financial Officer)

## **Appendix 1 – Schedule of uncorrected audit differences**

- 1) Judgmental difference - Undervaluation of Stevenage swimming pool

Dr £582,800 Property, Plant and Equipment  
Cr £582,800 Equity Component

