

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee held on 21 July 2021

Present

Inkster (Chairman), Briggs (Vice-Chairman), Keast and Linger

Also in attendance: Councillor Pike

12 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Prad Bains, Guest, Kennett and Gary Robinson.

13 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests relating to matters on the agenda.

14 Statement of Accounts 2019/20 And Letter Of Representation - Havant Borough Council

The Committee received the Statement of Accounts and Letter of Representation for 2019/20. The Committee noted details of amendments made to the Accounts since the report was published.

The Statement of Accounts detailed the Council's financial position against budgets in 2019/20, including core financial statements and supporting information, while also outlining arrangements for 2020/21 onwards. The Letter of Representation set out the Council's response to the external auditors and explanation of the unadjusted audit difference.

The Committee was advised of the reasons for the delay in producing these accounts and given an assurance that the external auditors and Council were working together to improve the process

RESOLVED that the;

- (a) Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 be agreed, that the Chairman certifies the approval by signing the relevant page of the accounts and the s151 Officer certify the approval of the Accounts by signing the relevant pages of the Accounts; and
- (b) Letter of Representation as attached as Appendix A to these minutes be agreed and the Chairman of the Committee and s151 Officer sign the letter.

15 Annual Audit Results Report 2019/20

The Committee considered the External Audit Results Report for the year ending 31 March 2020. The external auditors joined the meeting for the debate on this item and answered members' questions in connection with the report.

The Audit Results Report summarised the findings from the 2019/20 audit. The Committee were informed that a majority of outstanding items detailed in the report had been completed and had not impacted upon the opinions contained within the report. The Committee were also informed of errors and changes to the report which had been identified since the report was published. It was noted that the errors and changes were less than previous years.

The Committee was advised that there were three unadjusted audit differences which would be explained in the Council's letter of Representation.

The Cabinet Lead advised on arrangements put in place to improve the property and assets service.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer advised that he was pleased with the report and especially as it showed that the Council was moving in the right direction and that there were no qualifications in the audit.

The reasons for the delays in producing the audit were explained to the Committee and an assurance given that the auditors and the Council's officers were working towards improving this process. The Committee noted that the current audit would not be submitted within the September deadline.

In response to questions, the Head of Finance and External Auditor advised:

- On how its properties were valued.
- That no matter what controls were in place there would always be a risk that these could be overridden and one of the purposes of the external audit was to ensure that this did not take place.
- Debt management had been brought back in house to improve this service.

The Cabinet Lead assured the Committee that the Council had done well at collecting rents during the pandemic and offered to brief the members on this service.

RESOLVED that the External Audit Results Report 2019/20 and Audit Committee Briefing be noted subject to the date on page 117, paragraph 3.31 being amended to read "November 2020".

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 5.33 pm



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My reference:
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Date:

Dear Sir

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL: LETTER OF REPRESENTATION 2019/20

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Havant Borough Council ("the Council") for the year ended 31 March 2020. 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 financial statements give a true and fair view of the Council financial position of Havant Borough Council as of 31 March 2020 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), 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 2019/20 for the Council.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the Council in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20, and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.

4. As members of management of the Council, we believe that the Council has 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 2019/20, that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.
5. We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences identified by and brought to the attention from the auditor because they were small value items.



20 HBC Audit results
report- updated.pdf

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

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the Council's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible to identify and address 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 disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the 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 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 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 all material transactions, events and conditions are reflected in the financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Full Council and committees (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: 16th June 2021
4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the 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 period 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 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 Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.
7. From the date of our last management representation letter (29 July 2020) through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants) , to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate.

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 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 to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in the financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

E. Subsequent Events

1. Other than as described in Note 29 to the financial statements, there have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

F. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information the Narrative Statement and the Annual Governance Statement.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

G. Comparative information – corresponding financial information

1. Following the Council elections in May 2019 the Council's portfolios were reorganised. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement comparators for 2018/19 have been updated to reflect the changes in service responsibilities that fall under each of the new portfolio headings.
2. During the preparation of the 2019/20 accounts it was identified that there was an inconsistency in the accounting treatment of Head of Coastal Partnership. There was a netting between income and expenditure. The value of the adjustment is £2.528 million. This was amended in 2019/20 accounts, and the 2018/19 comparators have been amended to reflect this accounting treatment. This adjustment does not affect the overall net figures in the accounts
3. The comparative amounts have been correctly restated to reflect the above matters and appropriate note disclosure of these restatements have also been included in the current year's financial statements.

H. Going Concern

Note 1 to the financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

I. Ownership of Assets

1. Except for assets capitalised under finance leases, the Council has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheet, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Council's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral. All assets to which the 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 financial statements.
3. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts.

J. Reserves

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

K. Use of the Work of a Specialist - Actuary

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the valuation of the net pension liability and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the 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.

L. Use of the Work of a Specialist – Property Valuers

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the valuation of investment property and operational land and buildings and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the 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.

M. Estimates

NNDR appeals and other provisions estimate

1. We believe that the measurement processes, including related assumptions and models, used to determine the accounting estimate have been consistently applied and are appropriate in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
2. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the estimate of provisions (including the NNDR appeals provision) appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out providing services on behalf of the entity.
3. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate are complete, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and made in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
4. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate and disclosures in the financial statements due to subsequent events, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Valuation of investment property and operational land and buildings estimate

1. We believe that the measurement processes, including related assumptions and models, used to determine the accounting estimate have been consistently applied and are appropriate in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
2. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the estimate of valuation of investment property and operational land and buildings appropriately reflect our intent and ability to use and maintain these assets on behalf of the entity.
3. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate are complete, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and made in

accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

4. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate(s) and disclosures in the financial statements due to subsequent events, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Pension Valuation Estimate

1. We believe that the measurement processes, including related assumptions and models, used to determine the accounting estimate have been consistently applied and are appropriate in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
2. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the estimate of pensions valuations appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out providing services on behalf of the entity.
3. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate(s) are complete, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and made in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
4. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate(s) and disclosures in the financial statements due to subsequent events, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic

N. 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,

Lydia Morrison – Chief Financial Officer (s151 Officer)

Councillor Mark Inkster – Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee

Appendix 1: HBC Audit results report (EY)