

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Audit of Financial Statements Report

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

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Status of report

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The team who delivered the work comprised John Herniman, Jeremy Saunders, Helen Holt, Alexis Smith, John Jones, Dylan Rees, Ben Buckley Sheila Craig, Johanna Butt, Sion Davies, Carwyn Rees, Alice Rushby and Alison Butler

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The Auditor General intends to issue an unqualified audit report on your financial statements. There are some issues to report to you prior to their approval.

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Summary report

Introduction

1. The Auditor General is responsible for providing an opinion on whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (the Council) at 31 March 2015 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended.
2. We do not try to obtain absolute assurance that the financial statements are correctly stated, but adopt the concept of materiality. In planning and conducting the audit, we seek to identify material misstatements in your financial statements, namely, those that might result in a reader of the accounts being misled.
3. The quantitative level at which we judge such misstatements to be material for the Council's accounts is £7,450,000. Whether an item is judged to be material can also be affected by certain qualitative issues such as legal and regulatory requirements and political sensitivity, for example the remuneration note.
4. International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 260 requires us to report certain matters arising from the audit of the financial statements to those charged with governance of a body in sufficient time to enable appropriate action.
5. This report sets out for consideration the matters arising from the audit of the financial statements of the Pension Fund for 2014-15, that require reporting under ISA 260.

Status of the audit

6. We received the draft financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2015 on 30 June, in line with the agreed deadline.
7. We are reporting to you the more significant issues arising from the audit, which we believe you must consider prior to approval of the financial statements. The audit team has already discussed these issues with officers.

Proposed audit report

8. It is the Auditor General's intention to issue an unqualified audit report on the financial statements once you have provided us with a Letter of Representation based on that set out in [Appendix 1](#). However, the audit cannot be formally concluded and an audit certificate issued until enquiries arising from a matter raised by a member of the public has been formally completed.
9. The proposed audit report is set out in [Appendix 2](#).

Significant issues arising from the audit

Uncorrected misstatements

10. There are no non-trivial misstatements identified in the financial statements, which remain uncorrected.

Corrected misstatements

11. There are misstatements that have been corrected by management, but which we consider should be drawn to your attention due to their relevance to your responsibilities over the financial reporting process. They are set out with explanations in [Appendix 3](#). The main area where adjustments have been made related to asset valuations which is also referred to further below.

Other significant issues arising from the audit

12. In the course of the audit, we consider a number of matters both qualitative and quantitative relating to the accounts and report any significant issues arising to you. There were some issues arising in these areas this year:
 - **We have one concern about the qualitative aspects of your accounting practices and financial reporting.**
 - We found the information provided to be, in the most part, relevant, reliable, comparable, material and easy to understand.
 - We concluded that estimates are appropriate and financial statement disclosures unbiased, fair and clear.
 - It was not initially clear how your valuer had assessed service potential when valuing schools using the depreciated replacement cost methodology. We carried out additional work to satisfy ourselves that the valuations were materially correct. Going forward, whilst the contract in place sets out the requirements for valuations to be compliant with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK, the Council does need to be explicit in this regard to have surety that its instructions are being followed.
 - **We did not encounter any significant difficulties during the audit.** We received information in a timely and helpful manner and were not restricted in our work. However, we did encounter a higher than expected level of queries and discrepancies which meant the audit work took longer than we originally expected to complete. We will work with management, to minimise these issues going forward. Welsh Government is currently consulting on plans to bring forward the timetable for preparing and publishing the accounts of local government bodies in Wales. Current proposals indicate that for the 2018-19 and 2019-20, accounts will be prepared by 30 June (same as it is currently) and published by 31 August (one month less than currently), and that for 2020-21

onwards they must be prepared by 31 May and published by 31 July. Therefore, ultimately, the timetable will be reduced by two months, one month less for the preparation and one month less for the publication. This will be challenging for all councils but adds emphasis to the need to minimise the amount of queries and discrepancies arising during the audit.

- **There were no significant matters discussed and corresponded upon with management which we need to report to you.**
- **There are no other matters significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process that we need to report to you.**
- **We did not identify any material weaknesses in your internal controls that we have not reported to you already**
- **There are not any 'other matters' specifically required by auditing standards to be communicated to those charged with governance.**

Independence and objectivity

13. As part of the finalisation process, we are required to provide you with representations concerning our independence.
14. We have complied with ethical standards and in our professional judgment, we are independent and our objectivity is not compromised. There are no relationships between the Wales Audit Office and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council that we consider to bear on our objectivity and independence.

Appendix 1

Final Letter of Representation

Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

30 September 2015

Representations regarding the 2014-15 financial statements

This letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (the Council) for the year ended 31 March 2015 for the purpose of expressing an opinion on their truth and fairness and their proper preparation.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made enquiries as we consider sufficient, we can make the following representations to you.

Management representations

Responsibilities

We have fulfilled our responsibilities for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with legislative requirements and CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2014-15; in particular the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance therewith.
- the design, implementation, maintenance and review of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

Information provided

We have provided you with:

- Full access to:
 - all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as books of account and supporting documentation, minutes of meetings and other matters;
 - additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
 - unrestricted access to staff from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

- The results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud;
- Our knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects the Council and involves:
 - management;
 - employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- Our knowledge of any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, regulators or others;
- Our knowledge of all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements;
- The identity of all related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware;
- Our knowledge of all known partnerships and joint working/ collaborative arrangements that would impact on the financial statements.

Financial statement representations

All transactions, assets and liabilities have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

Significant assumptions used in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.

Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed.

All events occurring subsequent to the reporting date which require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted for or disclosed.

All known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements have been disclosed to the auditor and accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework including consideration of the implications of the overtime in holiday pay judgement in the Bear Scotland case and your accounting treatment resulting from a recent VAT investigation by HMRC.

The Council has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that would require adjustment to, or disclosure in, the accounting statements and related notes.

The financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions. The effects of uncorrected misstatements identified during the audit are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the financial statements taken as a whole.

Representations by the Council

We acknowledge that the representations made by management, above, have been discussed with us.

We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of true and fair financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. The financial statements were approved by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council on 30 September 2015

Signed by:
S151 Officer
Date:

Signed by:
Mayor
Date:

Appendix 2

Proposed audit report of the Auditor General to the Members of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

I have audited the accounting statements and related notes of:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Group; and
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund;

for the year ended 31 March 2015 under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's accounting statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement and the Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Group accounting statements comprise the Group Movement in Reserves Statement, the Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Group Balance Sheet and the Group Cash Flow Statement.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund's accounting statements comprise the Fund Account and the Net Assets Statement.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2014-15 based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs).

Respective responsibilities of the responsible financial officer and the Auditor General for Wales

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts set out on page 13, the responsible financial officer is responsible for the preparation of the statement of accounts, including Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Group accounting statements and Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund's accounting statements, which gives a true and fair view.

My responsibility is to audit the accounting statements and related notes in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require me to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the accounting statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the accounting statements and related notes sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the accounting statements and related notes are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough

Council's Group's and Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the responsible financial officer and the overall presentation of the accounting statements and related notes.

In addition, I read all the financial and non-financial information in the Foreword to identify material inconsistencies with the audited accounting statements and related notes and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by me in the course of performing the audit. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies, I consider the implications for my report.

Opinion on the accounting statements of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

In my opinion the accounting statements and related notes:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as at 31 March 2015 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2014-15.

Opinion on the accounting statements of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Group

In my opinion the accounting statements and related notes:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Group as at 31 March 2015 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2014-15.

Opinion on the accounting statements of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund

In my opinion, the pension fund accounts and related notes:

- give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund during the year ended 31 March 2015 and of the amount and disposition of the fund's assets and liabilities as at that date, other than liabilities to pay pensions and benefits after the end of the scheme year; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2014-15.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, the information contained in the Foreword is consistent with the accounting statements and related notes.

Matters on which I report by exception

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters, which I report to you, if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept;
- the accounting statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit; and
- the Governance Statement contains material misstatements of fact or is inconsistent with other information I am aware of from my audit.

Certificate of completion of audit

The audit cannot be formally concluded and an audit certificate issued until enquiries arising from a matter raised by a member of the public has been formally completed.

For and on behalf of
Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ
30 September 2015

Appendix 3

Summary of corrections made to the draft financial statements which should be drawn to the attention of those charged with Governance

During our audit we identified the following misstatements that have been corrected by management, but which we consider should be drawn to your attention due to their relevance to your responsibilities over the financial reporting process.

Value of correction, £	Nature of correction	Reason for correction
£12,901,000	Land and buildings in the balance sheet reduced by £12,901,000 with consequent changes to revaluation reserve and capital adjustment account. This has no effect on the general fund balance.	Finance costs had been included in the valuer's calculations of depreciated replacement costs for assets in the balance sheet which was not in accordance with the Code.
£2,528,000	Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) under charged for the net of downwards revaluation of assets (£2,875,000) and over charge of depreciation (£347,000) referred to above. This has no effect on the general fund balance.	Finance costs had been included in the valuer's calculations of depreciated replacement costs for assets in the balance sheet which was not in accordance with the Code.
NA	Median salary for all employees not disclosed in note 30.	Median salary needs to be disclosed to comply with Accounts and Audit regulations.
NA	The narrative supporting the Senior Officers' Remuneration Note needed an amendment.	Additional narrative to fully describe the new structure.
NA	Remuneration banding note needed several adjustments.	Note needed to fully tie in with supporting records.

Value of correction, £	Nature of correction	Reason for correction
£350,000	Central South Education Consortium (CSEC) consolidated in at the incorrect percentage and based on draft (CSEC) accounts which were subsequently adjusted for additional income. Gross income and gross expenditure both over stated by £350,000 This has no effect on the general fund balance.	To consolidate the correct income and expenditure in relation to CSEC.
£308,000	Income from sale of surplus vehicles was included in other income as opposed to gain/loss on disposal of assets. This has no effect on the general fund balance.	To correctly account for all disposals.
£208,000	Council tax bad debt provision overstated by £208,000 with consequent understatement of council tax income. This increases the general fund balance by £208,000.	To correctly account for council tax income.
£1,820,000	Short term debtors reduced and short term creditors reduced by £1,820,000 because it incorrectly included pension fund debtors. This has no effect on the general fund balance.	To correctly account for pension fund debtors.
£163,000	Insurance provision charged to CIES overstated by £163,000. Transfer made to insurance reserve to compensate. This has no effect on the general fund balance.	To correctly account for insurance provisions.
£155,000	Debtors and creditors both overstated in relation to severance costs originally accrued but paid in year. This has no effect on the general fund balance	To correctly accounts for creditors and debtors at year end.
NA	IAS19 costs not correctly classified across services in CIES.	To correctly account for IAS19 costs in CIES.

Value of correction, £	Nature of correction	Reason for correction
	This has no effect on the general fund balance.	
NA	A number of other narrative notes needed amendment to fully and accurately reflect the Council's position.	To fully reflect the Council's position in the notes to the accounts.

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