

Audit of Accounts Report – Powys Pension Fund

Audit year: 2019-20

Date issued: November 2020

Document reference: 2090A2020-21

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The section 45 code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to the Wales Audit Office at infoofficer@audit.wales.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

Contents

We intend to issue an unqualified audit report on your Accounts. There are some issues to report to you prior to their approval.

Audit of Accounts Report

Introduction	4
Impact of COVID-19 on this year's audit	4
Proposed audit opinion	6
Significant issues arising from the audit	6
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Final Letter of Representation	8
Appendix 2 – Proposed audit report	11
Appendix 3 – Summary of corrections made	15

Audit of Accounts Report

Introduction

- 1 We summarise the main findings from our audit of your 2019-20 annual report and accounts in this report.
- 2 We have already discussed these issues with the Head of Finance and the Financial Reporting and Policy Accountant.
- 3 Auditors can never give complete assurance that accounts are correctly stated. Instead, we work to a level of 'materiality'. This level of materiality is set to try to identify and correct misstatements that might otherwise cause a user of the accounts into being misled.
- 4 We set this level at £6,453,000 for this year's audit.
- 5 There are some areas of the accounts that may be of more importance to the reader and we have set a lower materiality level for these for example Related Party transactions.
- 6 We have now substantially completed this year's audit.
- 7 In our professional view, we have complied with the ethical standards that apply to our work; remain independent of yourselves; and, our objectivity has not been compromised in any way.
- 8 However, I draw your attention to one potential conflict of interest that has arisen. This relates to a member of my financial audit team who holds a voluntary role as Treasurer of a charity which has a contract to provide a service within Powys' Adult Social Care and which is an admitted body of the pension scheme. I can confirm that planned safeguards have operated as intended in respect of this matter. I can also confirm that, all other members of my team are independent of the Council and its senior officers.

Impact of COVID-19 on this year's audit

- 9 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all aspects of our society and continues to do so. You are required by law to prepare accounts and it is of considerable testament to the commitment of your accounts team that you have succeeded in doing so this year in the face of the challenges posed by this pandemic. We are extremely grateful to the professionalism of the team in supporting us to complete our audit in such difficult circumstances.
- 10 The pandemic has unsurprisingly affected our audit and we summarise in **Exhibit 1** the main impacts. Other than where we specifically make recommendations, the detail in **Exhibit 1** is provided for information purposes only to help you understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this year's audit process.

Exhibit 1 – impact of COVID-19 on this year’s audit

Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The COVID-19 pandemic has created some exceptional circumstances this year and Welsh Government has issued revised timescales that require preparation and certification of draft accounts by 31 August 2020 and publication of final audited accounts by 30 November 2020 for all local government bodies in Wales. Public bodies are encouraged to conclude audits early, where possible.• As a result of the pandemic, we received the draft accounts on 15 June 2020 as planned, and ahead of the Welsh Government revised timescales.• As a result of prioritising our resources to work on the Council’s statutory accounts audit, we did not commence our audit of the Pension Fund until early September.• We expect your audit report to be signed on 23 November in line with the revised timescales issued by Welsh Government.
Electronic signatures	<p>The Head of Finance provided an electronic signature, along with a supporting e-mail to confirm that she had certified the draft statement of accounts. We will continue to accept the use of electronic signatures and electronic transfer of files during the approval and signing process.</p>
Audit evidence	<p>As in previous years, we received the majority of audit evidence in electronic format. We have used various techniques to ensure its validity. Where we have been unable to obtain access to paper documents because of COVID-19 restrictions, we have devised alternative audit methodologies to obtain sufficient audit evidence. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• officers provided electronic working papers in accordance with our agreed Audit Deliverables Report;• officers provided audit evidence to the audit team via e-mail or via the secure ‘Sharepoint’ folder which was accessible to Audit Wales staff remotely;• officers were available through Microsoft Teams for video conference meetings, and to share on-screen information/evidence; and• Audit Wales also secured remote read only access to the Council’s ledger system. <p>The practical implications of lockdown, together with the additional workload pressures on your staff created by the over-riding need to respond to the pandemic, meant that we prioritised the audit of the Council’s statutory accounts ahead of Pension Fund accounts this year.</p>

	Despite this, the audit is due to be completed within the Welsh Government's revised deadline of 30 November.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video conferencing has enabled the audit team to correspond effectively with officers throughout the audit. • Video-conference based Audit Committee meetings have enabled us to discharge our responsibility for reporting to those charged with governance

- 11 We will be reviewing what we have learned for our audit process from the COVID-19 pandemic and whether there are innovative practices that we might adopt in the future to enhance that process.

Proposed audit opinion

- 12 We intend to issue an unqualified audit opinion on this year's accounts once you have provided us with a Letter of Representation based on that set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 13 We issue a 'qualified' audit opinion where we have material concerns about some aspects of your accounts; otherwise we issue an unqualified opinion.
- 14 The Letter of Representation contains certain confirmations we are required to obtain from you under auditing standards, along with confirmation of other specific information you have provided to us during our audit.
- 15 Our proposed audit report is set out in **Appendix 2**. Whilst our audit opinion is unqualified, we have included an Emphasis of Matter paragraph as per ISA (UK) 706 within our Auditor's Report. This is in relation to material valuation uncertainty assigned to the property fund investments at 31 March 2020.

Significant issues arising from the audit

Uncorrected misstatements

- 16 There are no misstatements identified in the accounts, which remain uncorrected.

Corrected misstatements

- 17 There were initially misstatements in the accounts that have now been corrected by management. However, we believe that these should be drawn to your attention and they are set out with explanations in **Appendix 3**.

Other significant issues arising from the audit

- 18 In the course of the audit, we consider a number of matters relating to the accounts and report any significant issues arising to you. There were some issues arising in these areas this year as shown in **Exhibit 2**:

Exhibit 2 – significant issues arising from the audit

<p>Impact of McCloud Pension remedy proposals on IAS 19 figures</p>	<p>Our Audit Plan highlighted the impact of the McCloud judgement as a potential audit risk. An estimate for this potential liability was included in the draft 2019-20 financial statements prepared in June 2020.</p> <p>On 16 July 2020, the UK government proposed its remedy for the McCloud judgment which had the potential to impact on the McCloud estimate already included in the financial statements.</p> <p>We corresponded with both management and the actuary regarding the issue. We subsequently received confirmation from the actuary that the assumptions used, in the draft statement of accounts, were broadly similar to the proposed remedy. Therefore, we were able to conclude that the estimate included in the financial statements remains reasonable.</p> <p>No adjustments were therefore required to be made to the relevant disclosure within Note 21 'Actuarial Present Value of Promised Retirement Benefits' within the financial statements.</p>
<p>Material uncertainty in relation to pension fund property assets</p>	<p>I have requested that the Council sets out in Note 3 Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies', additional narrative to disclose the material uncertainty in relation to pension fund property assets</p> <p>I have drawn the reader's attention to this disclosure in an emphasis of matter paragraph in my audit report.</p> <p>My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.</p>

Appendix 1

Final letter of representation

[Audited body's letterhead]

Auditor General for Wales
Audit Wales
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

19 November 2020

Representations regarding the 2019-20 financial statements

This letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Powys Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2020 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 the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019-20; in particular the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance therewith; and
- 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 Powys Pension Fund 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.

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.

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 Audit Committee

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 the Audit Committee on 19 November 2020.

We confirm that we have taken all the steps that we ought to have taken in order to make ourselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that it has been communicated to you. We confirm that, as far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which you are unaware.

Signed by:

Signed by:

Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer

Chair of Audit Committee

Date: 19 November 2020

Date: 19 November 2020

Appendix 2

Proposed Audit Report

The independent auditor's report of the Auditor General for Wales to the members of Powys County Council as administering authority for Powys Pension Fund.

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

I have audited the financial statements of Powys Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2020 under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. Powys Pension Fund's financial statements comprise the fund account, the net assets statement and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. 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 2019-20 based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs).

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the pension fund during the year ended 31 March 2020, and of the amount and disposition at that date of its assets and liabilities; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019-20.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISAs (UK)). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I am independent of the pension fund in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Emphasis of matter

I draw attention to Note 3 'Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies', of the financial statements, which describes the impact of material uncertainty disclosed in pension fund manager year-end valuation reports for the UK property funds they manage

on behalf of the Powys Pension Fund. The Council has disclosed this material uncertainty.

My audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Conclusions relating to going concern

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require me to report to you where:

- the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the responsible financial officer has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the pension fund's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The responsible financial officer is responsible for the other information in the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements 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.

Report on other requirements

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of my audit:

- the information contained in the annual report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and the annual report has been prepared in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the pension fund and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the annual report.

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 financial 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.

Certificate of completion of audit

I certify that I have completed the audit of the accounts of Powys Pension Fund in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Auditor General for Wales' Code of Audit Practice.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the responsible financial officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the financial statements, the responsible financial officer is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements, which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the responsible financial officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the responsible financial officer is responsible for assessing the pension fund's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless deemed inappropriate.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales
23 November 2020

24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

Appendix 3

Summary of corrections made

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.

Exhibit 3: summary of corrections made

Value of correction	Nature of correction	Reason for correction
£953,000	Note 15 – Additional Voluntary Contributions Note 15 disclosure in the draft accounts was incomplete and £953,000 was inserted to the disclosure following receipt of the information from two additional voluntary contribution providers.	Numerical disclosures amended to Note 15 to ensure the disclosure is complete.
n/a	Various minor narrative and arithmetical amendments. These include amendments to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note 20b – reconciliation of Investment level 3 changes for casting; and• Note 12 – Investments Analysis for casting.	The amendments or additional information provide enhanced understanding to the reader of the financial statements.



Audit Wales
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500
Fax: 029 2032 0600
Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.