

Audit of Accounts Report – Powys County Council

Audit year: 2022-23

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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.

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

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Audit of Accounts Report

Introduction

- 1 We summarise the main findings from our audit of your 2022-23 Statement of Accounts in this report.
- 2 We have already discussed these issues with the Section 151 Officer.
- 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 £5.56 million 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, as follows:
 - Related Party transactions (with individuals) £10,000
 - Senior officer remuneration £1,000
- 6 We have now substantially completed this year's audit / but the following work is outstanding:
 - IAS19 Assurance work to support the Liability related to the Defined Benefit Scheme
 - Payroll testing
 - Completion of review of our audit work
- 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. There are no relationships between ourselves and yourselves that we believe could undermine our objectivity and independence.

Proposed audit opinion

- 8 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**.
- 9 We issue a 'qualified' audit opinion where we have material concerns about some aspects of your accounts; otherwise, we issue an unqualified opinion.
- 10 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.
- 11 Our proposed audit report is set out in **Appendix 2**.

Significant issues arising from the audit

Uncorrected misstatements

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

Corrected misstatements

13 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

14 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 no such issues arising in this year.

Recommendations

15 The recommendation arising from our audit is set out in **Appendix 4**. Management has responded to them and we will follow up progress against them during next year's audit.

Appendix 1

Final Letter of Representation

Audited body's letterhead

Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
1 Capital Quarter
Cardiff
CF10 4BZ

Xx November 2023

Representations regarding the 2022-23 financial statements

This letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Powys County Council and its group for the year ended 31 March 2023 for the purpose of expressing an opinion on their truth and fairness.

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 CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom UK 2022-23; 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 Powys County Council and its group 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.
- The methods, the data and the significant assumptions used in making accounting estimates, and their related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement or disclosure that is reasonable in the context of the applicable financial reporting framework.
- 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.

Representations by Powys County 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 the Council's Governance and Audit Committee on xx/xx/xx

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:

Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)

Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee – signed on behalf of those charged with governance

Date:

Date:

Appendix 2

Proposed Audit Report

The report of the Auditor General for Wales to the members of Powys County Council

Opinion on financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of Powys County Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

Powys County Council's financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Expenditure and Funding Analysis, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement, the Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement and the related notes, including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-23.

In my opinion, in all material respects, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Powys County Council as at 31 March 2023 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-23

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISAs (UK)) and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report.

My staff and I are independent of the Powys County Council 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.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on Powys County Council's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the responsible financial officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. The Responsible Financial Officer is responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. 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.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

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

- the information contained in the Narrative Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-23;
- The information given in the Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with guidance.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of Powys County Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Narrative Report or the Governance Statement.

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

- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit;
- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my team; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns.

Responsibilities of the responsible financial officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts set out on page 18, the responsible financial officer is responsible for:

- the preparation of the statement of accounts, which give a true and fair view and comply with proper practices;
- maintaining proper accounting records;
- internal controls as the responsible financial officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of statements of accounts that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- assessing Powys County Council'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 the responsible financial officer anticipates that the services provided by Powys County Council will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

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.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

My procedures included the following:

- Enquiring of management, Powys County Council's head of internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to Powys County Council's policies and procedures concerned with:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
 - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; and
 - the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Considering as an audit team how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition, expenditure recognition and posting of unusual journals
- Obtaining an understanding of Powys County Council's framework of authority as well as other legal and regulatory frameworks that Powys County Council operates in, focusing
- on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of [name of local government body and group.
- Obtaining an understanding of related party relationships.

In addition to the above, my procedures to respond to identified risks included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations discussed above;
- enquiring of management, the Governance And Audit Committee and legal advisors about actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all audit team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the Powys County Council's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

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.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Certificate of completion of audit

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

Adrian Crompton

Auditor General for Wales

28 November 2023

1 Capital Quarter

Tyndall Street

Cardiff, CF10 4BZ

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
£12.787m	Council Dwellings in Note 12 were revalued using indices to bring their value up to date as at 31 March 2023	Suitable indices were not available from the valuers at the time the draft accounts were prepared.
£3.834m	Capital Commitments disclosed in Note 12 (page 61) were reduced	The capital commitment figure was reduced from £38.256m as the figure included the value of creditors already included in the accounts so overstating the commitments being met from future years' budgets.
£1.096m	Increase in Property, Plant and Equipment (Note 12) and reduction in Non-enhancing expenditure in Note 9	Expenditure on enhancing facilities at Llanfyllin Leisure Centre erroneously treated as non-enhancing.
£0.87m	Assets under construction in Note 12 decreased and Council Dwellings increased	Council Dwelling completed and brought into use in Llanigon had not been transferred out of assets under construction.
Various	Changes made to senior officer emoluments disclosures in Note 31	Corrections made to the Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Monitoring Office salary disclosures. Also, some changes to correct the factual accuracy of narrative footnotes.

Value of correction	Nature of correction	Reason for correction
Various	Additional disclosures added to the related parties note (Note 35)	Additional disclosures relating to members' interests relating to those members who left following the local elections in May 2022.
Narrative note	Note 42 Events after the reporting period to be amended to include reference to the Council's current position identifying buildings containing RAAC	To provide information to the reader on how RAAC may impact on Powys' assets.
Narrative within note 38	Note 38 Defined Benefit Pension Schemes to be amended to reflect the correct valuation year as per the actuarial (IAS19) report.	Reference was made to estimating assets and liabilities on the 2019 valuation within the note, however on reading the actuarial (IAS19) report the asset and liabilities valuation was based on the 2022 valuation.
Narrative, presentational & minor amendments	To ensure that all disclosures are accurately presented.	Several narrative, presentational and minor amendments were made to supporting notes throughout the final financial statements.

Appendix 4

Recommendations

We set out one the recommendation arising from our audit with management’s response to them. We will follow up this next year and include any outstanding issues in next year’s audit report:

Exhibit 4: matter arising 1

Matter arising 1: Non-enhancing Expenditure	
Findings	<p>Our audit testing identified that a 3G pitch in Llanfyllin, had not been capitalised when it should have been. It had been treated as non-enhancing expenditure. This is not the first time that the Council has incorrectly identified expenditure as non-enhancing, an issue was also raised in the 2021-22 audit.</p> <p>The misclassification led to the audit team completing additional testing of non-enhancing expenditure to ensure that the balance was not materially misstated.</p>
Priority	High
Recommendation	The council should ensure that checks of non-enhancing expenditure are undertaken before preparing the financial statements to ensure that misclassification is limited.
Benefits of implementing the recommendation	The audit of non-enhancing expenditure is more efficient, as additional testing is not required.
Accepted in full by management	Yes
Management response	As per recommendation

Implementation date

30 June 2024



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