

# **Report to the Audit & Governance Committee**



**Report reference:** **AGC-010-2020/21**  
**Date of meeting:** **28 September 2020**

**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Finance & Economic Development  
**Subject:** Statement of Accounts 2019/20 - Update  
**Responsible Officer:** Andrew Small (01992 564278).  
**Democratic Services:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564243).

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1) To note the progress in preparing the Council's Statement of Accounts 2019/20.**
- (2) To agree to receive and scrutinise the Council's audited Statement of Accounts 2019/20 on 23rd November 2020.**

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To update the Audit and Governance Committee on the Council's progress in discharging its statutory duty to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts that comply with the CIPFA Code, and in accordance with the statutory framework contained in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

## **Report:**

1. One of the key functions of this Committee is to scrutinise the Council's annual Statement of Accounts.
2. The Statement of Accounts must be prepared in accordance with proper practices as set out in the *CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting*, and within the statutory framework of the *Accounts and Audit Regulations*.
3. The *Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) Amendments Regulations 2020* extended the statutory deadlines for 2019/20 for all local authorities:
  - Unaudited Accounts – these were required to be published on the Council's website by 31st August 2020. The Council's Accounts were published on Friday 21st August 2020; and
  - Audited Accounts – these are required to be published on the Council's website by 30th November 2020.
4. The audit of the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 is currently in progress and it is anticipated that the external auditors (Deloitte) will be able to issue their audit opinion well within the statutory deadline of 30th November 2020.

5. All Councillors will have the opportunity to debate the audited Statement of Accounts at full Council; part of that debate will be to consider the recommendations made by this Committee – following detailed (post-audit) consideration of the Accounts – on 23rd November 2020.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To update the Audit and Governance Committee on the Council's progress in discharging its statutory duty to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts that comply with the CIPFA Code, and in accordance with the statutory framework contained in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The prescribed format and statutory framework within which the Statement of Accounts is prepared is explained above in Paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3. In addition, there are also a range of other legal requirements in respect of financial reporting that the Council is required to comply with; these are detailed within the appropriate sections of the Statement of Accounts themselves.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener (SCG) Implications:**

There are no direct SCG implications contained within the report.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

Members of the public have legal rights to inspect, ask questions about and challenge items in the Council's Statement of Accounts. Details of these have been published on the Council's website and the statutory period ended at 4pm on 28th September 2020. To date, no enquiries have been received in relation to this.

### **Background Papers:**

Epping Forest District Council: Statement of Accounts 2019/20 (DRAFT) available via the following link <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies/>

### **Risk Management:**

Failure to meet the statutory deadline for the production and audit of the Statement of Accounts would result in this being highlighted in Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited's (PSAA) report on the results of auditors' work. The impact of this risk materialising would have largely reputational repercussions for the Council and would limit the Council's ability to demonstrate accountability and value for money in its use of public funds. Although this risk materialised in 2018/19, new arrangements have now been implemented in the Council's Finance function, which means that this risk is now considered to be within acceptable levels for 2019/20.