

East Sussex Fire Authority Audit results report

Year ended 31 March 2021

1 November 2021



Building a better
working world

1 November 2021



East Sussex Fire Authority
Service Head Quarters
Church Lane
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2DZ

Dear Scrutiny & Audit Panel Members

2021 Audit results report

We are pleased to attach our audit results report, summarising the findings and conclusions from our audit. This report updates the previous version of the report presented to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 28 September 2021.

The audit is designed to express an opinion on the 2020-21 financial statements and address current statutory and regulatory requirements. This report contains our findings related to the areas of audit emphasis, our views on the East Sussex Fire Authority's accounting policies and judgements and material internal control findings. Each year sees further enhancements to the level of audit challenge and the quality of evidence required to achieve the robust professional scepticism that society expects. We thank the management team for supporting this process. We have also included an update on our work on value for money arrangements.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel, other members of the Authority, and senior management. It is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 11 November 2021.

Yours faithfully

Helen Thompson
Associate Partner
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
Encl

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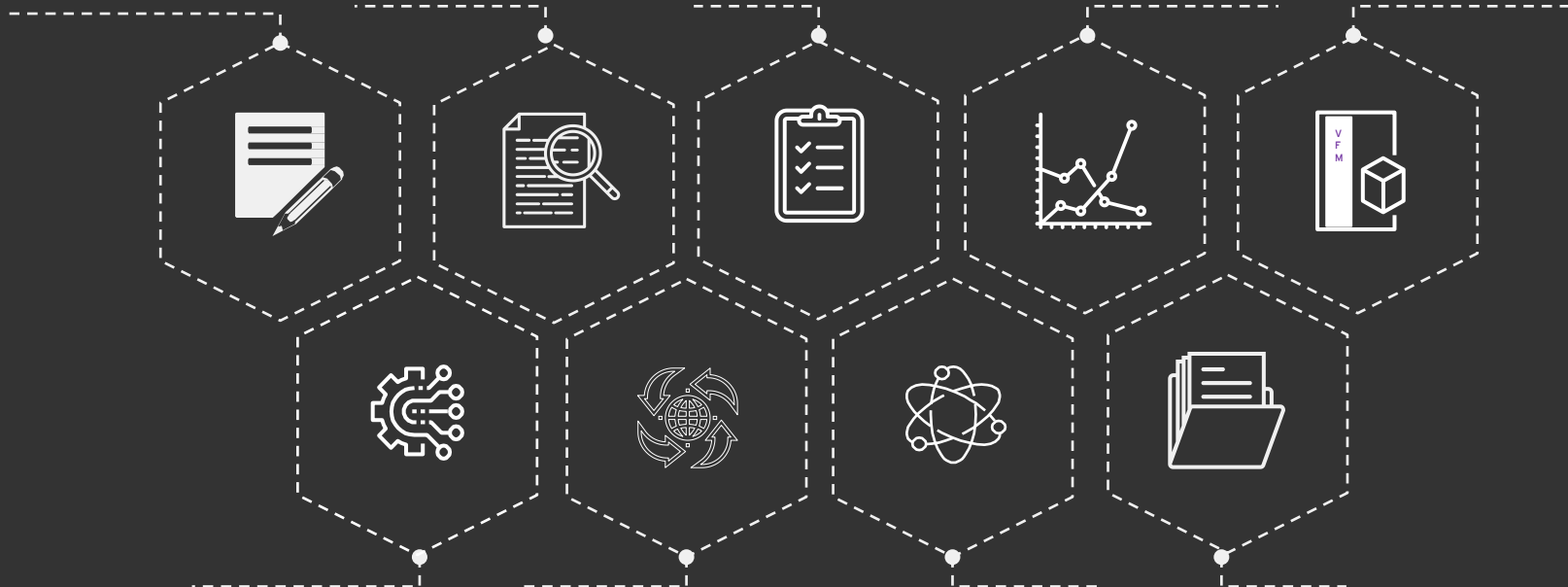
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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)" issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and management of East Sussex Fire Authority in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and management of East Sussex Fire Authority those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and management of East Sussex Fire Authority for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01 Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Scope update

In our audit planning report and updated audit planning report presented to the 29 April 2021 and 22 July 2021 Scrutiny & Audit Panel meetings respectively, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements. We carried out our audit in accordance with this plan, with the following exceptions:

► Changes in materiality

We updated our planning materiality assessment using the draft results and have also reconsidered our risk assessment. Based on our materiality measure of gross expenditure on provision of services, we have updated our overall materiality assessment to £1.05m (Audit Planning Report – £1.14m). This results in updated performance materiality, at 75% of overall materiality, of £790k, and an updated threshold for reporting misstatements of £52k.

► Changes to reporting timescales

As a result of COVID-19, new regulations, the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 No 263, have been published and came into force on 31 March 2021. This announced a change to publication date for final, audited accounts from 31 July to 30 September 2021 for all relevant authorities.

► Auditing accounting estimates

A revised auditing standard has been issued in respect of the audit of accounting estimates. The revised standard requires auditors to consider inherent risks associated with the production of accounting estimates. These could relate, for example, to the complexity of the method applied, subjectivity in the choice of data or assumptions or a high degree of estimation uncertainty. As part of this, auditors now consider risk on a spectrum (from low to high inherent risk) rather than a simplified classification of whether there is a significant risk or not. At the same time, we may see the number of significant risks we report in respect of accounting estimates to increase as a result of the revised guidance in this area. We have considered the following areas as higher inherent risk estimates in our approach:

- The revaluation of land and buildings classified as Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE); and
- Pension liability and asset valuation.

► Additional audit procedures as a result of Covid-19

Other changes in the entity and regulatory environment as a result of Covid-19 that have not resulted in an additional risk, but result in the following impacts on our audit strategy were as follows:

- **Information Produced by the Entity (IPE):** We identified an increased risk around the completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of information produced by the entity due to the inability of the audit team to verify original documents or re-run reports on-site from the Authority's systems. We undertook the following to address this risk:
 - Used the screen sharing function of Microsoft Teams to evidence re-running of reports used to generate the IPE we audited; and
 - Agreed IPE to scanned documents or other system screenshots.



Executive Summary

Status of the audit

Our audit work in respect of the Authority's opinion is substantially complete. The following are the main items relating to the completion of our audit procedures that were outstanding at the date of this report:

- ▶ Final consideration of the subsequent events up to the date of the audit opinion;
- ▶ Receipt of signed management representation letter;
- ▶ Signed Narrative Report and financial statements;
- ▶ Documentation of final review on our audit files;
- ▶ Whole of Government Accounts: We have yet to receive the NAO instructions on this for 2020/21.

We expect to issue an unqualified opinion in the week ending 12 November 2021.

Auditor responsibilities under the new Code of Audit Practice 2020

Under the Code of Audit Practice 2020 we are still required to consider whether the Authority has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. The 2020 Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Authority a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Authority has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- Financial sustainability
How the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance
How the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness:
How the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

Executive Summary

Status of the audit - Value for Money

In the updated planning report presented to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel, on 22 July 2021, we reported that we had completed our value for money (VFM) risk assessment and not identified any risk of significant weakness against the three reporting criteria we are required to consider under the NAO's 2020 Code. We have revisited our assessment on completion of the audit of the financial statements and remain satisfied that we have not identified a risk of significant weakness. As a result, we have completed our planned VFM procedures and have no matters to report by exception in the auditor's report (see Section 03). We plan to issue the VFM commentary as part of issuing the Auditor's Annual Report.

Audit differences

There are no unadjusted differences as at 11 November 2021.

There have been no misstatements greater than £790k which have been corrected by management.

A small number of other amendments were made to disclosures appearing in the financial statements as a result of our work.

Other reporting issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement for consistency with our knowledge of the Authority. We have no matters to report as a result of this work.

We have not yet been able to perform the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts submission. This is because HM Treasury are continuing to review the online 2020/21 WGA Data Collection Tool (DCT) and update the guidance that is available for preparers. Based on the last available update the DCT and guidance was not expected to be available until Autumn 2021. Therefore the 2020/21 WGA component data will not be available for auditors to review until after that. Group Audit Instructions and the timetable for 2020/21 will necessarily follow any changes HM Treasury make to the DCT and process.

We have no other matters to report.

Executive Summary

Areas of audit focus

In our audit planning report, and subsequent update, we identified a number of key areas of focus for our audit of the financial report of the Authority. This report sets out our observations and status in relation to these areas, including our views on areas which might be conservative and areas where there is potential risk and exposure. Our consideration of these matters and others identified during the period is summarised within the "Areas of Audit Focus" section of this report.

Fraud Risk	Findings & Conclusions
Misstatements due to fraud or error	We have not identified any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override, instances of inappropriate judgements being applied; or any other transactions during our audit which appear unusual or outside the Authority's normal course of business.
Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure	<p>Our sample testing of additions to PPE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found costs had been correctly classified as capital and included at the correct value. • Did not identify any revenue items that were incorrectly classified as capital. <p>Our review of judgements taken by management found them to be reasonable.</p>

Area of audit focus / Inherent risk	Findings & Conclusions
Valuation of Land and Buildings	We are satisfied that the valuation of property, plant and equipment is fairly stated and appropriately disclosed.
Pension Liability and Asset Valuation (Inherent risk)	As a result of our work, the IAS19 report was subsequently revised which led to adjustments close to performance materiality in the Authority's Statement of Accounts. Following this adjustment, we are satisfied that the pension liability and asset valuation is fairly stated and appropriately disclosed. Further details are set out in Section 2 of this report.
Going Concern (Area of audit focus)	<p>We have reviewed management's going concern assessment and confirm their conclusion that the Authority remains a going concern is based on reasonable and supportable assumptions.</p> <p>We have also reviewed management's going concern disclosure and confirmed it is sufficiently detailed, transparent and accurately reflects management's underlying going concern assessment.</p>

Executive Summary

Areas of audit focus (cont.)

Area of audit focus / Inherent risk	Findings & Conclusions
Accounting for Covid-19 related government grants (Inherent risk)	Based on our work we are satisfied that the accounting treatment adopted for Covid-19 related government grants accorded with the Authority's assessment of whether it was acting as agent or principal, the underlying conditions of the grant and whether those conditions had been met.

We request that you review these and other matters set out in this report to ensure:

- ▶ There are no residual further considerations or matters that could impact these issues
- ▶ You concur with the resolution of the issue
- ▶ There are no further significant issues you are aware of to be considered before the financial report is finalised

There are no matters, other than those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel or Management.

Control observations

We have adopted a fully substantive approach, and so have not tested the operation of controls. We have, however, updated our understanding of the key processes and the controls which are in place to detect or prevent error. Through this work, we have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements and which is unknown to you.

Independence

Please refer to Section 8 for our update on Independence.



02

Areas of Audit Focus



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Misstatements due to fraud or error

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.

As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.

We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What judgements are we focused on?

Our assessment of risk led us to create a series of criteria for the testing of journals, focusing specifically on areas that could be open to management manipulation. We have also focused specifically on capitalisation of assets as a potential area of manipulation, which is recorded as a separately identified significant risk - Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure.

Our work on estimates focussed on PPE valuation and IAS19 pension estimates which are identified as areas of higher inherent risk and are reported further in this report.

What did we do?

We identified the key fraud risks at the planning stage of the audit and considered the effectiveness of management's controls that are designed to address the risk of fraud. We updated our understanding of the risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address them and made enquiries of Internal Audit, management and those charged with governance to support our understanding.

Our approach focused on:

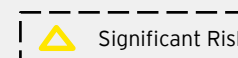
- ▶ Testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements.
- ▶ Assessing accounting estimates for evidence of management bias.
- ▶ Evaluating the business rationale for significant unusual transactions.

What are our conclusions?

We have completed our work and:

- ▶ We have found no evidence that management had attempted to override internal controls.
- ▶ We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied.
- ▶ We did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the Authority's normal course of business.

This conclusion is based on detailed testing of accounts entries susceptible to potential manipulation.





Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Risk of misstatements due to fraud or error – specifically in inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure

What is the risk?

Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.

From our risk assessment, we have assessed that the risk manifests itself solely through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure to improve the financial position of the general fund.

What judgements are we focused on?

We focused on whether expenditure was properly capitalised in its initial recognition, or whether subsequent expenditure on an asset enhances the asset or extends its useful life.

What did we do?

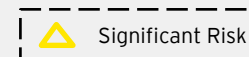
Our approach focused on:

- ▶ selecting a sample of PPE additions to test and confirm the item was appropriate to capitalise through agreement to evidence such as invoices and capital expenditure authorisations; and
- ▶ performing journals testing, during this testing we challenged entries that could be indicative of inappropriate capitalisation, such as journals which reclassify transactions originally recorded as revenue expenditure to capital.

What are our conclusions?

We have completed our work:

- ▶ Our sample testing of additions to property, plant and equipment found that they had been correctly classified as capital and included at the correct value.
- ▶ Our sample testing of additions to property, plant and equipment did not identify any revenue items that were incorrectly classified.
- ▶ Our data analytical procedures did not identify any journal entries that incorrectly moved expenditure into capital codes



Audit risks

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures.

What is the area of focus?	What did we do?	What are our conclusions?
<p>Valuation of Land and Buildings</p> <p>The fair value of Land and Buildings in Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) represent significant balances in the Authority's accounts and are subject to valuation changes and impairment reviews. The valuation at 31 March 2021 was £42.0m.</p> <p>Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.</p>	<p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Considered the work performed by the Authority's valuers Flude Commercial, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work; ▶ Sample tested key asset information used by the valuers in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support valuations based on price per square metre); ▶ Considered the annual cycle of valuations to ensure that assets have been valued within a 5 year rolling programme as required by the Code for PPE. We have also considered if there are any specific changes to assets that have occurred and that these have been communicated to the valuer; ▶ Reviewed assets not subject to valuation in 2020/21 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated; ▶ Tested to confirm that accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements. 	<p>We have completed our work and have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Found nothing has come to our attention regarding the adequacy of the valuers' scope of work, their professional capabilities and the results from their work; ▶ Indicated that, based on our samples selected, that the valuers assumptions are accurate, i.e. correct floor plans and price per square metre used and considered potential impacts on useful economic lives; ▶ Confirmed assets not subject to valuation have not been materially misstated; ▶ Confirmed accounting entries have been processed correctly in the financial statements; <p>Consequently, we are satisfied that the valuation of property, plant and equipment is fairly stated and appropriately disclosed.</p>

Audit risks

Other areas of audit focus (continued)

What is the area of focus?	What did we do?	What are our conclusions?
<p>Net Pension Liability Valuation</p> <p>The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Authority to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), administered by East Sussex County Council and the Firefighters Pension Scheme where its administration was transferred to West Yorkshire Pension Fund during the year. The Authority's pension fund liabilities are material estimated balances and the Code requires that these liabilities be disclosed on the Authority's balance sheet. At 31 March 2021 this totalled £488.4m.</p> <p>The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 reports issued to the Authority by the actuaries of the two Pension Schemes. Accounting for these schemes involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages actuaries to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates. During the year, the Authority changed its actuary from Hymans Robertson to Barnett Waddingham.</p>	<p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Liaised with the auditors of East Sussex Pension Fund, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to East Sussex Fire Authority. However, this required assurance letter is still outstanding.▶ Assessed the work of the LGPS Pension Fund actuary (Barnett Waddingham) and the Firefighters pension actuary (Barnett Waddingham) including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by the National Audit Office for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team.▶ Reviewed and tested the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Authority's financial statements in relation to IAS19.	<p>Our planned work in this area is now complete. We previously reported that an issue had arisen across all local government audits that needed to be resolved prior to us being able to fully conclude our work. This was in relation to the impact of the revised auditing standard on accounting estimates. We planned to take an audit approach to this estimate based on procedures to evaluate management's process. The new auditing standard requires auditors to test the method of measurement of accounting estimates to determine whether the model is appropriately designed, consistently applied and mathematically accurate, and that the integrity of the assumptions and the data has been maintained in applying the model. Neither we, nor PWC as consulting actuaries commissioned by the NAO for all local government sector audits, were able to access the detailed models of the actuaries in order to evidence these requirements. We therefore modified our planned approach and undertook alternate procedures to create an auditor's estimate, to provide a different method of gaining assurance. The results of this exercise showed the actuarial estimate to be accurate within a reasonable range.</p> <p>As a result of our work, an IAS19 report was subsequently revised which led to adjustments close to performance materiality in the Authority's Statement of Accounts.</p>

Audit risks

Other areas of audit focus (continued)

What is the area of focus?	What did we do?	What are our conclusions?
<p>Going Concern</p> <p>Covid-19 has created a number of financial pressures throughout local government, increasing service demand and expenditure. The Authority has incurred additional expenditure in a number of areas of its operations and has experienced some income losses. The extent of support from MHCLG has developed over time, but does not include all financial consequences of Covid-19.</p> <p>CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 sets out that organisations that can only be discontinued under statutory prescription shall prepare their accounts on a going concern basis.</p> <p>However, International Auditing Standard 570 Going Concern, as applied by Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statements of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom, still requires auditors to undertake sufficient and appropriate audit procedures to consider whether there is a material uncertainty on going concern that requires reporting by management within the financial statements, and within the auditor's report. We are obliged to report on such matters within the section of our audit report 'Conclusions relating to Going Concern'.</p> <p>To do this, the auditor must review management's assessment of the going concern basis applying IAS1 Presentation of Financial Statements.</p>	<p>We have met the requirements of the revised auditing standard on going concern (ISA 570) and considered the adequacy of the Authority's going concern assessment and its disclosure in the accounts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Challenging management's identification of events or conditions impacting going concern. ▶ Testing management's resulting assessment of going concern by evaluating supporting evidence (including consideration of the risk of management bias). ▶ Reviewing the cashflow forecast covering the foreseeable future, to ensure that it has sufficient liquidity to continue to operate as a going concern. ▶ Undertaking a 'stand back' review to consider all of the evidence obtained, whether corroborative or contradictory, when we draw our conclusions on going concern. ▶ Challenging the disclosure made in the accounts in respect of going concern and any material uncertainties. 	<p>Management's initial going concern assessment was for the period up to 30 September 2022, but subsequently updated to cover the period up to 30 November 2022. We have reviewed management's initial and updated going concern assessments and confirm that their conclusion that the Authority remains a going concern is based on reasonable and supportable assumptions.</p> <p>We have also reviewed management's going concern disclosure and confirmed it is sufficiently detailed, transparent and accurately reflects management's underlying going concern assessment.</p>

Audit risks

Other areas of audit focus (continued)

What is the area of focus?	What did we do?	What are our conclusions?
<p>Accounting for Covid-19 related government grants</p> <p>The Authority has received government funding in relation to Covid-19 and investment support in Protection Services following the Grenfell Tower Inquiries. There is a need for the Authority to ensure that it accounts for these grants appropriately, taking into account any associated restrictions and conditions.</p>	<p>We considered the Authority's judgement on material grants received in relation to whether it is acting as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Agent, where it has determined that it is acting as an intermediary; or▶ Principal, where the Authority has determined that it is acting on its own behalf. <p>We sought to determine whether conditions were attached to the grant funding received and whether those conditions were met or not. Considering the outcome of the above we considered the appropriateness of the accounting treatment for the grants, in particular whether the grants were correctly classified, and whether associated disclosure were also accurate.</p>	<p>Based on our work we are satisfied that the accounting treatment adopted for Covid-19 related government grants and investment support in Protection Services, and accorded with the Authority's assessment of whether it was acting as agent or principal, the underlying conditions of the grant and whether those conditions had been met.</p>



03 Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements and the firefighters' pension fund financial statements of East Sussex Fire Authority for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement, Expenditure and Funding Analysis, and the related notes 1 to 37; and include the firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes 1 to 3.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- ▶ give a true and fair view of the financial position of East Sussex Fire Authority as at 31 March 2021 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- ▶ have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to

our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Comptroller and Auditor General's AGN01, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of 12 months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Treasurer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report. However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this statement is not a guarantee as to the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Treasurer is responsible for the other information.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.



Audit Report

Draft audit report (cont.)

Our opinion on the financial statements

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- ▶ in our opinion the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Authority;
- ▶ we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we are not satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the Treasurer

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Treasurer's Responsibilities set out on page 11, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Authority financial statements and the firefighters pension fund financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the members determine 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 Treasurer is responsible for assessing the Authority'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 Authority either intends to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our 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 our 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.

Audit Report

Draft audit report (cont.)

Our opinion on the financial statements

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect irregularities, including fraud. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both those charged with governance of the entity and management.

- ▶ We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that are applicable to the Authority and determined that the most significant are:
 - Local Government Act 1972,
 - Local Government Act 2003,
 - The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended in 2018 and 2020,
 - The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, and
 - The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

In addition, the Authority has to comply with laws and regulations in the areas of anti-bribery and corruption, data protection, employment legislation, tax legislation, general power of competence, procurement and health & safety.

- ▶ We understood how East Sussex Fire Authority is complying with those frameworks by understanding the incentive, opportunities and motives for non-compliance, including inquiring of management, head of internal audit and those charged with governance, and obtaining and reading documentation relating to the procedures in place to identify, evaluate and comply with laws and regulations, and whether they are aware of

instances of non-compliance. We corroborated this through our reading of the Authority's committee minutes. Based on this understanding we designed our audit procedures to identify non-compliance with such laws and regulations. Our procedures had a focus on compliance with the accounting framework through obtaining sufficient audit evidence in line with the level of risk identified and with relevant legislation.

- ▶ We assessed the susceptibility of the Authority's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur by understanding the potential incentives and pressures for management to manipulate the financial statements, and performed procedures to understand the areas in which this would most likely arise. Based on our risk assessment procedures, we identified, inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and management override of controls to be our fraud risks.
- ▶ To address our fraud risk of inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure we tested the Authority's capitalised expenditure to ensure the capitalisation criteria were properly met and the expenditure was genuine.
- ▶ To address our fraud risk of management override of controls, we tested specific journal entries identified by applying risk criteria to the entire population of journals. For each journal selected, we tested specific transactions back to source documentation to confirm that the journals were authorised and accounted for appropriately. In addition, we assessed whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates were indicative of a potential bias and evaluated the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

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

Audit Report

Draft audit report (cont.)

Our opinion on the financial statements

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2021, as to whether East Sussex Fire Authority had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether East Sussex Fire Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, East Sussex Fire Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed the work necessary to issue our assurance statement in respect of the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack.

We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements or on our value for money conclusion.

Until we have completed these procedures we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of East Sussex Fire Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Helen Thompson (Key Audit Partner)
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)
Southampton



04 Audit Differences





Audit Differences

In the normal course of any audit, we identify misstatements between amounts we believe should be recorded in the financial statements and the disclosures and amounts actually recorded. These differences are classified as “known” or “judgemental”. Known differences represent items that can be accurately quantified and relate to a definite set of facts or circumstances. Judgemental differences generally involve estimation and relate to facts or circumstances that are uncertain or open to interpretation.

Summary of adjusted and unadjusted differences

There are no unadjusted differences as at 17 September 2021.

There have been no misstatements greater than £790k which have been corrected by management.

A small number of other amendments were made to disclosures appearing in the financial statements as a result of our work.



05

Value for Money



Value for money

The Authority's responsibilities for value for money (VFM)

The Authority is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of their policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at their disposal.

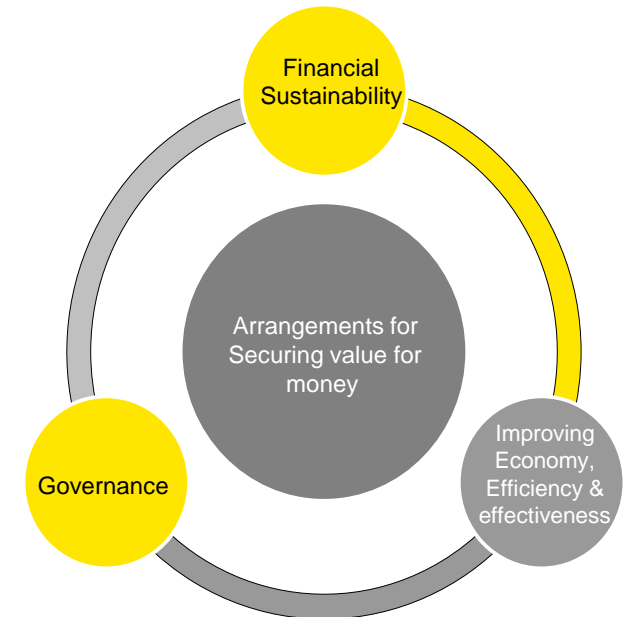
As part of the material published with its financial statements, the Authority is required to bring together commentary on their governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing its governance statement, the Authority tailors the content to reflect their own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements set out in the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on their arrangements for securing value for money from their use of resources.

Risk assessment

We have previously reported to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel the outcome of our assessment of the risk of significant weaknesses in the Authority's VFM arrangements - that we had not identified any risks. We have revisited our risk assessment and have not identified any additional risks.

Status of our VFM work

We have completed our planned VFM procedures and have no matters to report by exception in the auditor's report (see Section 03). We plan to issue the VFM commentary by the end of December as part of issuing the Auditor's Annual Report.





06 Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement

We must give an opinion on the consistency of the financial and non-financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 with the audited financial statements.

We must also review the Annual Governance Statement for completeness of disclosures, consistency with other information from our work, and whether it complies with relevant guidance.

Financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and published with the financial statements was consistent with the audited financial statements.

We have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and can confirm it is consistent with other information from our audit of the financial statements and we have no other matters to report.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of our review, and the nature of our report, is specified by the National Audit Office.

We have not yet been able to perform the procedures required by the National Audit Office on the Whole of Government Accounts submission. This is because HM Treasury are continuing to review the online 2020/21 WGA Data Collection Tool (DCT) and update the guidance that is available for preparers. Based on the last available update the DCT and guidance was not expected to be available until Autumn 2021. Therefore the 2020/21 WGA component data will not be available for auditors to review until after that. Group Audit Instructions and the timetable for 2020/21 will necessarily follow any changes HM Treasury make to the DCT and process.

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Authority to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. "a report in the public interest").

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

Other reporting issues

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Authority's financial reporting process. They include the following:

- ▶ Significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;
- ▶ Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit;
- ▶ Any significant matters arising from the audit that were discussed with management;
- ▶ Written representations we have requested;
- ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report;
- ▶ Any other matters significant to overseeing the financial reporting process;
- ▶ Related parties;
- ▶ External confirmations;
- ▶ Going concern;
- ▶ Consideration of laws and regulations;

We have nothing to comment in respect of these.



07

Assessment of Control Environment



Assessment of Control Environment

Financial controls

As part of our audit of the financial statements, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed.

Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, we are required to communicate to you.

We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements.

We considered whether circumstances arising from COVID-19 resulted in a change to the overall control environment of effectiveness of internal controls, for example due to significant staff absence or limitations as a result of working remotely. We identified no issues which we wish to bring to your attention.



08

Independence

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and the Fund, and its members and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to the Authority, its members and senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2020 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity. However, the Treasurer noted one issue in his response to our enquiries. East Sussex County Council / Orbis, who provide a significant element of finance support to the Authority, retain EY as its external tax advisor. The Treasurer confirmed that East Sussex Fire Authority retain PSTax as its external tax advisor in order to avoid any independence conflict. We therefore conclude there is no threat to our independence from this matter.

Services provided by Ernst & Young

The table below sets out a summary of the fees that are due to us for the year ended 31 March 2021 in line with the disclosures set out in FRC Ethical Standard and in statute.

As at the date of this report, there are no future services which have been contracted and no written proposal to provide non-audit services has been submitted.

	Final fee 2020/21	Planned fee 2020/21	Final Fee 2019/20
	£	£	£
Scale Fee - Code work	23,690	23,690	23,690
2019/20 fee variation determined by PSAA (Note 1)	-	-	8,700
2020/21 PSAA expected additional minimal core fees (Note 2):			
• VFM	TBC	5,000 to 9,000	-
• ISA 540 accounting estimates		1,900	
2020/21 proposed fee variation - other (Note 3)	TBC		-
Total Fees	TBC	30,590 to 34,590	32,390

Note 1 - In order to meet regulatory and compliance audit requirements not present in the market at the time of our most recent bid to PSAA, we assessed that the recurrent cost of additional requirements to carry out our audit should increase by £27,553. In addition, we identified an in-year risk based fee variation of £4,342 for 2019/20. PSAA has determined the total fee variation for 2019/20 as £8,700. We expect similar costs in nature in 2020/21 and subsequent years. However, PSAA has stated that this will need to be determined each year.

Note 2 - In August 2021, PSAA published 'Additional information for 2020/21 audit fees'. PSAA commissioned external independent technical research for setting standardised fee variations to assess the expected impact on audit work programmes of a range of new and updated audit requirements. The figures included here are the minimum additional fee ranges set out in this document.

Note 3 - Any further additional fees (over and above VFM and ISA540) for 2020/21 will be communicated to the Treasurer following the completion of the audit.

Other communications

EY Transparency Report 2020

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2020:

[EY UK Transparency Report 2020 | EY UK](#)







09

Appendices




Appendix A

Required communications with the Scrutiny & Audit Panel




There are certain communications that we must provide to the those charged with governance of UK entities. We have detailed these here together with a reference of when and where they were covered:

 Our Reporting to you		
Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Scrutiny & Audit Panel of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter.	Audit Planning Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 29 April 2021.
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified. When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team.	Audit Planning Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 29 April 2021.
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.

Appendix A

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty related to going concern ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The appropriateness of related disclosures in the financial statements 	No conditions or events were identified, either individually or together to raise any doubt about East Sussex Fire Authority's ability to continue for the 12 months from the date of our report.
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiry of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements. 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements. ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and Management responsibility. 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communications whenever significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	<p>Audit Planning Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 29 April 2021.</p> <p>Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.</p>
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures. 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Scrutiny & Audit Panel may be aware of. 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit. 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key audit matters that we will include in our auditor's report ▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakdown of fee information when the audit planning report is agreed ▶ Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit ▶ Any non-audit work 	<p>Audit Planning Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 29 April 2021.</p> <p>Audit Results Report presented at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel meeting on 28 September 2021 and updated 11 November 2021.</p>

Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

[Date]

Helen Thompson
Ernst & Young LLP
Grosvenor House
Grosvenor Square
Southampton
SO15 2BE

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of East Sussex Fire Authority ("the Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2021. 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 Authority financial position of East Sussex Fire Authority as of 31 March 2021 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 2020/21.

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 2020/21.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Authority, 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 (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Authority in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, 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 Authority, we believe that the Authority 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 2020/21, 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. There are no unadjusted audit differences identified during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented.

Management representation letter (continued)

Management Rep Letter

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

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the Authority'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 Authority (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 Authority'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 Authority'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 Authority, Scrutiny & Audit Panel and Policy & Resources Panel held through the year to the most recent meeting on the Fire Authority on 2 September 2021, Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 11 November 2021, and Policy & Resources Panel on 11 November 2021.
4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Authority'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 methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

Management representation letter (continued)

Management Rep Letter

6. We have disclosed to you, and the Authority 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 at 30 November 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. Going Concern

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

F. Subsequent Events

1. Other than Note 6 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.

G. Other information

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

H. Ownership of Assets

1. Except for assets capitalised under finance leases, the Authority has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheet, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Authority's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral. All assets to which the Authority 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.

Management representation letter (continued)

Management Rep Letter

3. We have no plans to abandon lines of product or other plans or intentions that will result in any excess or obsolete inventory, and no inventory is stated at an amount in excess of net realisable value.
4. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts. Except as disclosed in Note 13 to the financial statements, we have no other line of credit arrangements.

I. Reserves

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

J. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the valuation of property, plant and equipment and IAS 19 pension fund 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.

K. Estimates

i.) Revaluation of land and buildings classified as property, plant and equipment; and

ii.) Pension liability and asset valuation

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in performing the revaluation of land and buildings classified as property, plant and equipment, and the pension liability and asset valuation have taken into account all relevant information and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic of which we are aware.

2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in performing the revaluation of land and buildings classified as property, plant and equipment, and the pension liability and asset valuation.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in performing the revaluation of land and buildings classified as property, plant and equipment, and the pension liability and asset valuation, appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out these valuations on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimates, including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are complete and are reasonable in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in performing the revaluation of land and buildings classified as property, plant and equipment, and the pension liability and asset valuation.
6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimates and disclosures in the financial statements, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

L. 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.

Appendix B

Management representation letter (continued)

Management Rep Letter

Yours faithfully,

Director: Resources / Treasurer

Date:

I confirm that this letter has been discussed and agreed at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 11 November 2021.

Chairman: Scrutiny & Audit Panel


Date:

APPENDIX C

Implementation of IFRS 16 Leases

In previous reports to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel, we have highlighted the issue of new accounting standards and regulatory developments. IFRS 16 introduces a number of significant changes which go beyond accounting technicalities. For example, the changes have the potential to impact on procurement processes as more information becomes available on the real cost of leases. The key accounting impact is that assets and liabilities in relation to significant lease arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases will need to be recognised on the balance sheet. IFRS 16 requires all substantial leases to be accounted for using the acquisition approach, recognising the rights acquired to use an asset.

IFRS 16 does not come into effect for the Authority until 1 April 2022. However, officers should be acting now to assess the Authority's leasing positions and secure the required information to ensure the Authority will be fully compliant with the 2022/23 Code. The following table summarises some key areas officers should be progressing.

IFRS 16 theme	Summary of key measures 
Data collection	Management should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Put in place a robust process to identify all arrangements that convey the right to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time. The adequacy of this process should be discussed with auditors. ▶ Classify all such leases into low value; short-term; peppercorn; portfolio and individual leases ▶ Identify, collect, log and check all significant data points that affect lease accounting including: the term of the lease; reasonably certain judgements on extension or termination; dates of rent reviews; variable payments; grandfathered decisions; non-lease components; and discount rate to be applied.
Policy Choices	The Authority needs to agree on certain policy choices. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether to adopt a portfolio approach ▶ What low value threshold to set and agree with auditors ▶ Which asset classes, if any, are management adopting the practical expedient in relation to non-lease components ▶ What is managements policy in relation to discount rates to be used?
Code adaptations for the public sector	Finance teams should understand the Code adaptations for the public sector. The Code contains general adaptations, (e.g. the definition of a lease); transitional interpretations (e.g. no restatement of prior periods) and adaptations that apply post transition (e.g. use of short-term lease exemption).
Transitional accounting arrangements	Finance teams should understand the accounting required on first implementation of IFRS 16. The main impact is on former operating leases where the authority is lessee. However, there can be implications for some finance leases where the Authority is lessee; and potentially for sub-leases, where the Authority is a lessor, that were operating leases under the old standard.
Ongoing accounting arrangements	Finance teams need to develop models to be able to properly account for initial recognition and subsequent measurement of right of use assets and associated liabilities. This is more complex than the previous standard due to more regular remeasurements and possible modifications after certain trigger events.
Remeasurements and modifications	Finance teams need to familiarise themselves with when the 'remeasurement' or 'modification' of a lease is required and what to do under each circumstance. A modification can lead to an additional lease being recognised. It is also important to know when remeasurements require a new discount rate is to be applied to the lease.

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