



Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Decision Report

Report reference number: 019-24

Government security classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Statement of Accounts 2022-23

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Service wide

Report by: Neil Cross, Chief Finance Officer

Date of report: 2nd May 2024

Enquiries to: Neil Cross, Chief Finance Officer

1. Purpose of the report

To approve the sign off and publication of the Statement of Accounts for 2022-23. These have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The external auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP, have not yet been able to complete the audit due to the delay in the audit of the Essex Pension Fund and therefore having not received a letter of assurance in respect of that audit.

This report proposes that the Statement of Accounts is published with a “subject to” statement in respect of the delay of the assurance letter from the audit of the Essex Pension Fund.

2. Recommendations

The Commissioner is asked to:

- Sign and approve the publication of the Statement of Accounts for 2022-23 with a “subject to” statement. The recommended “subject to” statement is:

‘The audit of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (PFCCFRA) has not yet been concluded by the external auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP. The external auditors have not been able to complete the audit as they are still awaiting receipt of the Letter of Assurance from the auditors of the Essex Pension Fund (Local Government Pension Scheme Audit).

The external auditors have stated in their draft Audit Findings Report that “Our work is nearing completion and except for the matter in relation to assurances from the pension fund auditor set out on the previous page, there are no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion for the Authority’s financial statements”.

Therefore, in the interest of transparency and to provide stakeholders with access to the information in the Statement of Accounts as early as possible, the PFCCFRA has published the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023, the Annual Governance Statement, and the Narrative Statement.

The Audit Findings Report, the Letter of Representation and the Audit Opinion will be published alongside the Statement of Accounts once the audit is concluded and the Audit Opinion is issued.’

- Agree that his signature can be added to the Statement of Accounts at page 20 and page 34.
- Agree that the PFCC’s signatures in the Statement of Accounts are dated in line with the date the PFCC signs this decision report.
- Approve the publication of the signed and dated Statement of Accounts.

The Audit Findings Report, the Letter of Representation and the Audit Opinion will be published alongside the Statement of Accounts, once the audit is concluded and the Audit Opinion is issued.

3. Benefits of the proposal

The external auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP, have not yet been able to complete the audit due to the delay in the audit of the Essex Pension Fund. However, with this being the only part of the audit outstanding, it is recommended that the Statement of Accounts is published, to ensure that transparency regarding the financial position for 2022/23 is made available as soon as possible, and not delayed any further.

4. Background and proposal

The audited Statement of Accounts was required to be published by 30 September 2023 to meet the statutory reporting requirements.

The external auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP, allocated an October 2023 start date for the audit of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023. However, they have not yet been able to complete the audit due to the delay in the audit of the Essex Pension Fund. This is the only part of the audit outstanding.

It is recommended that the PFCC signs and approves the publication of the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 with a “subject to” statement. The recommended “subject to” statement is:

‘The audit of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (PFCCFRA) has not yet been concluded by the external auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP. The external auditors have not been able to complete the audit as they are still awaiting receipt of the Letter of Assurance from the auditors of the Essex Pension Fund (Local Government Pension Scheme Audit).

The external auditors have stated in their draft Audit Findings Report that “Our work is nearing completion and except for the matter in relation to assurances from the pension fund auditor set

out on the previous page, there are no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion for the Authority's financial statements".

Therefore, in the interest of transparency and to provide stakeholders with access to the information in the Statement of Accounts as early as possible, the PFCCFRA has published the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023, the Annual Governance Statement, and the Narrative Statement.

The Audit Findings Report, the Letter of Representation and the Audit Opinion will be published alongside the Statement of Accounts once the audit is concluded, and the Audit Opinion is issued.'

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

As an alternative, we could wait for the assurance letter from the auditors of the Essex Pension Fund to be issued to our auditors. However, the audit of the pension scheme has not yet commenced, and the auditors of the Essex Pension Fund have only offered an assurance to our external auditors that they will have completed their audit by the end of September 2024. It is therefore not recommended that we wait for this assurance letter before signing the Statement of Accounts, or before publication.

6. Strategic priorities

The Accounts set out the financial position of the Authority at 31st March 2023. In particular, the Narrative Report outlines some of the key financial issues in areas such as revenue and capital spending, ensuring that we are investing in the key areas that help drive change, reduce risk and ensure that we can continue to provide a first-class emergency response service to the people of Essex. In addition, the Accounts provide information about reserves we have set aside to provide for investment to continue to develop and improve the service.

7. Operational implications

None directly associated with this report.

8. Financial implications

As set out in the Statement of Accounts.

9. Legal implications

There are no legal issues arising from the decision to publish our Statement of Accounts for 2022/23. The Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Although not published by the deadline, the publication of the final Statement of Accounts is still required by statute.

10. Staffing implications

None directly associated with this report.

11. Equality and Diversity implications

The actions being taken will not have a disproportionate impact on individuals with protected characteristics (as defined within the Equality Act 2010), when compared to all other individuals and will not disadvantage people with protected characteristics. The publication of the Statement of Accounts is not expected to have any inequitable impact on individuals with protected characteristics.

Race	N	Religion or belief	N
Sex	N	Gender reassignment	N
Age	N	Pregnancy & maternity	N
Disability	N	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N
Sexual orientation	N		

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper.

12. Risks

None arising from the decision to publish the Accounts.

13. Governance Boards

Audit Committee on 22nd March 2024.

Strategic Board on 18th April 2024

14. Background papers

- Statement of Accounts 2022-23

Decision Process

Step 1A - Chief Fire Officer Comments

(The Chief Fire Officer is asked in their capacity as the Head of Paid Service to comment on the proposal.)

.....
.....

Sign: 

Date:03/05/24

Step 1B – Consultation with representative bodies

(The Chief Fire Officer is to set out the consultation that has been undertaken with the representative bodies)

.....

Step 2 - Statutory Officer Review

The report will be reviewed by the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority’s (“the Commissioner’s”) Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the Commissioner or their Deputy.

Monitoring Officer

Sign:



Print: P. Brent-Isherwood

Date: 17 May 2024

Chief Finance Officer

Sign:



Print: Neil Cross

Date: 02/05/2024

Step 3 - Publication

Is the report for publication? YES – With the “subject to” statement provided above

If ‘NO’, please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State ‘none’ if applicable)

None

If the report is not for publication, the Monitoring Officer will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Step 4 - Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1 Of Decision Sheet YES/NO

2 Of Appendix YES/NO

If ‘YES’, please provide details of required redaction:

N/A

Date redaction carried out:

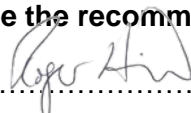
If redaction is required, the Chief Finance Officer or the Monitoring Officer are to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign: Print:

Date signed:

Step 5 - Decision by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner or Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign:  (PFCC)

Print: Roger Hirst Date signed: 21/05/2024