

## **INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

We have audited the financial statements of Bromsgrove District Council (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2017 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The financial statements comprise the Group and Authority Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Group Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Group Cash Flow Statement, the Collection Fund Statement and the related notes. 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 2016/17.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's 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 Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

### **Respective responsibilities of the Executive Director of Finance and Resources and auditor**

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Executive Director of Finance and Resources is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the 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 2016/17, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law, the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the "Code of Audit Practice") and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

### **Scope of the audit of the financial statements**

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority and Group's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Executive Director of Finance and Resources; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we

become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

### **Opinion on financial statements**

In our opinion:

- the financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and Group as at 31 March 2017 and of the Authority's and Group's expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17 and applicable law.

### **Opinion on other matters**

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited financial statements in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the audited financial statements.

### **Matters on which we are required to report by exception**

We are required to report to you if:

- in our opinion the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with the guidance included in 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)' published by CIPFA and SOLACE; or
- we have reported a matter in the public interest under section 24 of the Act in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we have made a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Act in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we have exercised any other special powers of the auditor under the Act.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matters.

### **Conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources**

#### **Respective responsibilities of the Authority and auditor**

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing 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.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Act to be satisfied 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.

## **Scope of the review of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources**

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2016, as to whether the Authority had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. 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 the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2017.

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 the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

### **Basis for qualified conclusion**

In considering the Authority's arrangements for securing efficiency, economy and effectiveness in its use of resources we identified the following matters:

#### ***In year reporting to Members***

The Authority's in year budgetary monitoring reports to Members do not adequately explain changes to the originally agreed budget. Reporting of savings is weak, and does not provide a clear picture of planned savings to be delivered, progress to date, risk to full achievement and mitigating actions. There is no risk assessment on the deliverability of schemes. Reports to Members do not give any indication of progress with delivery of the Authority's Efficiency Plan or actions being taken to bring it back into line.

This matter is evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for informed decision making – reliable and timely financial reporting that supports the delivery of strategic priorities.

#### ***Financial Sustainability***

The Authority updated its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period to 31 March 2021, in February 2017 in line with its annual planning process. The updated MTFP includes savings which have not been agreed by Members and not all savings plans included have a robust business case to support them.

This matter is evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for sustainable resource deployment – Planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and maintain statutory functions. It is also evidence of weaknesses in informed decision making – Understanding and using appropriate cost and performance information (including, where relevant, information from regulatory/monitoring bodies) to support informed decision making and performance management.

**Qualified conclusion**

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2016, except for the effects of the matters described in the Basis for qualified conclusion paragraphs above, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2017.

**Certificate**

We certify that we have completed the audit of the financial statements of the Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.

*Richard Percival*

**Richard Percival**

for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

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21 September 2017