

East Herts Council Report

Leadership Team Meeting

Date of meeting: Tuesday 23 September 2025

Report by: Brian Moldon, Director of Finance, Risk and Performance

Report title: External auditors completion report - 2023/24

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Summary – The external auditors, Azets will present their Audit Completion and Annual Auditors Reports for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts to the Committee setting out the results of their audit.

This report presents the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts to the Audit and Governance Committee for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:

- a) Receive and make any comments on the external auditor's Completion Report for 2023/24 and the Annual Auditors Report 2023/24.
- b) Approve the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 That Members review and comment on the external auditors Completion Report (Appendix A) and Annual Auditors Report (Appendix B) for 2023/24.

1.2 The Statement of Accounts are attached as Appendix C for 2023/24.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Government has introduced legislation aimed at bringing local authority audits up to date, with a backstop date of 28 February

2025 for the completion of 2023/24 audits. As part of this process, it is expected that auditors will issue a 'disclaimed' audit opinions, meaning no assurance can be provided on these set of accounts.

2.2 This report is presented to the Audit & Governance Committee in its role as the body charged with governance and as the designated committee responsible for approving the Statement of Accounts (see Appendix C). The Auditor's Completion Report and the Annual Auditor's Report for 2023/24, prepared by the Council's external auditors, are included at Appendices A and B respectively.

2.3 For Members' information, an updated version of the Auditor's Disclaimer of Opinion on the financial statements is provided at Appendix D. This will be incorporated into the final version of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts once the auditors have signed them off. Also included is a copy of the Letter of Representation (at Appendix E), which will be signed by the Director of Finance, Risk and Performance ahead of the audit sign-off. This letter is a key piece of audit evidence, confirming the accuracy and completeness of the financial information provided. It also acknowledges management's responsibility for the financial statements and confirms that all material facts have been disclosed.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The external auditor is required by auditing standards to present the Committee with their Audit Completion and Annual Auditor's Reports. The external auditor is presenting their report on the Council's financial statements and provide a value for money conclusion.

3.2 The report anticipates issuing a disclaimed audit opinion for the financial year ending 31 March 2024 due to the inability to meet the statutory backstop date of 28 February 2025.

3.3 The report highlights significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangement for the preparation and publication of financial statements. The Council failed to publish draft financial statements within the regulatory timeframe for the year 2023/24.

4.0 Options

4.1 Members can ask questions and make observations to the external auditor, but they cannot reject their reports.

5.0 Risks

5.1 These are contained within the body of the main report.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

These are contained in the main body of the report.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Approval of the accounts by committee fulfils the requirements of the Accounts and Audit regulations (2015).

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

- 7.1 Appendix A – Audit Completion Report 2023/24.
- 7.2 Appendix B – Auditors Annual Report 2023/24
- 7.3 Appendix C – Statement of Accounts for 2023/24
- 7.4 Appendix D – Auditors Disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements
- 7.5 Appendix E – Draft Letter of Representation

Contact Member

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