

13 April 2022

Southend-on-Sea City Council
Civil Centre
Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
SS2 6ER

Dear Audit Committee Members

We are writing to you to provide a further update on the 2020/21 audit of the Southend-on-Sea City Council (formerly, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council) Statement of Accounts, including the work on arrangements to secure value for money. Our audit is in progress and we are not yet in a position to report more substantively to you at this time.

Nationally, Public Sector Audit Appointments have reported that only 9% of local authorities were able to meet their publication deadline and represents a significant decline from 2020, where 45% were able to publish audited accounts within the required timelines (<https://www.psa.co.uk/2021/10/news-release-2020-21-audited-accounts-psaa/>). A significant number of these overdue Statements of Accounts remain overdue at the current time.

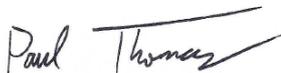
We previously reported on the key factors behind the delay in finalisation of the audit opinion (see our letter of 9 December 2021), which remain the same at the current time.

Since the previous meeting of the audit committee, we have discussed with management a plan to deliver the remaining 2020/21 audit activities and the 2021/22 audit sequentially commencing in summer 2022. We are currently finalising an appropriate replacement for the engagement manager. In the meantime, we have also shared with management a detailed request list and delivery schedule to allow us to perform the work to the best effect.

We note that the Council had published audited accounts within the publication deadline during our tenure as external auditors for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 audits. For the current audit, the Council had provided the audit team with a draft of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts prior to the unaudited accounts publication deadline and we concluded from the manager and partner reviews that this deliverable was at the expected level of quality. We are currently liaising with management on matters raised from our review and note that management have provided the audit team with responses and proposed amendments which are currently under our review.

We will provide a further update to the Council in due course. This process has been complicated by the number of local government audits in a similar position, which means that we are having to make difficult decisions around prioritisation of the resources available in order to continue to address the overall backlog. We have been having regular conversations with management throughout this process in order to keep them informed.

Yours faithfully



Paul Thomas
For and on behalf of Deloitte LLP