

1 July 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.

As a reminder, nationally, Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) 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. A further update from PSAA has since become available (<https://www.psa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Q4-2021-22-quality-monitoring-report.pdf>), noting that as of 31 March 2022 48% of the 2021 opinions across the sector remained outstanding.

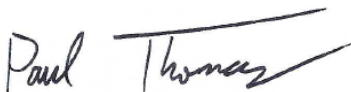
We previously reported on the key factors behind the delay in finalisation of the audit opinion (see our letter of 9 December 2021), which remain the same at the current time.

We are pleased to report that, 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 introduced a new Audit Manager, Muzz Seethamah, to management in late June. Muzz will be supported by another manager with extensive previous experience of Local Government audit work, Ashveeta Singh-Harripersadh, from mid-July.

Additionally, we are now in the process of finalising scheduling for the period through to the end of 2022, and have allocated team members to completion of your audits. We have a small engagement team from later in July, through August, during which time we anticipate finalising a significant part of the 2021 work. A more substantial engagement team is then allocated for the period from September through to the end of November 2022. It is anticipated that these staff bookings, which include continuity personnel, will enable us to have addressed the back-log audit from 2021, and completed the 2022 audit before the end of 2022. This will include our Value for Money work for both periods.

We will continue to provide regular updates to the Council, both through our direct communications with management, and through the Audit Committee when appropriate.

Yours faithfully



Paul Thomas
For and on behalf of Deloitte LLP