

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Key
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Report to:	Audit Committee	Date: 03 December 2024
Subject:	Statement of Accounts 2023/24	
Report of	Director of Finance	

Summary

- 1.1 In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended) the 2023/24 Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts were signed by the Interim Deputy Chief Finance Officer (acting S151 Officer) on 31 May 2024 by the deadline and published on the Councils website. However, the Annual Governance Statement was not available by the 31 May 2024 deadline, therefore the Council has been unable to commence the 30-working day period for the Exercise of Public Rights and a delay notice was published on the Council website.
- 1.2 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 came into force on the 30 September 2024, this legislated the statutory backstop dates, including the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts of 28 February 2025. To comply with the backstop date legislation the Council must publish accountability statements on the website by this backstop date, accountability statements need to include:
 - The Statement of Accounts together with the Audit Opinion and any certificate.
 - The Annual Governance Statement.
 - The Narrative Statement (the Council includes this within the Statement of Accounts)
- 1.3 To achieve the statutory backstop date of the 28 February 2025, the Council is required to commence the 30-working day period for the Exercise of Public Rights, no later than 16 January 2025. Whilst there is no longer a requirement for those charged with governance to approve the Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement, Audit Committee are asked to consider and note the updated 2023/24 Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1) and Draft 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement (Appendix 2) ahead of the commencement of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Consider and note the 2023/24 Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts and 2023/24 Draft Annual Governance Statement.

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Background

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 preparation of the Council's accounts must follow proper practices, which includes compliance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.
- 3.2 The arrangements for preparing and publishing the Council's Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts and Draft Annual Governance Statement are set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- 3.3 Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended) the Director of Finance (S151 Officer) as the Council's responsible finance officer, must on behalf of the Council:
- Sign and date the Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts and confirm they are satisfied that it represents a true and fair view of:
 - The financial position of the authority at the end of the financial year to which it relates, and
 - That authority's income and expenditure for that financial year.
 - Publish on the authority's website the Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts and the Draft Annual Governance Statement.
 - Commence the 30-working day Period for the Exercise of Public Rights

Accounts and Audit Regulations

- 3.4 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 came into force on the 30 September 2024, this legislated the statutory backstop dates as follows:

Financial Year Accounts	Deadline
Up to & Including 2022-23	13 December 2023
2023-24	28 February 2025
2024-25	27 February 2026
2025-26	31 January 2027
2026-27	30 November 2027
2027-28	30 November 2028

- 3.5 To comply with the backstop date legislation the Council must publish accountability statements on the website by the backstop date, accountability statements need to include:
- The Statement of Accounts together with the Audit Opinion and any certificate.
 - The Annual Governance Statement.
 - The Narrative Statement (the Council includes this within the Statement of Accounts)
- 3.6 Those charged with governance are required to approve the final audited accountability statements prior to publication.
- 3.7 Bodies that are exempt or have failed to comply with a backstop date will be required to publish an explanation and publish audited accountability statements as soon as practicable. The government intends to publish a list of bodies and auditors that do not meet the proposed backstop dates and are not exempt, those bodies will need to send a copy of the published explanation to the secretary of state.

Statement of Accounts

- 3.8 The format and content is defined in regulations and specified in the relevant sections of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice, and comprises:
- Narrative Statement
 - Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts
 - Core Financial Statements
 - Expenditure and Funding Analysis
 - Notes to the Core Financial Statements
 - Supplementary Statements: Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Collection Fund
 - Group Accounts
 - Notes to the Group Accounts
 - Glossary of Terms
- 3.9 The Council's 2023/24 Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts are attached at Appendix 1 for consideration and noting.

Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

- 3.10 A key role of Audit Committee is to oversee the Council's control environment and the associated system of internal controls and assurance processes. Audit Committee must satisfy itself that the Authority's assurance statements, in particular the AGS, properly reflects the risk environment and any actions needed to improve it.
- 3.11 The AGS therefore sets out the governance issues that are deemed significant and the actions that are being taken to address them. The Council is required to exercise judgment in deciding whether or not a particular issue should be deemed significant. Factors which are used in exercising that judgment include:
- Whether the issue seriously prejudiced or prevented achievement of a principal objective.
 - Whether the issue has resulted in a requirement to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved or has resulted in significant diversion of resources from another aspect of the business.
 - Whether the external auditor regards it as having a material impact on the accounts.
 - Whether the Audit Committee, or equivalent, advises it should be considered significant for this purpose.
 - Whether the Head of Fraud, Audit, Insurance & Risk reports on it as significant, for this purpose, in the annual opinion on the internal control environment.
 - Whether the issue, or its impact, has attracted significant public interest or has seriously damaged the reputation of the organisation.
- 3.12 The information provided in the AGS regarding significant governance issues may include a description of the weakness and its impact on the Council in order to improve disclosure and provide context for the actions taken. The Council is required to balance utility to the reader of the AGS against the need for discretion in such disclosure to avoid further adverse impacts or exploitation of the weakness.
- 3.13 The Council's 2023/24 Draft Annual Governance Statement are attached at Appendix 2 for consideration and noting.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

The production and publication of the Statement of Accounts provides valuable information to the residents of the Council and to its suppliers.

A strong financially sustainable Council is essential to the delivery of the Let's do it Strategy.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

The statement of Accounts is a record of past financial expenditure. It does not determine future resource allocation.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

There are no implications to an increased carbon impact of this decision.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
There is a risk of misstatement	Accounts are reviewed by Mazars and their opinion of both set of accounts is independent to the Council

Legal Implications:

The localised accounts process was established pursuant to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the system ensures that the Council's accounts are independently verified by the Council's external auditors Mazars ensuring good governance and financial transparency.

This report is submitted to Audit committee in accordance with the financial regulations as set out in the Council constitution.

Financial Implications:

The statement of accounts are an essential part of any organisation and represent the financial position of the business for that particular financial year. For public sector organisations they are statutory and give the public and central government assurance that tax payers money is being expended in an economic and efficient way. These accounts not only report the in year position but also the future stability of the organisation through the strength of its balance sheet and cash flow.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Bury 2023/24 Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts
Appendix 2: Bury 2023/24 Draft Annual Governance Statement

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning