

Audit of Accounts Report – North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee

Audit year: 2022-23

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh. Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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We intend to issue an unqualified audit report on your Accounts. There are some issues to report to you prior to their approval.

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Audit of Accounts Report

Introduction

- 1 We summarise the main findings from our audit of your 2022-23 accounts in this report.
- 2 We have already discussed these issues with the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and his team.
- 3 Auditors can never give complete assurance that accounts are correctly stated. Instead, we work to a level of 'materiality'. This level of materiality is set to try to identify and correct misstatements that might otherwise cause a user of the accounts into being misled.
- 4 We set this level at £90,400 for this year's audit.
- 5 There are some areas of the accounts that may be of more importance to the reader, and we have set a lower materiality level for:
 - Related Party Disclosures £10,000
 - Senior Officer Remuneration £1,000
- 6 We have now substantially completed this year's audit subject to completion of final audit procedure steps. Should any issues arise from this work, we will provide a verbal update at the Committee.
- 7 In our professional view, we have complied with the ethical standards that apply to our work; remain independent of yourselves; and our objectivity has not been compromised in any way. We have previously notified you of a potential threat to auditor independence and objectivity arising with the Audit Manager who is an acquaintance of a member of the Joint Committee's Executive Group. We confirm that the planned safeguards to mitigate the potential threat set out in our Audit Plan have operated as intended.

Proposed audit opinion

- 8 **We intend to issue an unqualified audit opinion on this year's accounts** once you have provided us with a Letter of Representation based on that set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 9 We issue a 'qualified' audit opinion where we have material concerns about some aspects of your accounts; otherwise we issue an unqualified opinion.
- 10 The Letter of Representation contains certain confirmations we are required to obtain from you under auditing standards along with confirmation of other specific information you have provided to us during our audit.
- 11 Our proposed audit report is set out in **Appendix 2**.

Significant issues arising from the audit

Uncorrected misstatements

12 There are no misstatements identified in the accounts which remain uncorrected.

Corrected misstatements

13 There were initially misstatements in the accounts that have now been corrected by management. However, we believe that these should be drawn to your attention and they are set out with explanations in **Appendix 3**.

Other significant issues arising from the audit

14 In the course of the audit, we consider a number of matters relating to the accounts and report any significant issues arising to you. There were no issues arising in these areas this year.

Appendix 1

Final Letter of Representation

[Audited body's letterhead]

Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
1 Capital Quarter
Tyndall Street
Cardiff
CF10 4BZ

Representations regarding the 2022-23 financial statements

This letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee for the year ended 31 March 2023 for the purpose of expressing an opinion on their truth and fairness and their proper preparation.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made enquiries as we consider sufficient, we can make the following representations to you.

Management representations

Responsibilities

We have fulfilled our responsibilities for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with legislative requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-23; in particular the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance therewith; and
- the design, implementation, maintenance and review of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

Information provided

We have provided you with:

- full access to:
 - all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as books of account and supporting documentation, minutes of meetings and other matters;
 - additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and

- unrestricted access to staff from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
- the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud;
- our knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee and involves:
 - management;
 - employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- our knowledge of any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, regulators or others;
- our knowledge of all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements; and
- the identity of all related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.

Financial statement representations

All transactions, assets and liabilities have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

The methods, the data and the significant assumptions used in making accounting estimates, and their related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement or disclosure that is reasonable in the context of the applicable financial reporting framework.

Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed.

All events occurring subsequent to the reporting date which require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted for or disclosed.

All known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements have been disclosed to the auditor and accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.

The financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions. There are no uncorrected misstatements.

Representations by Joint Committee

We acknowledge that the representations made by management, above, have been discussed with us.

We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of true and fair financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. The financial statements were approved by North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee on 2 February 2024.

We confirm that we have taken all the steps that we ought to have taken in order to make ourselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that it has been communicated to you. We confirm that, as far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which you are unaware.

Signed by:

Signed by:

Dewi Aeron Morgan

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn

Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council

Chair of NWEAB

2 February 2024

2 February 2024

Appendix 2

Proposed Audit Report

The report of the Auditor General for Wales to the members of North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee

Opinion on financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee for the year ended 31 March 2023 under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

The North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee's financial statements comprise the Expenditure and Funding Analysis, the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-2023.

In my opinion, in all material respects, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee as at 31 March 2023 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-2023.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISAs (UK)) and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report.

My staff and I are independent of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate. Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the responsible financial officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. The Responsible Financial Officer is responsible for the other information contained within the Statement of Accounts. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of my audit:

- the information contained in the Narrative Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-23; and
- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with guidance.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Narrative Report or the Annual Governance Statement.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters, which I report to you, if, in my
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opinion:

- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit;
- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my team; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the responsible financial officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts, the responsible financial officer is responsible for:

- the preparation of the financial statements, which give a true and fair view and comply with proper practices;
- maintaining proper accounting records;
- internal controls as the responsible financial officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of statements of accounts that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the responsible financial officer anticipates that the services provided by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

My procedures included the following:

- Enquiring of management and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee's policies and procedures concerned with:

- identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
 - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; and
 - the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- considering as an audit team how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in management override.
 - obtaining an understanding of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee's framework of authority as well as other legal and regulatory frameworks that the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee; and
 - obtaining an understanding of related party relationships.

In addition to the above, my procedures to respond to identified risks included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations discussed above;
- enquiring of management and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee about actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the administering authority; and
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all audit team and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Certificate of completion of audit

I certify that I have completed the audit of the accounts of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Joint Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Auditor General for Wales' Code of Audit Practice.

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales
5 February 2024

1 Capital Quarter
Tyndall Street
Cardiff, CF10 4BZ

Appendix 3

Summary of Corrections Made

During our audit, we identified the following misstatements that have been corrected by management, but which we consider should be drawn to your attention due to their relevance to your responsibilities over the financial reporting process.

Correction	Nature of correction	Reason for correction
<p>Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £851,000 increase in pension costs charged to the CIES. £851,000 increase in re-measurement charged to the Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure. <p>Nil impact on Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.</p> <p>Pension Reserve (Note 14.2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £851,000 increase in re-measurements of the net pension defined benefit (liabilities)/ assets. £851,000 increase in reversal of items debited or credited to the CIES. <p>Nil impact on the pension reserve closing position.</p>	<p>Following the submission of the draft accounts for audit, a revised IAS19 report was received from the Actuary due to the Current Service Cost being shown as a receipt/asset and not an expense/liability in error.</p> <p>This resulted in the 'Current Service Cost' being understated by £840,000, interest payable being understated by £11,000 and re-measurement being understated by £851,000.</p> <p>Numerous other notes are impacted by this adjustment including the narrative report, Note 6 'Material items of income and expenditure', Note 10 'Financing and Investment Income' and Expenditure', Note 17 'Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature' and Note 24 'Pension costs'.</p>	<p>To correct an error made by the actuary within NWEAB's IAS 19 report.</p>
<p>Classification Only:</p> <p>Cash Flow Statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note 15a 'Cash flow Statement Operating Activities'. Note 16 'Cash flow Statement Investing Activities'. <p>2022-23: £1,656,000.</p>	<p>The draft cash flow statement and supporting notes to the cashflow statement incorrectly included REFCUS (Revenue Expenditure Funded by Capital Under Statute) income and expenditure as 'Other non-cash items charged to net surplus/deficit on the provision of services' and 'Other payments for investing activities' line in Note 15a.</p>	<p>To comply with the CIPFA Code.</p>

2021-22: £124,000.

The narrative within the cash flow statement clearly states that *'Investing Activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Joint Committee's future service delivery.'* This does not apply for REFCUS as it is capital expenditure on assets not owned by the Joint Committee and therefore expensed through the CIES and should not have been capitalised on the Balance Sheet.

As the prior period REFCUS amount is material this will also require adjustment and footnotes added to the cash flow, Note 15a and Note 16 as a restatement.



Audit Wales

1 Capital Quarter

Tyndall Street

Cardiff

CF10 4BZ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

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