

Ernst & Young  
Citygate  
St James' Boulevard  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE1 4JD

22 July 2022

Dear Sirs

### **MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL: STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS – 31 MARCH 2021**

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Middlesbrough Council (“the Council”) for the year ended 31 March 2021. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of Middlesbrough Council as of 31 March 2021 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify -nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

#### **A. Financial Statements and Financial Records**

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the Council in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice

on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.

3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.

4. As members of management of the Council, we believe that the Council has a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.

5. We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences identified by and brought to our attention by the auditor because either they are insignificant or we do not feel they add any value to the user of the accounts.

6. We confirm the Council does not have securities (debt or equity) listed on a recognised exchange.

## **B. Non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud**

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for determining that the Council's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible for identifying and addressing any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.

3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.

4. We have disclosed to you, and provided you full access to information and any internal investigations relating to, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud, known to us that may have affected the Council (regardless of the source or form and including, without limitation, allegations by "whistleblowers") including non-compliance matters:

- involving financial improprieties;
- related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements;
- related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Council's activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;
- involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or
- in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

### **C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions**

1. We have provided you with:

- Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
- Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and all material transactions, events and conditions are reflected in the financial statements, including those related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Council, Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Board (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following dates: 6 July 2022 for Council, 12 July 2022 for Executive and 19 July 2022 for Overview & Scrutiny Board.

4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the year ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at 31 March 2021. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.

5. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

6. We have disclosed to you, and the Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

7. From 2 March 2021 through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you, to the extent that we are aware, (1) any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate, and (2) ransomware attacks when we paid or are contemplating paying a ransom, regardless of the amount.

## **D. Liabilities and Contingencies**

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in the financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

## **E. Going Concern**

Note 1 to the financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

## **F. Subsequent Events**

There have been no events, including events related to the Covid-19 pandemic, subsequent to year end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

## **G. Other information**

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

## **H. Climate-related matters**

1. We confirm that to the best of our knowledge all information that is relevant to the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of climate-related matters has been considered and reflected in the financial statements.
2. The key assumptions used in preparing the financial statements are, to the extent allowable under the requirements of the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, aligned with the statements we have made in the other information or other public communications made by us (see section G).

## **I. Reserves**

We have properly recorded or disclosed in the financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

## **J. Use of the Work of a Specialist**

We agree with the findings of the specialist that we engaged to evaluate the valuation of land and buildings and the Council's defined pension balances and have adequately

considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

## **K. Valuation of Non-Current Assets**

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the valuations of land and buildings have taken into account all relevant information, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the valuation of land and buildings.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the valuation of land and buildings appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out the Council's intentions on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate, including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on valuation certainty, are complete and are reasonable in the context of the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialised skills or expertise has been applied in making the valuation of land and buildings.
6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate(s) and disclosures in the financial statements, including due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **I. Retirement benefits**

On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Yours faithfully,

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Ian Wright, Director of Finance

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Brian Hubbard, Chair of Corporate Affairs & Audit Committee

## **Schedule of unadjusted differences**

- An overstatement of income and debtors of £1,492k due to incorrect recognition of an invoice for Section 106 amounts raised in error;
- An overstatement of the valuation of Centre Square 2 of £693k due to a transposition error in the asset size used by the Council's external valuer;
- An overstatement of income and earmarked reserves of £549k due to double-counting of a Covid-related grant;
- An extrapolated overstatement of expenditure of £2,704k relating to non-recognition of prepayments for amounts relating to future periods; and
- An extrapolated overstatement of income of £2,897k relating to late recognition of amounts related to earlier period.