

Mr James Collins
Director
Mazars LLP

My Ref:
Your Ref:

Date: 30 October 2023

Dear James

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council - audit for year ended 31 March 2023

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (the Council) for the year ended 31 March 2023 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (the Code) as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (“the Code Update”), published in November 2022 and applicable law.

I confirm that the following representations, to the best of my knowledge and belief, are made on the basis of enquiries of management and staff with relevant knowledge and experience (and, where appropriate, inspection of supporting documentation) sufficient to satisfy ourselves that I can properly make each of the following representations to you.

My responsibility for the financial statements and accounting information

I believe that I have fulfilled my responsibilities for the true and fair presentation and preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Code and applicable law.

My responsibility to provide and disclose relevant information

I 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 material;
- additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
- unrestricted access to individuals within the Council you determined it was necessary to contact in order to obtain audit evidence.

I confirm as Strategic Director, Resources and Digital that I have taken all the necessary steps to make me aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that you, as auditors, are aware of this information. As far as I am aware there is no relevant audit information of which you, as auditors, are unaware.

Accounting records

I confirm that all transactions that have a material effect on the financial statements have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements. All other records and related information, including minutes of all Council and committee meetings, have been made available to you.

Accounting policies

I confirm that I have reviewed the accounting policies applied during the year in accordance with Code and International Accounting Standard 8 and consider these policies to faithfully represent the effects of transactions, other events or conditions on the Council's financial position, financial performance and cash flows.

Accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value

I confirm that any significant assumptions used by the Council in making accounting estimates, including those measured at current or fair value, are reasonable.

Contingencies

There are no material contingent losses including pending or potential litigation that should be accrued where:

- information presently available indicates that it is probable that an asset has been impaired or a liability had been incurred at the balance sheet date; and
- the amount of the loss can be reasonably estimated.

There are no material contingent losses that should be disclosed where, although either or both the conditions specified above are not met, there is a reasonable possibility that a loss, or a loss greater than that accrued, may have been incurred at the balance sheet date.

There are no contingent gains which should be disclosed.

All material matters, including unasserted claims, that may result in litigation against the Council have been brought to your attention. All known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements have been disclosed to you and accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the Code and applicable law.

Laws and regulations

I confirm that I have disclosed to you all those events of which I am aware which involve known or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, together with the actual or contingent consequences which may arise therefrom.

The Council has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that would have a material effect on the accounts in the event of non-compliance.

Fraud and error

I acknowledge my responsibility as Strategic Director, Resources and Digital for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

I have disclosed to you:

- all the results of my assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud;

- all knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the Council involving:
 - management and those charged with governance;
 - employees who have significant roles in internal control; and
 - others where fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.

I have disclosed to you all information in relation to any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the Council's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

Related party transactions

I confirm that all related party relationships, transactions and balances, have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the Code and applicable law. I have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which I am aware.

Charges on assets

All the Council's assets are free from any charges exercisable by third parties except as disclosed within the financial statements.

Impairment review

To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing to indicate that there is a permanent reduction in the recoverable amount of the property, plant and equipment below their carrying value at the balance sheet date. An impairment review is, therefore, not considered necessary.

Future commitments

I am not aware of any plans, intentions or commitments that may materially affect the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities or give rise to additional liabilities.

Service Concession Arrangements

I am not aware of any material contract variations, payment deductions or additional service charges in 2022/23 in relation to the Council's PFI schemes that you have not been made aware of.

Subsequent events

I confirm all events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which the Code and applicable law, require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed. Should further material events occur after the date of this letter which may necessitate revision of the figures included in the financial statements or inclusion of a note thereto, I will advise you accordingly. I confirm I have disclosed to you the extent of the RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) in Council-owned buildings and to date, there is no indication of any significant issues. I confirm also that I have assessed the impact on the Council of the global banking challenges, in particular on whether this impacts on the Council's ability to continue as a going concern and on post balance sheet disclosures.

Going concern

To the best of my knowledge there is nothing to indicate that the Council will cease to continue as a going concern in the foreseeable future. The period to which I have paid particular attention in assessing the appropriateness of the going concern basis is not less than twelve months from the date of approval of the financial statements.

Unadjusted misstatements

I confirm that the effects of the uncorrected misstatements are immaterial, both individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole.

Yours sincerely

Darren Collins
Strategic Director, Resources and Digital

Appendix 1

Unadjusted misstatements – 2022/23	Assets (£000s)	Liabilities (£000s)	Reserves (£000s)	Income Statement (£000s)
1. Dr Gross Expenditure Cr Creditors Extrapolated error from expenditure cut off testing		-2,193		2,193
2. Dr Creditors Cr Gross Expenditure Extrapolated error from creditor accrual testing		2,469		-2,469
3. Dr Debtors (NHS bodies) Cr Creditors (NHS bodies) Extrapolated error from debtor balance testing	279	-279		
4. Dr Gross Income Cr Current Debtors Cr Non-current Debtors Legacy PSP and Housing Company debtor balances	-36 -858			894
Total unadjusted misstatements – 2022/23	-615	-3	0	618

Unadjusted Disclosures

Note 24 provisions: the non-domestic rates appeals provision of £3.990m as at 31 March 2023 (£2.472m in 2021/22) has not been split between current and non-current.

Unadjusted misstatements – prior year	Assets (£000s)	Liabilities (£000s)	Reserves (£000s)	Income Statement (£000s)
1. Dr Gross Income Cr Current Debtors Write back of disputed debtor	-3,539			3,539
2. Dr Current Creditors Cr Gross Expenditure Cancellation of disputed creditor		1,824		-1,824
3. Dr Gross Income Cr Gross Expenditure Misclassification of Highways income and expenditure in Note 16				5,370 -5,370
Total unadjusted misstatements – prior year	-3,539	1,824	0	1,715