

Harlow District Council

Audit Results Report - ISA (UK and Ireland) 260
for the year ended 31 March 2016

August 2016

Ernst & Young LLP



Building a better
working world

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In April 2015 Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued “Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies 2015-16”. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website (www.psa.co.uk)

The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The ‘Terms of Appointment from 1 April 2015’ issued by PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Audit Results Report is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities. This report is intended solely for the use of the Members of the audited body. We, as appointed auditor, take no responsibility to any third party.

Our Complaints Procedure – If at any time you would like to discuss with us how our service to you could be improved, or if you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving, you may take the issue up with your usual partner or director contact. If you prefer an alternative route, please contact Steve Varley, our Managing Partner, 1 More London Place, London SE1 2AF. We undertake to look into any complaint carefully and promptly and to do all we can to explain the position to you. Should you remain dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, you may of course take matters up with our professional institute. We can provide further information on how you may contact our professional institute.

1. Executive summary

The National Audit Office's Code of Audit Practice (the Code) requires us to report to those charged with governance – the Audit & Standards Committee – on the work we have carried out to discharge our statutory audit responsibilities together with any governance issues identified. This report summarises the findings from the 2015/16 audit which is substantially complete. It includes messages arising from our audit of your financial statements and the results of the work we have undertaken to assess your arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources.

Below are the results and conclusions on the significant areas of the audit process.

Status of the audit	<p>We have substantially completed our audit of the financial statements of Harlow District Council for the year ended 2015/16. Subject to satisfactory completion of the following outstanding items which are also detailed in Appendix B we will issue an audit opinion in the form which appears in Appendix E:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff costs/officer remunerations • journals testing • MIRS review • completion of income testing • cashflow statement • final Director and Manager review of the accounts and audit work • review of the final version of the financial statements • completion of subsequent events review • receipt of the signed management representation letter <p>We have performed the procedures outlined in our Audit Plan and anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements.</p> <p>We expect to conclude that you have put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources.</p> <p>It is expected that the Council will be below the materiality threshold set by the National Audit Office (NAO) for the Whole of Government Accounts return. We are therefore not expecting to have to complete any procedures related to this, other than confirming that the Council is below the threshold.</p> <p>We expect to issue the audit certificate at the same time as the audit opinion.</p>
Audit differences	<p>Subject to completion of the outstanding matters detailed at Appendix B, we have not identified any errors for which management have chosen not to adjust.</p> <p>Our audit identified a number of further audit differences which our team have highlighted to management for amendment. These related in the main to accounting for property, plant and equipment and have been corrected during the course of our work. Further details of the amendment are provided at Appendix A. These adjustments have not had an impact on useable reserves.</p>

Scope and materiality	<p>In our audit plan presented at the meeting of the Audit & Standards Committee on 9 March 2016, we communicated that our audit procedures would be performed using a materiality of £3,045k. We have reassessed this based on the actual results for the financial year and have increased this amount to £3,261k.</p> <p>The threshold for reporting audit differences which impact the financial statements has also increased from £152k to £163k. The basis of our assessment is 2% of gross operating expenditure, which has remained consistent with prior years.</p> <p>We also identified the following areas where misstatement at a level lower than our overall materiality level might influence the reader. For these areas we developed an audit strategy specific to these areas, the areas identified and audit strategy applied include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Remuneration disclosures including any severance payments, exit packages and termination benefits:</i> Our audit strategy was to check the bandings reported in Notes 31 and 32 of the financial statements, test the completeness of the disclosure and compliance with the Code requirements. We sample checked transactions back to the payroll system and supporting documentation. • <i>Related party transactions:</i> Our audit strategy was to obtain and review declarations from senior officers and members of the Council and review for any material disclosures. We also confirmed that the disclosure in Note 35 complied with the Code requirements. We undertook a sample check of contracts included on the Council's contracts register against Companies House records to identify whether any key decision makers within the Council had an interest in the companies with which the Council had contracts. • <i>Members Allowances:</i> Our audit strategy was to test the completeness of the disclosures within Note 30 and make sure that the disclosure was compliant with the Code by sample checking transactions back to the payroll system and other relevant supporting documentation.
We carried out our work in accordance with our Audit Plan.	
Significant audit risks	<p>We identified the following audit risks during the planning phase of our audit, and reported these to you in our audit plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risk of fraud in revenue recognition • risk of management override • classification and valuation of investment property and property, plant and equipment <p>The 'addressing audit risks' section of this report sets out how we have gained audit assurance over those issues.</p>
Other reporting issues	We have no other matters we wish to report.
Control observations	We have adopted a fully substantive approach and have therefore not tested the operation of controls.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council's staff for their assistance during the course of our work.

Debbie Hanson
Executive Director
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

2. Responsibilities and purpose of our work

The Council's responsibilities

The Council is responsible for preparing and publishing its Statement of Accounts, accompanied by the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). In the AGS, the Council reports publicly on the extent to which it complies with its own code of governance, including how it has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period.

The Council is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Purpose of our work

Our audit was designed to:

- Express an opinion on the 2015/16 financial statements and the consistency of other information published with them;
- Report on an exception basis on the Annual Governance Statement;
- Consider and report any matters that prevent us being satisfied that the Council had put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources (the value for money conclusion); and
- Discharge our statutory duties and responsibilities as established by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Code of Audit Practice.

In addition, this report contains our findings related to the areas of audit emphasis and any views on significant deficiencies in internal control or the Council's accounting policies and key judgments.

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of our review and the nature of our report are specified by the National Audit Office.

3. Financial statements audit

Addressing audit risks

We identified the following audit risks during the planning phase of our audit, and reported these to you in our Audit Plan. Here, we set out how we have gained audit assurance over those issues.

A significant audit risk in the context of the audit of the financial statements is an inherent risk with both a higher likelihood of occurrence and a higher magnitude of effect should it occur and which requires special audit consideration. For significant risks, we obtain an understanding of the entity's controls relevant to each risk and assess the design and implementation of the relevant controls.

Significant Risks (including fraud risks)	Audit procedures performed	Assurance gained and issues arising
<p>Risk of fraud in revenue recognition</p> <p>Under ISA240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10, issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.</p> <p>For local authorities the potential for the incorrect classification of revenue spend as capital is a particular area where there is a risk of revenue recognition. We will undertake specific testing to address this risk.</p>	<p>During the course of our audit we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reviewed and tested the Council's revenue and expenditure recognition policies. ▶ Reviewed and discuss with management any accounting estimates on revenue or expenditure recognition for evidence of bias. ▶ Developed a testing strategy to test material revenue and expenditure streams. ▶ Reviewed and tested revenue cut-off at the period end date. ▶ Tested capital expenditure on property, plant and equipment to ensure it meets the definition of capital expenditure as set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Accounting Code). 	<p>We found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The revenue and expenditure recognition policies adopted by the Council were appropriate. ▶ Estimates made by management when preparing the financial statements were appropriate; we found no evidence of management bias. ▶ Our testing of material revenue and expenditure transaction streams identified no matters that we wish to bring to your attention. ▶ Our testing of income and expenditure transactions at the period end identified no evidence of items being accounted for in the incorrect accounting period. ▶ Our sample testing of capital expenditure on confirmed that expenditure met the definition of capital expenditure as set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Accounting Code).
<p>Risk of management override</p> <p>As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.</p>	<p>During the course of our audit we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Test the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements. ▶ Review accounting estimates for evidence of management bias. ▶ Evaluate the business rationale for significant unusual transactions. 	<p>We found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Journal entries recorded in the general ledger, and other adjustments made on the preparation of the financial statements, were appropriate. ▶ The revenue and expenditure recognition policies adopted by the Council were appropriate. ▶ Our testing identified no significant or unusual transactions.

Classification and valuation of investment property and property, plant and equipment

The Council undertakes an annual exercise to revalue property assets (including its social housing stock and investment property assets). The valuation of property assets represents a significant accounting estimate. The accounting entries arising from changes in value are complex and will have a significant impact on the Council's financial statements.

- ▶ The Council's Fixed Asset Register is unable to calculate the accounting entries arising from changes in the valuation of these assets. The Council is therefore reliant on excel-based spreadsheets to manually calculate the accounting entries, using data provided by the Council's valuer and historic data recorded on the Council's Fixed Asset Register.
- ▶ The Council has confirmed that it intends to reclassify assets previously recorded as investment property to other land and buildings. These assets had a market value at 31 March 2015 of £19.5 million.

Taken together, we considered these factors presented a significant risk to the financial statements.

During the course of our audit we have:

- Assessed the reliability of management's experts (in relation to the valuation work undertaken for the Council by the District Valuer, placing reliance on experts commissioned by the National Audit Office in respect of land and property values, and our own valuation specialists).
- Tested the reliability of the information provided by the Council to valuers.
- Tested the accounting treatment applied to changes in the valuation of property assets.
- Tested the classification of property assets within the balance sheet, ensuring that the classification is consistent with the Accounting Code.
- Tested the prior period adjustment arising from the reclassification of investment property assets is adequately disclosed and consistent with guidance in the Accounting Code.

We found that:

- We were able to place reliance on the work undertaken by management's valuation experts.
- The information provided to management's experts was reliable.
- Changes in the valuation of property, plant and equipment had been applied incorrectly. Management have amended the financial statements to correct this error. Details of this error are set out at Appendix A.
- Property, plant and equipment assets had been classified in accordance with the Accounting Code.
- The prior period adjustment arising from the reclassification of investment property assets was consistent with guidance in the accounting code. The accounts did however need to be updated to include a note explaining the prior period adjustment and the areas of the accounts impacted.

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we are required to communicate to you significant findings from the audit and other matters that are significant to you oversight of the Council's financial reporting process, including the following:

- Qualitative aspects of your accounting practices; estimates and disclosures;
- Matters specifically required by other auditing standards to be communicated to those charged with governance. For example, issues about fraud, compliance with laws and regulations, external confirmations and related party transactions;
- Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit; and
- Other audit matters of governance interest

We have no matters we wish to report.

Control themes and observations

It is the responsibility of the Council to develop and implement systems of internal financial control and to put in place proper arrangements to monitor their adequacy and effectiveness in practice. Our responsibility as your auditor is to consider whether the Council has put adequate arrangements in place to satisfy itself that the systems of internal financial control are both adequate and effective in practice.

We have adopted a fully substantive approach and have therefore not tested the operation of controls.

We have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and can confirm that it not misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Council.

Request for written representations

We have requested a management representation letter to gain management's confirmation in relation to a number of matters, as outlined in Appendix F. In addition to the standard representations, we have requested the following specific representations, for areas where cannot otherwise gain audit assurance:

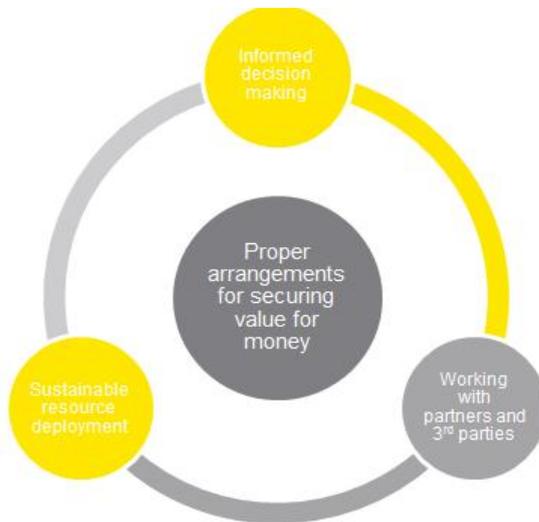
- Use of a specialist
 - We have requested representation that Members and management did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and that Members and management are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists;
- Estimates
 - For the estimates for property, plant and equipment, investment properties, pension liabilities and business rate appeals we have requested representation from Members and management that the estimates appropriately reflect their intent and ability to make judgments, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for the revenue and expenses during the year on behalf of the entity; and
- Retirement benefits
 - We have requested representation from Members and management that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with the knowledge Members and management of the business and that all significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of our review and the nature of our report are specified by the National Audit Office.

The Council is below the threshold of £350 million set by the National Audit Office (NAO) for any of: assets (excluding PPE); liabilities (excluding pension liabilities); income or expenditure. Therefore we are not required to undertake further work on the Council's return.

4. Value for money



We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. This is known as our value for money conclusion.

Proper arrangements are defined by statutory guidance issued by the National Audit Office. They comprise your arrangements to:

- ▶ Take informed decisions;
- ▶ Deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and
- ▶ Work with partners and other third parties.

Overall conclusion

We did not identify any significant risks in relation to these criteria.

We have performed the procedures outlined in our audit plan. As part of our work we considered the following areas and made the following observations:

- **We reviewed the medium term financial plan and the assumptions included within it:** The Council's latest Medium Term Financial Strategy identifies a cumulative budget gap in the financial years 2016/17 to 2018/19 of £3.4 million and was updated in January 2016. The assumptions made in the MTFs are reasonable and prudent. For example, the Council does not rely on as yet uncertain funding streams to balance its base budget. For example, funding from the New Homes Bonus is transferred to reserves and is therefore not included as part of funding for the base budget. Work is ongoing to address the budget gaps in future years in order to address the budget gap going forward and maintain its reserves. As part of this process, the Council needs to formalise the savings plans it is developing.
- **We assessed the level of reserves that the Council has at the 31 March 2016:** The level of useable general fund reserves held by the Council at 31 March 2016 is £29 million. Of these a number are earmarked for specific purposes, leaving around £7 million that could be used to support spending if needed. The general fund working balance forms part of this and at just under £4 million is above the minimum level of £2.5 million recommended by the Head of Finance. We have therefore concluded that the Council has adequate levels of reserves.
- **We considered the Council's budget setting and monitoring processes:** The Council set a balanced budget for 2016/17, with no unmet budget gap to be addressed. The assumptions made by the Council in determining its budget are appropriate and we are satisfied that the Council's has established appropriate budgetary control procedures.
- **We considered the Council's decision making processes and partnership working:** The Council has appropriate governance, performance and risk management processes in place. There is evidence of the Council working effectively with partners in key areas, such as Kier

Harlow for the repair of council dwellings and Veolia for waste collection. A clear vision for the Council is included in the Corporate Plan and the Council has effectively managed significant projects such as the development of the Enterprise Zone.

We therefore expect to conclude that you have put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources.

Other matters to bring to your attention

We have no other matters to bring to your attention.

Appendix A – Corrected audit differences

The following corrected differences, which are greater than £3.261 million, have been identified during the course of our audit and warrant communicating to you.

These items have been corrected by management within the revised financial statements.

Balance sheet and Statement of comprehensive income and expenditure

Item of account	Balance sheet (Decrease in asset) / Decrease in reserve £m	Comprehensive income and expenditure statement (Decrease in exp) / Increase in exp £m	Movement in Reserves Statement (decrease in reserves movement)/ increase in reserve movement
Error in calculation of impairment on property, plant & equipment at 31 March 2016.			
PPE balance (reduction in upward revaluation of council dwellings)	(3,631)		
Revaluation reserve (reduction in reserve balance)	3,631		
MIRS (reduction in unusable reserves)			(3,631)
Surplus/deficit on revaluation in the CIES (decrease in surplus)		3,631	
Cumulative effect of adjusted differences	0	3,631	(3,631)

Disclosures

Disclosure	Description of difference
Note 15 – Financial Instruments	Statutory debts of £3 million removed from amount disclosed for financial assets carried at contract amounts.
Prior Period Restatement	Inclusion of an additional note explaining the prior period adjustment relating to Investment Property / Property, Plant & Equipment balances, and the areas of the accounts impacted.

Appendix B – Outstanding matters

The following items relating to the completion of our audit procedures are outstanding at the date of the release of this report

Item	Actions to resolve	Responsibility
Management representation letter	Receipt of signed letter of representation	Management and Audit and Standards Committee
Annual accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correction of errors misstatements identified by EY. • Approval of accounts by Audit & Standards Committee and Cabinet • Accounts re-certified by RFO 	EY, management and Audit and Standards Committee.
Subsequent events review	Completion of the subsequent events procedures to the date of signing the audit report	EY and management
Other outstanding work	<p>Management and EY to work together to complete any outstanding work on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff costs/officer remunerations • NDR appeals provision • Cash & Cash equivalents, and Investments • journals testing • MIRS review • completion of income testing • cashflow statement • final Director and Manager review of the audit work • review of the final version of the financial statements 	EY and management

Appendix C – Independence

We confirm there are no changes in our assessment of independence since our confirmation in our Audit Plan dated 9 March 2016.

We complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors and the requirements of the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA)'s Terms of Appointment. In our professional judgement the firm is independent and the objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff has not been compromised within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements.

We confirm that we are not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the firm that we are required by auditing and ethical standards to report to you.

We consider that our independence in this context is a matter that should be reviewed by both you and ourselves. It is therefore important that you consider the facts of which you are aware and come to a view. If you wish to discuss any matters concerning our independence, we will be pleased to do so at the forthcoming meeting of the Audit Committee on 7 September 2016.

We confirm that we have met the reporting requirements to the Audit Committee, as 'those charged with governance' under International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) 260 – Communication with those charged with governance. Our communication plan to meet these requirements was set out in our Audit Plan of 9 March 2016.

Appendix D – Auditor fees

The table below sets out the scale fee and our final proposed audit fees.

Description	Proposed final Fee 2015/16 £	Scale Fee 2015/16 £
Total Audit Fee – Code work	77,514	77,514
Certification of claims and returns	18,695	18,695

Our actual fee is in line with the scale fee set by the PSAA at this point in time, subject to satisfactory clearance of the outstanding work.

We confirm we have not undertaken any non-audit work outside of the PSAA's requirements.

Appendix E – Draft audit report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Harlow District Council

Opinion on the Authority's financial statements

We have audited the financial statements of Harlow District Council for the year ended 31 March 2016 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The financial statements comprise the:

- Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Balance Sheet,
- Cash Flow Statement,
- Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement, the Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement and Collection Fund; and
- Related notes 1 to 45 for the core statements, H1 to H14 for the Housing Revenue Account and CF1 to CF3 for the Collection Fund.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16.

This report is made solely to the members of Harlow District Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Head of Finance and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Head of Finance's Responsibilities set out on page 21, the Head of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Head of Finance; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the [name of the document that the financial statements are published in the Statement of Accounts 2015/16 to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we

become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Opinion on financial statements

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Harlow District Council as at 31 March 2016 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the information given in the Harlow District Council Statement of Accounts 2015/16 for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- in our opinion the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Council;
- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We have nothing to report in these respects

Conclusion on Harlow District Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

Authority's responsibilities

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Auditor's responsibilities

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) requires us to report to you our conclusion relating to proper arrangements.

We report if significant matters have come to our attention which prevent us from concluding that the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in November 2015, as to whether Harlow District Council had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined this criterion as that necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the [name of body] put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, Harlow District Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance issued by the C&AG in November 2015, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, Harlow District Council put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts of Harlow District Council in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Debbie Hanson, Executive Director

for and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP, Appointed Auditor

Luton

September 2016

Appendix F – Management representation letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

[Date]

Debbie Hanson
Ernst & Young
400 Capability Green
Luton LU1 3LU

Dear Debbie,

Harlow District Council Letter of Representations

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Harlow District Council (“the Council”) for the year ended 31 March 2016. 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 Harlow District Council as of 31 March 2016 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16.

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 and Ireland), 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 2015/16].
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 (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Council in accordance with [the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16. 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 2015/16, that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

5. There are no unadjusted audit differences identified during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented.

B. Fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
2. 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.
3. We have no knowledge of any fraud or suspected fraud involving management or other employees who have a significant role in the Council's internal controls over financial reporting. In addition, we have no knowledge of any fraud or suspected fraud involving other employees in which the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements. We have no knowledge of any allegations of financial improprieties, including fraud or suspected fraud, (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers") which could result in a misstatement of the financial statements or otherwise affect the financial reporting of the Council.

C. Compliance with Laws and Regulations

1. We have disclosed to you all identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.

D. 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 are reflected in the financial statements.
3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Council, Cabinet, and Audit & Standards Committee or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared held through the to the most recent meeting on the following date: 15 September 2016.
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 period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the period end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.

5. We believe that the significant assumptions we used in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.
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.

E. 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 litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Note 40 to the financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

F. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

G. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Properties, Pension Liabilities and business rate appeals 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.

H. Estimates for Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Properties, Pension Liabilities and Business Rate Appeals, and bad debt provisions.

1. We believe that the measurement processes, including related assumptions and models, used to determine the accounting estimate(s) have been consistently applied and are appropriate in the context of the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16.
2. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making these estimates appropriately reflect our intent and ability to make judgments, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for the revenue and expenses during the year on behalf of the entity.
3. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate(s) are complete and made in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16.

4. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate(s) and disclosures in the financial statements due to subsequent events

Retirement Benefits

1. 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 Sincerely,

Head of Finance

I confirm that this letter has been discussed and agreed at the Audit and Standards Committee on 7 September 2016

Chair of Audit and Standards Committee

Appendix G – Required communications with the audit committee

There are certain communications that we must provide to the Audit Committee of UK clients. These are detailed here:

Required communication	Reference
<p>Planning and audit approach</p> <p>Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, including any limitations.</p>	Audit Plan
<p>Significant findings from the audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit Results Report
<p>Going concern</p> <p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	No conditions or events were identified, either individually or in aggregate, that indicated there could be doubt about Harlow District Council's ability to continue as a going concern for the 12 months from the date of our report.
<p>Misstatements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ In writing, corrected misstatements that are significant 	Audit Results Report.
<p>Fraud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ A discussion of any other matters related to fraud 	We have made enquiries of management and those charged with governance. We have not become aware of any fraud or illegal acts during our audit.
<p>Related parties</p> <p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	We have no matters we wish to report.

Required communication	Reference
<p>External confirmations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures 	We have received all requested confirmations.
<p>Consideration of laws and regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Audit findings regarding non-compliance where the non-compliance is material and believed to be intentional. This communication is subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off ▶ Enquiry of the audit committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the audit committee may be aware of 	We have not identified any material instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations.
<p>Independence</p> <p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's objectivity and independence</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence 	Audit Plan and Audit Results Report
<p>Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit</p>	Audit Results Report
<p>Fee Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakdown of fee information at the agreement of the initial audit plan ▶ Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit 	Audit Plan Audit Results Report
<p>Certification work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Summary of certification work undertaken 	We will report the findings from our certification work to the Audit and Standards Committee on 8 March 2017.

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