

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

22 MARCH 2021

1. **ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2019/20**

Report of the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Audit and Risk Committee notes the Annual Audit Letter (AAL) attached as an Appendix to this report.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform the Audit and Risk Committee of the findings of the external audit work undertaken for the audit year 2019/20 which is summarised in the AAL.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The AAL summarises the key findings from external audit work undertaken for the 2019/20 audit year. The audit comprised two elements:

- To audit and give an opinion on the Authority's financial statements.
- An assessment of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (the value for money conclusion).

3.2 The Audit Findings Reports (AFR) presented to the Fire Authority on 5 October 2020 outlined the findings of the audit work undertaken.

Ref. AU/ARC/2021/March/91203213

- 3.3 The auditor has now issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2019/20 financial statements included in the Authority's Statement of Accounts.
- 3.4 As part of the external audit work programme, the auditor was also required to provide a value for money conclusion. In carrying out this work the auditor is required to follow the National Audit Office (NAO)'s Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and Auditor Guidance Note (AGN) 07 – Auditor Reporting. The NAO Code of Audit Practice specifies the following criterion for auditors to evaluate:
- "In all significant respects, the audited body takes properly informed decisions and deploys resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for tax payers and local people."*
- 3.5 As a consequence of this work, the auditor concluded that for 2019/20 the Authority had proper arrangements in all significant respects to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness and to ensure it delivered value for money in its use of resources.
- 3.6 The Treasurer has been consulted and has agreed the content of the AAL.
- 3.7 Representatives from Grant Thornton will present and explain the findings detailed in the AAL to the Audit and Risk Committee.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report will not lead to and/or do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is a legal requirement for the Authority to consider the AAL Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 234 – The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The agreed scale fee for the provision of external audit services for the audit year 2019/20 was set at £35,500 although the AFR highlighted a fee variation (increase) of £9,830 on this figure.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Audit Findings Report 2019/20 – Agenda item 10 – Fire Authority 5 October 2020.

The contact officer for this report is Wayne Brown, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, telephone number 0121 380 6907.

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER