

The Audit Findings for Shropshire County Pension Fund

Year ended 31 March 2017

7 September 2017

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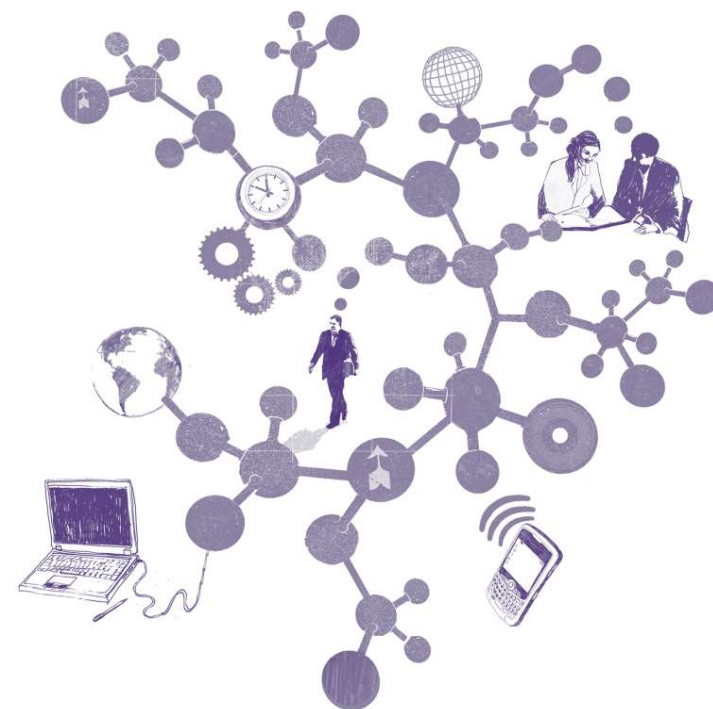
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7 September 2017

Dear Members of the Pensions Committee

Audit Findings for Shropshire County Pension Fund for the year ending 31 March 2017

This Audit Findings report highlights the significant findings arising from the audit for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Shropshire County Pension Fund, the Pensions Committee), as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice. Its contents have been discussed with management.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed primarily for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements. Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose defalcations or other irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the kind assistance provided by the fund accountants and administration staff during our audit.

Yours sincerely

John Gregory
Director

Chartered Accountants

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Contents

Section	Page
1. Executive summary	4
2. Audit findings	7
3. Fees, non-audit services and independence	18
4. Communication of audit matters	20

Appendices

A Audit opinion	
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Section 1: Executive summary

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Fees, non audit services and independence

04. Communication of audit matters

Purpose of this report

This report highlights the key issues affecting the results of Shropshire County Pension Fund ('the Fund') and the preparation of the fund's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2017. It is also used to report our audit findings to management and those charged with governance in accordance with the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, and the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act').

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion, the Fund's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the fund and its income and expenditure for the year and whether they have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

We are also required consider other information published together with the audited financial statements: whether it is consistent with the financial statements and in line with required guidance. This includes the Pension Fund Annual Report.

Introduction

In carrying out our audit we have not had to alter or change our audit approach, which we communicated to you in our Audit Plan dated March 2017.

Our audit is substantially complete although we are finalising our procedures in the following areas:

- completion of final specialist partner review
- obtaining confirmation from outstanding Investment Managers
- obtaining and reviewing the final management letter of representation
- completion of additional responses required in relation to IAS 19 requests from admitted body auditors
- review of the final version of the financial statements; and
- updating our post balance sheet events review, to the date of signing the opinion.

We received draft financial statements and accompanying working papers at the commencement of our work, in accordance with the agreed timetable.

We anticipate providing a unqualified audit opinion in respect of the financial statements (see Appendix A).

Key audit and financial reporting issues

Financial statements opinion

We anticipate providing an unqualified opinion in respect of the Fund's financial statements.

The key messages arising from our audit of the Fund's financial statements are:

- We have no adjusted or unadjusted misstatements to report,
- The draft accounts were presented for audit in accordance with the agreed timetable.
- During the course of our work at year end, we were provided with access to all documents as required and the quality of working papers and level of knowledge and assistance provided by fund staff was of a high standard.

We have not identified any adjustments affecting the Fund's reported financial position. However, we have agreed with officers some minor adjustments to improve the presentation of the financial statements.

Further details are set out in section two of this report.

Controls

Roles and responsibilities

The Fund's management is responsible for the identification, assessment, management and monitoring of risk, and for developing, operating and monitoring the system of internal control.

Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we report these to the Fund.

Findings

We have not noted any significant control weaknesses during our audit.

The way forward

Matters arising from the financial statements audit have been discussed with the Head of Treasury and Pensions.

Acknowledgement

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by the fund accountants and administration staff during our audit.

Grant Thornton UK LLP
September 2017

Section 2: Audit findings

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Fees, non audit services and independence

04. Communication of audit matters

This section summarises the findings of the audit. We report on the final level of materiality used and the work undertaken against the risks we identified in our initial audit plan. We also conclude on the accounting policies, estimates and judgements used and highlight any weaknesses found in internal controls as part of the audit. As required by auditing standards we detail both adjusted and unadjusted misstatements to the accounts and their impact on the financial statements.

Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit. The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As we reported in our audit plan, we determined overall materiality to be £17,090,000 (being 1% of net assets). We have considered whether this level remained appropriate during the course of the audit and have made no changes to our overall materiality.

We also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulated effect of such amounts would have a material impact on the financial statements. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £828,000. This remains the same as reported in our audit plan.

As we reported in our audit plan, we identified the following items where we decided that separate materiality levels were appropriate. These remain the same as reported in our audit plan.

Balance/transaction/disclosure	Explanation	Materiality level
Management Expenses	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	5% of the value of expenses
Related party transactions	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	10% of the value of the highest disclosure

Audit findings against significant risks

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty" (ISA (UK&I) 315).

In this section we detail our response to the significant risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. As we noted in our plan, there are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards.

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
1.	<p>The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk</p> <p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Shropshire County Pension Fund, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited; and • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Shropshire Council as the administering authority, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any material issues in respect of revenue recognition.</p>
2.	<p>Management over-ride of controls</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 it is presumed that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review of accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management, • testing of journal entries, and • review of unusual significant transactions. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any evidence of management over-ride of controls. In particular the findings of our review of journal controls and testing of journal entries has not identified any significant issues.</p> <p>We set out later in this section of the report our work and findings on key accounting estimates and judgements.</p>

Audit findings against significant risks continued

We have also identified the following significant risks of material misstatement from our understanding of the entity. We set out below the work we have completed to address these risks.

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
3.	Level 3 Investments – Valuation is incorrect Under ISA 315 significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgemental matters. Level 3 investments by their very nature require a significant degree of judgement to reach an appropriate valuation at year end.	We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gained an understanding of the transactions via discussions with the pension fund team and reviewed supporting documentation. carried out walkthrough tests of the controls identified in the cycle. tested a sample of Level 3 investments by obtaining and reviewed the audited accounts at latest date for individual investments and agreeing these to the fund manager reports at that date. Reconciliation of those values to the values at 31 March 2017 with reference to known movements in the intervening period. reviewed the nature and basis of estimated values and considered what assurance management has over the year end valuations provided for these types of investments. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.

Audit findings against other risks

In this section we detail our response to the other risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. Recommendations, together with management responses are attached at appendix A.

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Investment Income	Investment income not accurate. (Accuracy)	We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle, We have performed a walkthrough to gain assurance that the in-year controls were operating in accordance with our documented understanding. We have reviewed the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and sought explanations for variances, 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risks identified.
Investment values – Level 2 investments	Valuation is incorrect. (Valuation net)	We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle, We have performed a walkthrough to gain assurance that the in-year controls were operating in accordance with our documented understanding. We have reviewed the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and sought explanations for variances, 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified
Investments purchases and sales	Investment activity not valid.	We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We reviewed the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and seek explanations for variances 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risks identified.

Audit findings against other risks (continued)



Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Contributions	Recorded contributions not correct (Occurrence)	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding tested key controls over the contributions made to the fund, tested a sample of contributions to source data to gain assurance over their accuracy and occurrence, and analysed contributions received with reference to changes in member body payrolls and numbers of contributing pensioners and ensured that any unexpected trends were satisfactorily explained. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.
Benefits payable	Benefits improperly computed/claims liability understated (Completeness, accuracy and occurrence)	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding tested key controls for member to be enrolled on the scheme, tested a sample of individual pensions in payment by reference to member files, and rationalised pension paid with reference to changes in pensioner numbers and increases applied in the year to ensure that any unusual trends are satisfactorily explained. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.

Audit findings against other risks (continued)

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Member Data	Member data not correct. (Rights and Obligations)	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle• undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding• tested key controls over changes to the pension fund data set, and• tested a sample of changes to member data made during the year to source documentation.	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified

Accounting policies, estimates and judgements

In this section we report on our consideration of accounting policies, in particular revenue recognition policies, and key estimates and judgements made and included with the Fund's financial statements.

Accounting area	Summary of policy	Comments	Assessment
Revenue recognition	<p>There are two key policies in relation to revenue recognition: that for contribution income and that for investment income.</p> <p>Normal contributions are accounted for in the payroll month to which they relate.</p> <p>Investment income from equities is accounted for on the date stocks are quoted ex-dividend. Income from fixed interest and index-linked securities, cash and short term deposits is accounted for on an accruals basis, as is income from other investments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policies are considered appropriate under the accounting framework in place. 	 (Green)
Judgements and estimates	<p>Because of the nature of the fund no significant accounting judgements have been made, with all judgements following the requirements set out in the Code.</p> <p>The fund has a material balance of investments with significant unobservable inputs. The valuation of these investments is subject to varying degrees of estimation uncertainty. The Fund discloses the differing methods of valuation for these funds within the accounting policies. In each case the Fund chooses to rely on the valuation provided by the fund manager.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policies are considered appropriate under the accounting framework in place. Sufficient assurance has been provided by either the experts used for valuing the fund, or we have been able to agree valuations to third party evidence. 	 (Green)



Assessment

● Marginal accounting policy which could potentially attract attention from regulators (Red)
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● Accounting policy appropriate but scope for improved disclosure (Amber)

● Accounting policy appropriate and disclosures sufficient (Green)

Accounting policies, estimates and judgements continued

Accounting area	Summary of policy	Comments	Assessment
Going concern	Officers have a reasonable expectation that the services provided by the Fund will continue for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.	We have reviewed officer's assessment and are satisfied with management's assessment that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2016/17 financial statements.	 (Green)
Other accounting policies	We have reviewed the Fund's policies against the requirements of the CIPFA Code and accounting standards.	Our review of accounting policies has not highlighted any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.	 (Green)

Assessment

 Marginal accounting policy which could potentially attract attention from regulators
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 Accounting policy appropriate but scope for improved disclosure

 Accounting policy appropriate and disclosures sufficient

Other communication requirements

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by auditing standards and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

	Issue	Commentary
1.	Matters in relation to fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with the Audit Committee. We have not been made aware of any incidents in the period and no other issues have been identified during the course of our audit.
2.	Matters in relation to laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are not aware of any significant incidences of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations.
3.	Written representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter of representation has been requested from the Fund.
4.	Disclosures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our review found no non-trivial omissions in the financial statements.
5.	Matters in relation to related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are not aware of any related party transactions which have not been disclosed aside from the omission of disclosure of transactions with the Pension Fund management team. Further details of this are included on page 18.
6.	Confirmation requests from third parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We obtained direct confirmations from all of the investment managers and the custodian of the fund. Positive confirmation was received from all parties, and as a result no further procedures were considered necessary.
7.	Going concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our work has not identified any reason to challenge the Fund's decision to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

Misstatements, misclassifications and disclosure changes

We did not identify any misstatements within the draft accounts presented to us for audit. We agreed a small number of minor disclosure amendments with officers, and these are being reflected in the final set of accounts. None of these are individually significant enough to merit drawing to the Committee’s attention.

There is, as in previous years, one area where officers disagree with our view in relation to a disclosure issue, and this is noted below and the accounts have not therefore been amended. We consider this to be a minor disclosure weakness only. The Committee is asked to confirm that it is content that the financial statements are not amended in relation to this matter.

Adjustment type		Account balance	Impact on the financial statements
1	Disclosure	Note 23, Related Party Transactions	As in prior years, Note 23 on related party transactions notes that the details in respect of the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance are provided within the Shropshire Council financial statements. Pension Fund financial statements must be capable of standing alone from the local authority financial statements and our view is that appropriate disclosures should be made within the pension fund accounts in line with section 3.4 of the Code of Practice.

Section 3: Fees, non-audit services and independence

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Fees, non audit services and independence

04. Communication of audit matters

We confirm below our final fees charged for the audit.

Fees

	Proposed fee per Audit Plan £	Actual fees £
Pension fund scale fee	23,427	23,427
Proposed fee variation	1,979	1,979
Total audit fees	25,406	25,406

The proposed fee variation for IAS 19 above takes account of the work we are required to undertake for admitted bodies within the PSAA regime and is consistent with that requested in prior years.

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
Audit related services: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None	Nil

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Section 4: Communication of audit matters

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Fees, non audit services and independence

04. Communication of audit matters

Communication to those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing ISA (UK&I) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

The Audit Plan outlined our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while this Audit Findings report presents the key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

Respective responsibilities

The Audit Findings Report has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psaa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

We have been appointed as the Fund's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Fund's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Fund to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Fund is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to auditor's report		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓

Appendices

Appendix A: Audit opinion

We anticipate we will provide the Authority with an unmodified audit report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR’S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

We have audited the pension fund financial statements of Shropshire Council (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2017 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The pension fund financial statements comprise the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes. 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 2016/17.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. 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, Governance and Assurance and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance is responsible for the preparation of the Authority’s Statement of Accounts, which includes the pension fund 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 2016/17, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the pension fund financial statements in accordance with applicable law, the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the “Code of Audit Practice”) 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 pension fund 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 pension fund’s circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance; and the overall presentation of the pension fund financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Authority's Statement of Accounts and the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited pension fund 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 the pension fund financial statements

In our opinion: the pension fund financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the pension fund during the year ended 31 March 2017 and of the amount and disposition at that date of the fund’s assets and liabilities, other than liabilities to pay pensions and benefits after the end of the fund year]; and the pension fund financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17 and applicable law.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited pension fund financial statements in the Authority's Statement of Accounts and the Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the audited pension fund financial statements.

Signature - to be added

John Gregory
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

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Date – to be added



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