

## FINAL ACCOUNTS REPORT 2023/24

**Meeting:** Council

**Date Of Meeting:** 27 February 2025

**Report Author(s):** Frank Jeffrey

**Lead Officer:** Stephen Fitzgerald | Stephen.fitzgerald@woking.gov.uk

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Dale Roberts | Cllrdale.roberts@woking.gov.uk

**Date Published:** 24 February 2025

Will the decision be open for call in (i.e. is it a key decision)?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the outcome of the discussions of the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 20 February 2025 in respect of the 2023/24 accounts.
- 1.2 A copy of the report considered by the Audit and Governance Committee, together with the draft accounts, has been published earlier.

### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council is requested to:

**RESOLVE THAT**

**the 2023/24 Final Accounts be approved and submitted to the External Auditors, Grant Thornton.**

### 3.0 Extract from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee

- 3.1 Set out below is an extract from the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 20 February 2025.

#### **Final Accounts Report 2023/24 STA25-011**

Stephen Fitzgerald introduced the Final Accounts 2023/24, which had been published on 16 January to comply with the end of the public inspection period on 27 February. The Accounts covered the year of the Section 114 announcement and Government Intervention. They would need to be approved by Full Council at its meeting on 27 February to fulfil its obligations for the backstop date of 28 February. Stephen Fitzgerald stated that in the Council's Chief Financial Officer's Certification, the same caveat had been included as in previous sets of accounts stating the accounts had been prepared on the basis of the best financial information available. Much work had taken place to prepare and bring five years' of outstanding accounts through the committee process over the past year.

Brendan Bradley, Deputy Section 151 Officer, reported that the Accounts set out the issues regarding asset valuations, borrowing levels and the servicing cost of the borrowing. Referring to the balance sheet of the Council, he stated that the level of stated reserves had reduced from circa £200m as at 31 March 2023 to circa minus 651 million as at 31 March 2024 due to loan impairment following external review, which had created a reliance on Exceptional Financial Support. It was noted that the 2023/24 Accounts dealt with the issues outlined in the Section 114 notice and the mitigations set out in the Extraordinary Financial Support: loan impairments; the suspension of interest from Group Companies; the application of the Capitalisation Direction; Minimum Revenue Provision; and Housing Revenue Account Legacy Charges. They would be the first set of accounts subject to Audit from Grant Thornton.

The Accounts were stated to be single entity for the Council alone, with group accounts to be made available once completed. The Audit was in train for the group accounts and it was anticipated they would be received by the Committee in June.

Councillor Rice asked if there were any issues not set out in the Accounts which the Committee should be made aware of. Stephen Fitzgerald confirmed that he was not aware of anything material that had not already been disclosed, that impacted to the proper approval of the Accounts that Members needed to be aware of. Stephen Fitzgerald also referred to the Chief Finance Officer's Statement of Responsibilities in the accounts which showed the approach that had been taken.

Councillor Rice referred to the variance analysis which he stated provided the level of detail needed by Members to understand the actual budget variance and full year forecast and stated that it would be useful as a template for the budget monitoring report. Stephen Fitzgerald stated that work was taking place to provide the correct level of detail.

Councillor Mukherjee asked for further assurance that there was nothing further the Committee should be made aware of and Stephen Fitzgerald stated that he had disclosed everything required for the draft Accounts to be referred to Council for approval, adding that the Accounts would require his signature.

Adesuwa Omoregie highlighted that at the meeting in December the resolution had contained additional information which the Committee voted and agreed to include in its resolution.

#### RESOLVED

That the 2023/24 Final Accounts should be referred to Council for approval and submission to the External Auditors, Grant Thornton and noted that Officers have confirmed that there are no further matters relevant to the above accounts as of the date of this meeting [20 February 2025] that should be brought to the Committee's attention.

**Report Ends**