

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

Qualified Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Mid Sussex District Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2025. The financial statements comprise the:

- Council Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Council Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Council Balance Sheet,
- Council Cash Flow Statement
- the related notes 1 to 40 including material accounting policy information and including the Expenditure and Funding Analysis, and
- Collection Fund and the related notes 1 to 4

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 2024/25.

In our opinion, except for the effects of the matters described in the Basis for qualified opinion section, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Mid Sussex District Council as at 31 March 2025 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended).

Basis for qualified opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) ('the Regulations') which came into force on 30 September 2024 required the accountability statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 to be approved not later than 27 February 2026 ('the backstop date').

As a result of the disclaimers of opinion on the financial statements for the years ended 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024, we do not have sufficient appropriate audit evidence over:

- the valuation of Land and Buildings included within property, plant and equipment that were last revalued in the financial year 2022/23, amounting to £25.29m, and the consequential impact of these on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement; and
- the classification of reserves between useable and unusable including, General fund balance, Earmarked Reserves, Useable Capital Receipts Reserve, Revaluation reserve, Capital Adjustment Account, and Collection Fund Adjustment Account. Our inability to audit the classification is a consequence of the disclaimer of opinion on the reserve balances as at 31 March 2023. We have obtained assurance over the in-year movements in reserves for the year ended 31 March 2025 and the comparative year.

Our opinion on the current period's financial statements is also modified because of the possible effect of the disclaimers of opinion on the financial statements for the years ended 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024 on the comparability of the current period's figures and the corresponding figures contained within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Movement in Reserves Statement, and Cash Flow Statement.

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Code of Audit Practice 2024, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our qualified opinion.

The audits of the financial statements for the years ended 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024 for Mid Sussex District Council were not completed for the reasons set out in our disclaimers of opinion on those financial statements dated 27 November 2024 and 21 February 2025, respectively.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (S151)'s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period to 12 months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (S151) with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report. However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this statement is not a guarantee as to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the narrative statements set out on pages 5 to 11, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (S151) is responsible for the other information contained within the Statement of Accounts.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of the other information, we are required to report that fact.

As described in the Basis for qualified opinion section of our report, our audit opinion is qualified due to a lack of sufficient appropriate audit evidence over property, plant and equipment, classification of reserves balances, and comparative values. Information on these elements of the financial statements is included in the Narrative Report and accordingly we have concluded that the other information may be materially misstated for the same reason.

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 (as amended)
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- 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 (as amended)
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we are not satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2025.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (S151)

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts set out on page 4, the Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (S151) 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 2024/25, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (S151) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (S151) is responsible for assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Council either intends to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

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 for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect irregularities, including fraud. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both those charged with governance of the entity and management.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that are applicable to the Council and determined that the most significant are:

- Local Government Act 1972,
- Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1992),
- Local Government Act 2003,
- The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended in 2018, 2020, and 2022,
- Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003,
- Business Rate Supplements Act 2009,
- The Local Government Finance Act 2012,
- The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended), and
- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

In addition, the Council has to comply with laws and regulations in the areas of anti-bribery and corruption, data protection, employment Legislation, tax Legislation, general power of competence, procurement and health & safety.

We understood how Mid Sussex District Council is complying with those frameworks by understanding the incentive, opportunities and motives for non-compliance, including inquiring of management, head of internal audit, those charged with governance and obtaining and reading documentation relating to the procedures in place to identify, evaluate and comply with laws and regulations, and whether they are aware of instances of non-compliance. We corroborated this through our reading of the Council's committee minutes, through enquiry of employees to confirm Council policies, and through the inspection of employee handbooks and other information. Based on this understanding we designed our audit procedures to identify non-compliance with such laws and regulations. Our procedures had a focus on compliance with the accounting framework through obtaining sufficient audit evidence in line with the level of risk identified and with relevant legislation.

We assessed the susceptibility of the Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur by understanding the potential incentives and pressures for management to manipulate the financial statements, and performed procedures to understand the areas in which this would most likely arise. Based on our risk assessment procedures, we identified inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and management override of controls to be our fraud risks.

To address our fraud risk around the manipulation of reported financial performance through improper recognition of revenue, we obtained the Council's manual year end income accruals, challenging assumptions and corroborating the income to appropriate evidence.

To address our fraud risk of inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure we tested the Council's capitalised expenditure to ensure the capitalisation criteria were properly met and the expenditure was genuine.

To address our fraud risk of management override of controls, we tested specific journal entries identified by applying risk criteria to the entire population of journals. For each journal selected, we tested specific transactions back to source documentation to confirm that the journals were authorised and accounted for appropriately.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

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 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2024, as to whether Mid Sussex District Council had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether Mid Sussex District Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2025.

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 Mid Sussex District Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made 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.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until the NAO, as group auditor, has confirmed that no further assurances will be required from us as component auditors of Mid Sussex District Council.

Until we have completed these procedures, we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Mid Sussex District Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 85 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 Council and the Council's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



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3 February 2026