



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Audit of Financial Statements Report – **GwE Joint Committee**

Audit year: 2018-19

Date issued: September 2019



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The team who delivered the work comprised Ian Howse (Engagement Partner), Clare Skivens (Engagement Manager) and Jonathan Saunders (Team Leader)

Contents

The Auditor General intends to issue an **unqualified audit report** on your financial statements.

Summary report

Introduction	4
Status of the audit	4
Proposed audit report	4
Audit outcomes	5
Recommendations arising from our 2018-19 financial audit work	7
Independence and objectivity	7
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Draft Letter of Representation	8
Appendix 2 – Proposed audit report of the Auditor General to the Audit Committee	11
Appendix 3 – Recommendations arising from our 2018-19 financial audit work	14
Appendix 4 – Recommendations arising from our 2017-18 financial audit work	15

Summary report

Introduction

- 1 The Auditor General is responsible for providing an opinion on whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of GwE Joint Committee at 31 March 2019 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended.
- 2 We do not try to obtain absolute assurance that the financial statements are correctly stated, but adopt the concept of materiality. In planning and conducting the audit, we seek to identify material misstatements in your financial statements, namely, those that might result in a reader of the accounts being misled.
- 3 The quantitative levels at which we judge such misstatements to be material for GwE Joint Committee are £334,000. Whether an item is judged to be material can also be affected by certain qualitative issues such as legal and regulatory requirements and political sensitivity.
- 4 International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 260 requires us to report certain matters arising from the audit of the financial statements to those charged with governance of a body in sufficient time to enable appropriate action.
- 5 This report sets out for consideration the matters arising from the audit of the financial statements of GwE Joint Committee, for 2018-19, that require reporting under ISA 260.

Status of the audit

- 6 We received the draft financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 on 30 May 2019, and have now substantially completed the audit work, however, at the date of our circulation of this report the following were outstanding:
 - Clearance of audit review notes;
 - Final review of second version of the accounts;
 - Clearance from quality reviewer; and
 - Receipt of letter of representation.
- 7 We are reporting to you the more significant issues arising from the audit, which we believe you must consider prior to approval of the financial statements. The audit team has already discussed these issues with management.

Proposed audit report

- 8 It is the Auditor General's intention to issue an unqualified audit report on the financial statements once you have provided us with a Letter of Representation based on that set out in [Appendix 1](#).
- 9 The proposed audit report is set out in [Appendix 2](#).

Audit outcomes

Uncorrected misstatements

10 There are no uncorrected misstatements.

Corrected misstatements

11 There are no corrected misstatements which we consider should be drawn to your attention.

Significant Risks

12 In our Financial Audit Plan, we set out information regarding the significant audit risks that were identified during our planning process. The table below sets out the outcome of our audit procedures in respect of those risks. We have conducted our audit in line with the Financial Audit Plan.

Financial audit risk	Proposed audit response
<p>Grant income and expenditure</p> <p>The committee receives significant grant funding, most of which is distributed to local authorities and schools. There is a risk that the financial statements inappropriately include or exclude this grant funding as the Committee will need to make an assessment of whether it is acting as an agent or principal body.</p>	<p>My audit team understood the Committee's recognition policy for grant income and expenditure which included a review of whether the Committee is acting as principal or agent. We performed tests of detail to confirm whether recognition criteria have been met.</p> <p>No issues were identified.</p>
<p>Management override of controls</p> <p>The risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is viewed as a significant risk [ISA 240.31-33].</p>	<p>My audit team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• tested the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements using enhanced data analytics to analyse the whole journal population for characteristics of interest;• performed design and implementation testing of controls over journal entries to the financial ledger;• reviewed accounting estimates for biases; and• evaluated the rationale for any significant transactions outside the normal course of

Financial audit risk	Proposed audit response
	business including those with related parties. No issues were identified.

Other significant issues arising from the audit

13 In the course of the audit, we consider a number of matters both qualitative and quantitative relating to the accounts and report any significant issues arising to you. There were no issues arising in these areas this year:

- **We have no concerns about the qualitative aspects of your accounting practices and financial reporting.** We found the information provided to be relevant, reliable, comparable, material and easy to understand. We concluded that accounting policies and estimates are appropriate and financial statement disclosures unbiased, fair and clear.
- **We did not encounter any significant difficulties during the audit.**
- **There were no significant matters discussed and corresponded upon with management which we need to report to you.**
- **There are no other matters significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process that we need to report to you.**
- **We did not identify any material weaknesses in your internal controls.**
- **There are not any other matters specifically required by auditing standards to be communicated to those charged with governance.**

Recommendations arising from our 2018-19 financial audit work

- 14 The recommendation arising from our financial audit work is set out in [Appendix 3](#). Management has responded to the recommendation and we will follow up progress on it during next year's audit. Where any actions are outstanding, we will continue to monitor progress and report it to you in next year's report.

Independence and objectivity

- 15 As part of the finalisation process, we are required to provide you with representations concerning our independence.
- 16 We have complied with ethical standards and in our professional judgment, we are independent and our objectivity is not compromised. There are no relationships between the Wales Audit Office and GwE Joint Committee that we consider to bear on our objectivity and independence.

Appendix 1

Draft Letter of Representation

Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

11 September 2019

Representations regarding the 2018-19 financial statements

This letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of GwE Joint Committee for the year ended 31 March 2019 the purpose of expressing an opinion on their truth and fairness and their proper preparation.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made enquiries as we consider sufficient, we can make the following representations to you.

Management representations

Responsibilities

We have fulfilled our responsibilities for:

- The preparation of the financial statements in accordance with legislative requirements and the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting; in particular the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance therewith.
- The design, implementation, maintenance and review of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error.

Information provided

We have provided you with:

- Full access to:
 - all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as books of account and supporting documentation, minutes of meetings and other matters;
 - additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
 - unrestricted access to staff from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

- The results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
- Our knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects GwE Joint Committee and involves:
 - management;
 - employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- Our knowledge of any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, regulators or others.
- Our knowledge of all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.
- The identity of all related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.

Financial statement representations

All transactions, assets and liabilities have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

Significant assumptions used in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.

Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed.

All events occurring subsequent to the reporting date which require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted for or disclosed.

All known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements have been disclosed to the auditor and accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.

The basis for distributing Education Improvement Grant between GwE's constituent local authorities is appropriate.

The financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions. The effects of uncorrected misstatements identified during the audit are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the financial statements taken as a whole.

Representations by those charged with governance

We acknowledge that the representations made by management, above, have been discussed with us.

We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of true and fair financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. The financial statements were approved by GwE Joint Committee on 11 September 2019.

We confirm that we have taken all the steps that we ought to have taken in order to make ourselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that it has been communicated to you. We confirm that, as far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which you are unaware.

Signed by:

Dafydd L Edwards
Head of Finance
Gwynedd Council

Date:

Signed by:

Councillor Phil Wynn
Chairman
GwE Joint Committee

Date:

Appendix 2

Proposed audit report of the Auditor General to the GwE Joint Committee

The independent auditor's report of the Auditor General for Wales to the members of GwE Joint Committee

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

I have audited the financial statements of GwE Joint Committee for the year ended 31 March 2019 under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

GwE Joint Committee's financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018-19 based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs).

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of GwE Joint Committee as at 31 March 2019 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018-19.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISAs (UK)). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I am independent of the Joint Committee in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require me to report to you where:

- the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the responsible financial officer has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about joint committee's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The responsible financial officer is responsible for the other information in the annual report and accounts. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated later in my report, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information 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 me in the course of performing the audit. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my report.

Report on other requirements

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of my audit:

- the information contained in the Narrative Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and the Narrative Report has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018-19;
- The information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and the Annual Governance Statement has been prepared in accordance with guidance.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Joint Committee and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Narrative Report or the Annual Governance Statement:

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters, which I report to you, if, in my opinion:

- proper accounting records have not been kept;
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

Certificate of completion of audit

I certify that I have completed the audit of the accounts of GwE Joint Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Auditor General for Wales' Code of Audit Practice.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the responsible financial officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts set out on page 6, the responsible financial officer is responsible for the preparation of the statement of accounts, which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the responsible financial officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of statements of accounts that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the statement of accounts, the responsible financial officer is responsible for assessing the Joint Committee'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 deemed inappropriate.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My 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 my 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.

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

Anthony Barrett
For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales
13 September 2019

24 Cathedral Road
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CF11 9LJ

Appendix 3

Recommendation arising from our 2018-19 financial audit work

We set out the recommendation arising from our audit with management's response to the recommendation. We will follow up this next year and include any outstanding issues in next year's audit report:

Matter arising 1 – Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant - Education Improvement Grant element	
Findings	<p>GwE are the administering body for the new Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant, an element of which is be distributed by Gwynedd Council (acting as host authority) amongst the other North Wales Councils (GwE's constituent local authorities). The 2018-19 award amount was £35,844k of which £26,638k relating to the Education Improvement Grant is redistributed. £24,636k was redistributed to the other local authorities in North Wales and £2,002k was retained by GwE. The basis of redistribution is agreed annually by the GwE Management Committee adjusting the prior years allocation by any cuts to the grant income from the Welsh Government. The figures are then confirmed as accurate by the finance department of each authority (we have evidenced this via review of email returns to GwE)</p> <p>Formal grant offer letters are not sent out to each authority confirming the EIG amount, however we have evidenced that annual EIG grant compliance returns are certified by each authority.</p> <p>We have agreed the fund transfers to bank statements and remittance advice and we are satisfied that the distribution is scrutinised by the GwE Management Committee, which includes representatives from each local authority, who would identify a material misstatement were there to be one. However, we have not been able to evidence the specific Management Meeting Committee meeting agenda item or meeting minutes explicitly confirming the approval of this allocation.</p>
Recommendation	It is recommended that the GwE Management Board meetings include an agenda item to explicitly agree the annual EIG distribution.
Priority	Low.
Benefit of Implementing Recommendation	To ensure that EIG redistribution is formally approved by the GwE Management Committee confirming the allocation is appropriate and in accordance with the GwE and the EIG priorities.
Accepted in full by management	Yes.
Management response	Agreed.
Implementation date	During 2019-20.

Appendix 4

Recommendations arising from our 2017-18 financial audit work

We set out all the recommendations arising from our 2017-18 audit with management's response to them. We have followed these up during the 2018-19 audit and have recorded the results below.

Matter arising 1 – IT findings	
Findings	As part of our financial audit we engaged IT specialists to assist the audit team with testing the appropriateness of the Council's IT systems which have a direct impact on the production of the financial statements. The IT specialists identified a number of recommendations which have been communicated to management.
Priority	Low.
Recommendation	It is recommended that management work with the IT Manager to ensure these recommendations are implemented in a timely manner.
Accepted in full by management	Yes.
Management response	Agreed and some aspects already actioned.
Implementation date	During 2018-19.
2018-19 findings	During the 2018-19 financial audit our IT specialists identified that one recommendation remains outstanding from previous years and that four new recommendations have been identified.
Status	In progress.
Management response	A number of the recommendations have already been implemented or in the process of being implemented.

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