

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

---

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Audit, Risk and Scrutiny
<b>DATE</b>	28 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Annual Accounts 2024/25 – Action Plan and Key Dates
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/342
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald, Director of Corporate Services
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Jonathan Belford, Chief Officer – Finance
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Lesley Fullerton, Finance Operations Manager
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	4.1

---

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with high level information and key dates in relation to the 2024/25 Annual Accounts including linkages to the plans and timetables of the Council's External Auditors.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee

- 2.1 Note the information in relation to the 2024/25 annual accounts process contained within the report.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Annual Accounts 2024/25 will summarise the Council's transactions for the period, 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and its financial position at the year-end 31 March 2025. They will be prepared in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) based Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code), and in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014. There are no changes to these Codes in 2024/25 that will have any significant impact on the Annual Accounts.

3.2 In order to comply with the regulations of being listed on the London Stock Exchange the Council is implementing the same earlier year end closedown as previous years. This means that the unaudited Annual Accounts will be ready for audit by 30 April 2025 and the signed audited Annual Accounts by 30 June 2025.

3.3 There are a number of key dates within this process, and these are summarised as follows:

<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
31 March 2025	End of the financial year 2024/25
Jan – June 2025	Information from Group Entities (including ALEO's)
23 April 2025	Public Notice for the Public Inspection Period to be issued
07 May 2025	Signing of unaudited Annual Accounts by the Proper Officer
08 May 2025	Sign off by Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee Submission of the Annual Accounts to Auditors
13 May 2025 – 2 June 2025	Public Inspection Period for the unaudited Annual Accounts
26 June 2025	Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee to consider and aim to approve the audited Annual Accounts for signature
26 June 2025	Signing of the audited Annual Accounts by the Proper Officer, Chief Executive and Council Co-Leaders.
30 June 2025	Statutory deadline for the Proper Officer to sign the unaudited Annual Accounts, submit to the Auditor and publish on the website, along with the accounts of all subsidiary bodies
14 July 2025 (tbc)	Deadline for submission of the unaudited Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) to the Scottish Government
30 September 2025	Deadline for submission of the signed audited Annual Accounts to the Auditor
30 September 2025 (tbc)	Deadline for submission of the audited WGA to the Scottish Government
31 October 2025	Statutory deadline for the publication on the website of the signed Annual Accounts & Audit Certificate, related Auditor report and accounts of all subsidiary bodies
31 December 2025	Deadline for submission of the audited Charitable Trust Annual Accounts to OSCR

### 3.3.1 31 March 2025

Transactions relating to goods and services received or provided by the Council by 31 March 2025 should be recorded in the 2024/25 financial year.

To facilitate an efficient year end closure, deadlines have been put in place in relation to ordering goods and services, posting/authorising payments, raising invoices and making accruals for material items. These key dates along with relevant guidance have been communicated throughout the Council by messages on the Council's intranet, and meetings between accounting staff and budget holders.

### 3.3.2 January 2025 – June 2025

The Council is required to consider its interests in all types of entity and prepare Group Accounts which incorporate the material transactions and balances of those entities identified as subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures. A number of the entities included are also referred to as ALEOs (Arms Length External Organisations). Throughout this period there are a number of deadlines for these entities to provide management accounts, draft financial statements with detailed working papers as necessary and audited Annual Accounts.

### 3.3.3 23 April 2025, 13 May 2025 – 2 June 2025

The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 define the notice period, the inspection period, the deadline for submission of an objection to the accounts and the information which must be made available for inspection. The latest date by which the public inspection can start is 1 July and a public notice must be issued by 17 June, giving at least 14 days' notice before the start of the inspection period.

### 3.3.4 7 & 8 May 2025

The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 require the unaudited Annual Accounts to be signed by the Proper Officer (Chief Officer - Finance) prior to submission to the Auditor.

The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee will receive the unaudited Annual Accounts 2024/25, including the Annual Governance Statement and Remuneration Report for consideration prior to submission for audit. The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 requires that a committee whose remit includes audit or governance meet to consider the unaudited accounts as submitted to the auditor no later than 31 August. As the body charged with governance it allows members of the committee the opportunity to take ownership of the accounts, to review them such as to be satisfied with their completeness hence effectively "sign off" the governance statement before they are submitted for audit.

### 3.3.5 13 May 2025

The Regulations also require publication of the unaudited Annual Accounts, as submitted to the Auditor, on the Council's website until the audited accounts can replace them.

### 3.3.6 26 June 2025

The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee will receive the audited Annual Accounts for consideration. The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 require that the committee aim to approve these accounts prior to their signature by the Proper Officer, Chief Executive and Council Leader having regard to any report made on the accounts and any advice given by the Proper Officer or the Auditor.

The committee will also receive the external auditor's "Annual Report to Members and the Controller of Audit on the 2024/25 audit" for debate and consideration. This report provides observations arising from the audit that are significant and relevant to their responsibility to oversee the financial reporting

process and sets out the auditor's responsibilities in relation to the financial audit as well as the auditor's findings and conclusions from all audit activity undertaken during the year. It highlights the significant issues arising from the audit of the financial statements and informs Elected Members of the proposed audit opinion in advance of the accounts being certified.

### 3.3.7 14 July (tbc) & 30 September 2025

The Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) Returns are prepared based on the draft and final annual accounts, and form part of the external audit.

### 3.3.8 31 October 2025

The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 set out the requirements for publication of the audited Annual Accounts by 31 October, including the signed accounts and audit certificate and all auditor reports relating to those signed accounts. In addition, the Council must publish the accounts of its subsidiaries either on its website or through a link to the relevant page on the company's website. All published documents must be available for at least five years.

3.4.1 The Council's external auditors, Audit Scotland, commenced their contract with effect from 2022-23. This is the third year of Audit Scotland's 5-year contract. Audit Scotland have confirmed that they will work to the above deadlines for the 2024/25 audit process.

3.4.2 The dates provided above are based on our achieving an audited set of Accounts by the end of June. This is consistent with the Council's early close deadlines that have been in place for several years. Some of these dates, therefore, may be subject to change.

3.4.4 Audit Scotland have introduced a new approach to best value reporting, which Committee were informed of in March 2023. The intention was to embed best value auditing in the annual audit process, presenting a thematic report each year alongside the annual audit report, as well as a report every 5 years summarising the best value thematic reports over the period. The year 2 report (2023/24 audit) was to be reported at the September 2024 meeting of this committee, which was cancelled. Therefore it is on the agenda of today's committee. The year 3 report (2024/25 audit) is planned for summer 2025.

## 3.5 Local Authority Charities

3.5.1 There is a requirement for full compliance with the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 which means that a full audit is required for all registered charities where the Council is the sole trustee irrespective of the size of the charity. The Accounts Commission has appointed the current auditor of the Council as the auditor of its relevant charities.

3.5.2 There are several statutory provisions in relation to record keeping and preparation of accounts for such charities as well as the duties of charity trustees in relation to accounting records. The Local Authority Accounts

(Scotland) Regulations 2014 also make provision for such bodies in a number of areas.

3.5.3 Taken together this effectively means that separate accounts and audit opinions are required for charities, and this is subject to the same requirements and timetable as detailed above for the Council's accounts.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce both unaudited and audited Annual accounts within certain timescales and to a high standard.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Compliance</b>	No risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Operational</b>	No risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Financial</b>	No risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Reputational</b>	No risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a

#### 7. RISK

<b>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	Annual Accounts is an enabler for the delivery of the outcomes and external audits ensure that the

	Council's stewardship and financial management are robust.
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	There are no direct implications on the economy arising from the recommendations of this report.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	A robust year end process and timetable assists budget holders in their role which in turn should enhance the staff experience.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	There are no direct implications on the environment arising from the recommendations of this report.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	
	There are no direct implications on the economy arising from the recommendations of this report.
<b>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</b>	
	The report sets out the key dates for the Annual Accounts 2024/25, which fulfils the requirements placed upon the Council by The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

## 8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	It is confirmed by Chief Officer - Finance that no Integrated Impact Assessment is required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

## 10. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Lesley Fullerton
<b>Title</b>	Finance Operations Manager
<b>Email Address</b>	lfullerton@aberdeencity.gov.uk
<b>Tel</b>	01224 067157