

North East Scotland Pension Funds
Pensions Committee

5 September 2017

North East Scotland Pension Funds 2016/17 Annual Audit Report

1. International Standard on Auditing (UK and Ireland) 260 (ISA 260) requires auditors to report specific matters arising from the audit of the financial statements to those charged with governance of a body in sufficient time to enable appropriate action. We are drawing to your attention matters for your consideration before the financial statements are approved and certified. We also present for your consideration our draft annual report on the 2016/17 audit which identifies significant findings from the financial statements audit. The section headed "Significant findings from the audit in accordance with ISA260" in the attached annual audit report sets out the issues identified. This report will be issued in final form after the financial statements have been certified
2. Our work on the financial statements is now substantially complete. Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of any outstanding matters and receipt of a revised set of financial statements for final review, we anticipate being able to issue an unqualified auditor's report by 30 September (the proposed report is attached at Appendix A). There are no anticipated modifications to the audit report.
3. In presenting this report to the Pensions Committee we seek confirmation from those charged with governance of any instances of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; any subsequent events that have occurred since the date of the financial statements; or material non-compliance with laws and regulations affecting the entity that should be brought to our attention.
4. We are required to report to those charged with governance all unadjusted misstatements which we have identified during the course of our audit, other than those of a trivial nature and request that these misstatements be corrected. We have no unadjusted misstatements to bring to your attention.
5. As part of the completion of our audit we seek written assurances from the Accountable Officer on aspects of the financial statements and judgements and estimates made. A draft letter of representation under ISA580 is attached at [Appendix B](#). This should be signed and returned by the Proper Officer (Aberdeen City Council's Head of Finance) with the signed financial statements prior to the independent auditor's opinion being certified.

APPENDIX A: Proposed Independent Auditor's Report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Aberdeen City Council as administering authority for North East Scotland Pension Funds and the Accounts Commission

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 120 of the Code of Audit Practice approved by the Accounts Commission, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of North East Scotland Pension Funds for the year ended 31 March 2017 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Fund Accounts, the Net Assets Statements and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) as adopted by the European Union, and as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17 (the 2016/17 Code).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable law and the 2016/17 Code of the financial transactions of the funds during the year ended 31 March 2017 and of the amount and disposition at that date of their assets and liabilities;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, as interpreted and adapted by the 2016/17 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing in the UK and Ireland (ISAs (UK&I)). 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 funds 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 Standards for Auditors, 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.

Responsibilities of the Head of Finance for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Head of Finance is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Head of Finance determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable legal requirements and ISAs (UK&I) as required by the Code of Audit Practice approved by the Accounts Commission. Those standards require me to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standards for Auditors. 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 circumstances of the funds and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Head of Finance; and the overall presentation of the financial statements.

My objectives are to achieve 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&I) 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.

Other information in the annual accounts

The Head of Finance is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the information other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on matters prescribed by the Accounts Commission to the extent explicitly stated later in this report.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements in accordance with ISAs (UK&I), my responsibility is to read all the financial and non-financial information in the annual accounts 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

Opinions on other prescribed matters

I am required by the Accounts Commission to express an opinion on the following matters.

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

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003;
- 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 that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016); and
- the information given in the Governance Compliance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with The Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

Matters on which I am required to report by exception

I am required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in my opinion:

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

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Gillian Woolman
Assistant Director
Audit Scotland
4th Floor
102 West Port
Edinburgh
EH3 9DN

xx September 2017

APPENDIX B: Letter of Representation (ISA 580)

<< print on headed notepaper>>

Gillian Woolman
Assistant Director
Audit Scotland
4th Floor
102 West Port
Edinburgh
EH3 9DN

XX September 2017
(date accounts are signed)

Dear Gillian

North East Scotland Pension Funds Annual Accounts 2016/17

1. This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of North East Scotland Pension Funds for the year ended 31 March 2017 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of North East Scotland Pension Funds, as at 31 March 2017 and of the amount and disposition at that date of their assets and liabilities.
2. I confirm to the best of my knowledge and belief, and having made appropriate enquiries of relevant officers, the following representations given to you in connection with your audit of North East Scotland Pension Funds for the year ended 31 March 2017.

General

3. I acknowledge my responsibility and that of North East Scotland Pension Funds for the financial statements. All the accounting records requested have been made available to you for the purposes of your audit. All material agreements and transactions undertaken by North East Scotland Pension Funds have been properly reflected in the financial statements. All other records and information have been made available to you, including minutes of all management and other meetings.
4. The information given in the Annual Report to the financial statements, including the Management Commentary, presents a balanced picture of North East Scotland Pension Funds and is consistent with the financial statements.
5. I confirm that the effects of uncorrected misstatements are immaterial, individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole. I am not aware of any uncorrected misstatements other than those identified in the auditor's report to those charged with governance (ISA260).

Financial Reporting Framework

6. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17, and in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

7. Disclosure has been made in the financial statements of all matters necessary for them to show a true and fair view of the transactions and state of affairs of North East Scotland Pension Funds for the year ended 31 March 2017.

Accounting Policies & Estimates

8. All material accounting policies adopted are as shown in the Statement of Accounting Policies included in the financial statements. The continuing appropriateness of these policies has been reviewed since the introduction of IAS 8 and on a regular basis thereafter, and takes account of the requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17.
9. The significant assumptions used in making accounting estimates are reasonable and properly reflected in the financial statements. There are no changes in estimation techniques which should be disclosed due to their having a material impact on the accounting disclosures.

Contributions – Pension Strain

10. All contributions due to the funds have been properly identified and accounted for. In particular the 'strain on the fund' costs have been properly recharged to relevant services and bodies.

Going Concern

11. I have assessed North East Scotland Pension Funds' ability to carry on as a going concern and have concluded that it is appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the financial statements.

Related Party Transactions

12. All transactions with related parties have been disclosed in the financial statements. I have made available to you all the relevant information concerning such transactions, and I am not aware of any other matters that require disclosure in order to comply with the requirements of IAS24, as interpreted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17.

Events Subsequent to the date of the Net Assets Statements

13. There have been no material events since the date of the Net Assets Statements which necessitate revision of the figures in the financial statements or notes thereto including contingent assets and liabilities.
14. Since the date of the Net Assets Statements no events or transactions have occurred which, though properly excluded from the financial statements, are of such importance that they should be brought to your notice.

Corporate Governance

15. I acknowledge as the officer with responsibility for the proper administration of the funds' financial affairs under section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, my responsibility for the corporate governance arrangements. I confirm that I have disclosed to the auditor all deficiencies in internal control of which I am aware.

16. The corporate governance arrangements have been reviewed and the disclosures I have made are in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17. There have been no changes in the corporate governance arrangements or issues identified, since the 31 March 2017, which require disclosure.

Fraud

17. I have considered the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud. I have disclosed to the auditor any allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the financial statements. There have been no irregularities involving management or employees who have a significant role in internal control or that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Assets

Investments

18. For the year ended 31 March 2017, the amounts included in the net assets statements reflect investments managed/held both internally and externally by appointed fund managers and the global custodian on behalf of the funds. Amounts have been calculated in accordance with approved bases of valuation and fairly represent the values at 31 March 2017. In making these assertions I am reliant on the opinions of the appointed fund managers. As far as we can reasonably ascertain, all assets are free from any lien, encumbrance or charge except as disclosed in the financial statements

Banking and Cash Flow Arrangements

19. The pension funds maintain separate bank accounts and while these accounts form part of Aberdeen City Council's treasury management arrangements, the pension funds can demonstrate that there is no borrowing from the administering authority. Amounts due to the administering authority to cover daily cash flows such as payments through the council's systems are reimbursed on a regular basis.

Other Current Assets

20. Orphaned liabilities are calculated by the scheme actuary and become due when an employer who is not backed by a guarantee leaves the fund. At 31 March 2017, all significant amounts have been identified and accrued.
21. On realisation in the ordinary course of the funds' business, the other current assets in the Net Assets Statements are expected, in my opinion, to produce at least the amounts at which they are stated. In particular adequate provision has, in my opinion, been made against all amounts owing which are known or may be expected to be irrecoverable.

Liabilities

22. All liabilities have been provided for in the books of account, including the liabilities for all purchases to which title has passed prior to 31 March 2017.

Contingent Liabilities

23. All significant liabilities arising either under formal agreements or through informal undertakings, have been provided for or noted in the accounts.

Actuarial Assumptions

24. The pension assumptions made by the actuary in the IAS19 report as at 31 March 2017 and the 2014 triennial valuations have been reviewed and I confirm that they are consistent with management's own view.

Liabilities

25. All liabilities have been provided for in the financial records, including the liabilities for all purchases to which title has passed prior to 31 March 2017.

Carrying Value of Assets and Liabilities

26. The assets and liabilities have been recognised, measured, presented and disclosed in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17. There are no plans or intentions that are likely to affect the carrying value of classification of the assets and liabilities within the financial statements.

Provisions

27. Provisions have been made in the financial statements for all material liabilities which have resulted or may be expected to result, by legal action or otherwise, from events which had occurred by 31 March 2017 and of which North East Scotland Pension Funds could reasonably be expected to be aware. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure likely to be required to settle the present obligation at 31 March 2017.

Commitments

28. There are no significant commitments or obligations including financial guarantees and offers of financial support which might adversely affect the funds.

Other Matters

29. Except as disclosed in the financial statements, the results for the period were not materially affected by:
- (i) transactions of a sort not usually undertaken by North East Scotland Pension Funds;
 - (ii) circumstances of an exceptional or non-recurrent nature;
 - (iii) charges or credits relating to prior periods; and
 - (iv) any change in the basis of accounting.

Yours sincerely

Steven Whyte

Head of Finance, Aberdeen City Council