

The Audit Findings for Merseyside Pension Fund

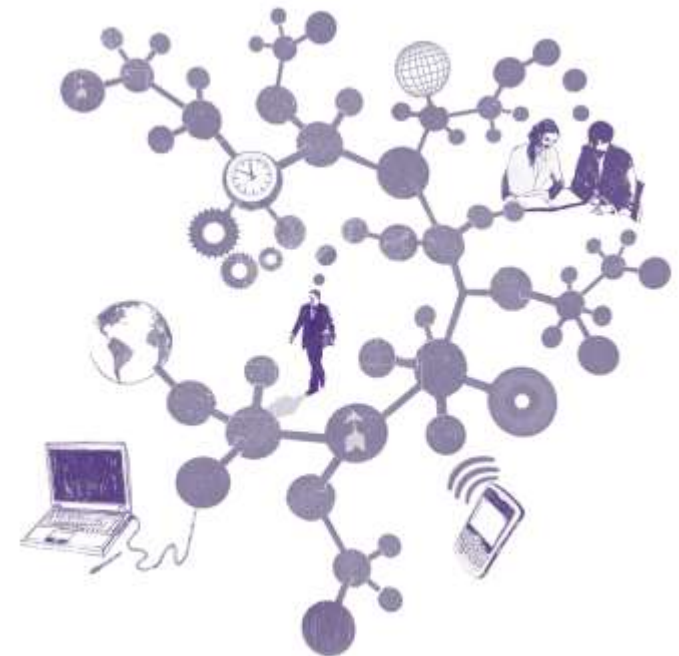
Year ended 31 March 2016

5 September 2016

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Wirral Council
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5 September 2016

Dear Members

Audit Findings for Merseyside Pension Fund for the year ending 31 March 2016

This Audit Findings report highlights the significant findings arising from the audit for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Merseyside Pension Fund, the Audit and Risk Management Committee), as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice. Its contents have been discussed with management of the Pension Fund and the Pensions Committee.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed primarily for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements. Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose defalcations or other irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the kind assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Blatcher
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Section 1: Executive summary

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

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04. Communication of audit matters

Purpose of this report

This report highlights the key issues affecting the results of Merseyside Pension Fund ('the Fund') and the preparation of the fund's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016. It is also used to report our audit findings to management and those charged with governance in accordance with the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, and the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act').

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion, the Fund's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the fund and its income and expenditure for the year and whether they have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

We are also required to consider other information published together with the audited financial statements, whether it is consistent with the financial statements and in line with required guidance. This includes the Pension Fund Annual Report.

Introduction

In the conduct of our audit we have not had to alter or change our audit approach, which we communicated to you in our Audit Plan dated March 2016.

Our audit is substantially complete although we are finalising our procedures in the following areas:

- review of the final version of the financial statements and annual report;
- obtaining and reviewing the management letter of representation; and
- updating our post balance sheet events review, to the date of signing the opinion.

We received draft financial statements and accompanying working papers at the commencement of our work. Additional working papers were provided where requested during the course of the audit.

We anticipate providing an unqualified audit opinion in respect of the financial statements (see Appendix B). We have also included our anticipated opinion on the Annual Report at Appendix C.

Key audit and financial reporting issues

Financial statements opinion

We have not identified any adjustments affecting the Fund's reported financial position. The audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 show net assets available for benefits during the year of £6,849,756k. We have agreed a small number of amendments to improve the overall presentation of the financial statements and to ensure consistency within the Pension Fund Annual Report.

The key messages arising from our audit of the Fund's financial statements are:

- the draft accounts were prepared to a good standard and were available for audit in accordance with agreed timescales and the national deadlines
- working papers were made available at the commencement of the audit and officers responded to requests for additional information during the audit on a timely basis.

We anticipate providing an unqualified opinion in respect of the Fund's financial statements.

Further details are set out in section two of this report.

Controls

Roles and responsibilities

The Fund's management is responsible for the identification, assessment, management and monitoring of risk, and for developing, operating and monitoring the system of internal control.

Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we report these to the Fund.

Findings

Our work has not identified any control weaknesses which we wish to highlight for your attention.

The way forward

Matters arising from the financial statements audit have been discussed with the Director of Pensions and Group Accountant.

As the national deadlines for the preparation and audit of Local Government Accounts are coming forward, the fund should look to agree earlier reporting deadlines for 2016/17, including changes to the committee timetables which will be required to support this.

The fund made significant progress in preparing accounts to an earlier timetable in 2016, in anticipation of earlier audit and reporting deadlines in future years. We will continue to work with the fund to agree earlier audit and reporting timescales for 2017.

We have made one recommendation, which is set out in the action plan at Appendix A. The recommendation has been discussed and agreed with the Group Accountant and the finance team.

Acknowledgement

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Grant Thornton UK LLP
September 2016

Section 2: Audit findings

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Fees, non audit services and independence

04. Communication of audit matters

This section summarises the findings of the audit, we report on the final level of materiality used and the work undertaken against the risks we identified in our initial audit plan. We also conclude on the accounting policies, estimates and judgements used and highlight any weaknesses found as part of the audit in internal controls. As required by auditing standards we detail both adjusted and unadjusted misstatements to the accounts and their impact on the financial statements.

Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit. The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As we reported in our audit plan, we determined overall materiality to be £66,000k (being 1% of net assets). We have considered whether this level remained appropriate during the course of the audit and have made no changes to our overall materiality.

We also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulated effect of such amounts would have a material impact on the financial statements. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £3,300k. This remains the same as reported in our audit plan.

As we reported in our audit plan, we identified the following items where we decided that separate materiality levels were appropriate. These remain the same as reported in our audit plan.

Balance/transaction/disclosure	Explanation
Management Remuneration	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.
Audit Fees	This is a statutory requirement and a requirement of ethical and auditing standards.
Related party transactions	Due to public interest in these disclosures.

Audit findings against significant risks

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty" (ISA (UK&I) 315).

In this section we detail our response to the significant risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. As we noted in our plan, there are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards.

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
1.	<p>The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue. This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Merseyside Pension Fund, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Wirral Council as the administering authority, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any material issues in respect of revenue recognition.</p>
2.	<p>Management over-ride of controls Under ISA (UK&I) 240 it is presumed that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p>Summary of work performed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review of entity controls • testing of journal entries • review of accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any evidence of management over-ride of controls. In particular the findings of our review of journal controls and testing of journal entries has not identified any significant issues.</p> <p>We set out later in this section of the report our work and findings on key accounting estimates and judgements.</p>

Audit findings against significant risks continued

We have also identified the following significant risks of material misstatement from our understanding of the entity. We set out below the work we have completed to address these risks.

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
3.	<p>Level 3 Investments – Valuation is incorrect</p> <p>Under ISA 315 significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgemental matters. Level 3 Investments by their very nature require a significant degree of judgement to reach an appropriate valuation at year end.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We gained an understanding of the transaction processes including a review of supporting documentation. • We carried out walkthrough tests of the controls identified in the processes. • We tested a sample of investments by obtaining and reviewing the audited accounts at latest date for individual investments and agreeing these to the fund manager reports at that date. We then reconciled those values to the values at 31st March with reference to known movements in the intervening period. • We reviewed the nature and basis of estimated values and considered what assurance management has over the year end valuations provided for these types of investments. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any material issues in respect of the valuation of Level 3 Investments.</p> <p>Our testing identified one Level 3 Investment (value £6.6m in the Net Assets Statement) where the audit opinion on the financial statements included a qualification of the audit opinion due to two matters and an emphasis of matter paragraph. The nature of the issues resulting in the qualification do not directly impact on the valuation of this investment.</p> <p>Management have considered the nature of the qualification and emphasis of matter in terms of their risk assessment for this investment, and concluded that the matters raised do not have a significant impact on this investment.</p>

Audit findings against other risks

In this section we detail our response to the other risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. Recommendations, together with management responses are attached at appendix A.

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Investment Income	Investment activity not valid. (Occurrence) Investment income not accurate. (Accuracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have performed a walkthrough to gain assurance that the in-year controls were operating in accordance with our documented understanding. • We have reviewed the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and sought explanations for variances. • Tested a sample of investment income to ensure it is appropriate • Completed a predictive analytical review for different types of investments • For direct property investments rationalised income against a list of properties for expected rental income. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.
Investment purchases and sales	Investment activity not valid. (Occurrence) Investment valuation not correct. (Valuation gross or net)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have performed a walkthrough to gain assurance that the in-year controls were operating in accordance with our documented understanding. • We have reviewed the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and sought explanations for variances. • Tested a sample of purchases and sales to ensure they are appropriate. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified. Our testing did identify one new investment (value £25m) which had not been recorded on the Openair Internal Investment Ledger.

Audit findings against other risks (continued)

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Contributions	Recorded contributions not correct (Occurrence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have performed a walkthrough to gain assurance that the in-year controls were operating in accordance with our documented understanding. • We have tested controls over occurrence, completeness and accuracy of contributions. • Rationalised contributions received with reference to changes in member body payrolls and numbers of contributing pensioners and ensured that any unexpected trends were satisfactorily explained. • Tested a sample of year end aggregate contributions income balances at employer level to year end employer certificates. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified

Audit findings against other risks (continued)

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Benefits payable	Benefits improperly computed/claims liability understated (Completeness, accuracy and occurrence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have performed a walkthrough to gain assurance that the in-year controls were operating in accordance with our documented understanding. • Controls testing over, completeness, accuracy and occurrence of benefit payments. • Tested a sample of individual lump sums and pensions in payment by reference to member files. • Rationalised pensions paid with reference to changes in pensioner numbers and increases applied in the year and ensured that any unusual trends were satisfactorily explained. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.
Member Data	Member data not correct. (Rights and Obligations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have performed a walkthrough to gain assurance that the in-year controls were operating in accordance with our documented understanding. • Controls testing over annual/monthly reconciliations and verifications with individual members. • Sample tested changes to member data made during the year to source documentation. 	Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.

Accounting policies, estimates and judgements

In this section we report on our consideration of accounting policies, in particular revenue recognition policies, and key estimates and judgements made and included with the Fund's financial statements.

Accounting area	Summary of policy	Comments	Assessment
Revenue recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal contributions are accounted for on an accruals basis, and employer deficit funding is accounted for on the due date set by the scheme actuary or on receipt if earlier than the due date. Income from equities is accounted for when the related investment is quoted ex dividend. Income from pooled investment vehicles and on short term deposits is accounted for on an accruals basis. Distributions from private equity are treated as a return of capital until the book value is nil and then treated as income on an accruals basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The revenue recognition policies are appropriate to the accounting framework and are adequately disclosed in the accounting policies. 	<p style="text-align: center;">● (Green)</p>
Judgements and estimates	<p>Key estimates and judgements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valuation of unquoted investments within private equity, infrastructure property and other alternative investments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have undertaken testing on a sample of unquoted investments to assess the appropriateness of the valuation. The key estimates and judgements relating to the valuation of unquoted investments are appropriate to the accounting framework and are disclosed within the accounting policies. The potential financial statement impact of different assumptions is adequately disclosed in Note 15 to the accounts. 	<p style="text-align: center;">● (Green)</p>
Going concern	<p>Officers have a reasonable expectation that the services provided by the Fund will continue for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.</p>	<p>We are satisfied with management's assessment that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2015/16 financial statements.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">● (Green)</p>
Other accounting policies	<p>We have reviewed the Fund's policies against the requirements of the CIPFA Code and accounting standards.</p>	<p>Our review of accounting policies has not highlighted any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. The Fund's accounting policies are appropriate and consistent with previous years.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">● (Green)</p>

Assessment

● Marginal accounting policy which could potentially attract attention from regulators (Red)

● Accounting policy appropriate but scope for improved disclosure (Amber)

● Accounting policy appropriate and disclosures sufficient (Green)

Other communication requirements

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by auditing standards and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

	Issue	Commentary
1.	Matters in relation to fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with the Audit and Risk Management Committee and Pensions Committee. We have not been made aware of any incidents in the period and no other issues have been identified during the course of our audit procedures.
2.	Matters in relation to related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the work we carried out, we have not identified any related party transactions which have not been disclosed.
3.	Matters in relation to laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have not made us aware of any significant incidences of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations and we have not identified any incidences from our audit work.
4.	Written representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have requested a letter of representation from the Fund. We have requested management representation to confirm ownership of The Fort.
5.	Confirmation requests from third parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We requested direct confirmations from the custodian and all main mandate fund managers, plus a sample of managers for alternative investments, for investment balances, income and purchases and sales. We have received confirmations from most managers and management are assisting us to chase those confirmations that remain outstanding.
6.	Disclosures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our review found no material omissions in the financial statements.
7.	Matters on which we report by exception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are required to report by exception where the Pension Fund Annual Report is inconsistent with the financial statements. We have not identified any issues we wish to report.

Internal controls

The purpose of an audit is to express an opinion on the financial statements.

Our audit included consideration of internal controls relevant to the preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control. We considered and walked through the internal controls for Investment Income, Contributions, Benefits Payable, and Member Data as set out on pages 9 – 13 above.

The controls were found to be operating effectively and we have no matters to report to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Misclassifications and disclosure changes

The table below provides details of misclassification and disclosure changes identified during the audit which have been made in the final set of financial statements.

Adjustment type	Value £'000	Account balance	Impact on the financial statements
1 Disclosure	Various	Notes to the accounts	We have agreed a number of small amendments to the notes to the accounts to correct minor errors and improve the overall disclosure within the financial statements. In particular, we requested that management improve the clarity of the narrative explanation for the reanalysis of investment management expenses in note 11b.
2 Misclassification	24,757	Note 13a	A new investment had been incorrectly classified in note 13a. The description for £24,757k new investment has been amended from 'Overseas Managed Funds - Corporate Bonds' to 'Overseas Managed Funds – Equities' to provide a more accurate description of the holding.

Section 3: Fees, non-audit services and independence

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We confirm below our final fees charged for the audit and confirm there were no fees for the provision of non audit services.

Fees

	Proposed fee per Audit Plan £	Actual fees £
Pension fund scale fee	36,882	36,882
Agreed fee variation – IAS 19	2,180	2,180
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	39,062	39,062

The proposed fee variation for IAS 19 above takes account of the work we are required to undertake for admitted bodies with the PSAA regime and is consistent with that requested in prior years.

The proposed fees for the year were in line with the scale fee set by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA)

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
Audit related services:	Nil
• None	
Non-audit services	Nil

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Section 4: Communication of audit matters

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Communication to those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing ISA (UK&I) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

The Audit Plan outlined our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while this Audit Findings report presents the key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

Respective responsibilities

The Audit Findings Report has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

We have been appointed as the Fund's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Fund's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Fund to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Fund is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to auditor's report		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓

Appendices

Appendix A: Action plan

Priority

High - Significant effect on control system

Medium - Effect on control system

Low - Best practice

Rec No.	Recommendation	Priority	Management response	Implementation date & responsibility
1	The fund should ensure that it has processes in place to review the audited financial statements and auditor reports on level three investments, and to consider the implications of any qualifications or emphasis of matter paragraphs on the fund's investment.	High	Fund Officers continue to work with our pooling partners and are agreeing enhanced monitoring procedures which include the review of the financial statements and audit reports.	Investment Managers March 2017

Appendix B: Audit opinion

We anticipate we will provide the Fund with an unmodified audit report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF WIRRAL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

We have audited the pension fund financial statements of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2016 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The pension fund financial statements comprise the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes. 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 2015/16.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer) and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer)'s Responsibilities, the Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer) is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts, which includes the pension fund 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 2015/16, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the pension fund financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the pension fund financial statements

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 pension fund's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer); and the overall presentation of the pension fund financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Authority's Statement of Accounts to identify material inconsistencies with the audited pension fund financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Opinion on the pension fund financial statements

In our opinion the pension fund financial statements:

- present a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the pension fund during the year ended 31 March 2016 and of the amount and disposition at that date of the fund's assets and liabilities, other than liabilities to pay pensions and benefits after the end of the fund year; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16 and applicable law.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited pension fund financial statements in the Authority's Statement of Accounts is consistent with the audited pension fund financial statements.

Fiona Blatcher
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

4 Hardman Square
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Manchester
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X September 2016

Appendix C: Proposed audit opinion on the annual report

We anticipate we will provide the Fund with an unmodified audit report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council on the consistency of the pension fund financial statements included in the Merseyside Pension Fund annual report

The accompanying Merseyside Pension Fund financial statements of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2016 which comprise the fund account, the net assets statement and the related notes are derived from the audited pension fund financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 included in the Authority's Statement of Accounts. We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the pension fund financial statements in the Statement of Accounts in our report dated X September 2016. The pension fund annual report, and the pension fund financial statements, do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the Statement of Accounts. Reading the pension fund financial statements is not a substitute for reading the audited Statement of Accounts of the Authority.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 paragraph 20(5) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members of the Authority those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer)'s responsibilities for the pension fund financial statements in the pension fund annual report

Under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the preparation of the pension fund financial statements, which must include the fund account, the net asset statement and supporting notes and disclosures prepared in accordance with proper practices. Proper practices for the pension fund financial statements in both the Authority Statement of Accounts and the pension fund annual report are set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16.

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to state to you whether the pension fund financial statements in the pension fund annual report are consistent with the pension fund financial statements in the Authority's Statement of Accounts in accordance with International Standard on Auditing 810, Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.

In addition we read the other information contained in the Merseyside Pension Fund annual report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the Merseyside Pension Fund financial statements. The other information consists of Management Structure; Chair's Introduction; Management Report; Pension Board Report; Membership Statistics; Scheme Administration Report; Investment Report; and Financial Performance.

Opinion

In our opinion, the Merseyside Pension Fund financial statements in the pension fund annual report derived from the audited pension fund financial statements in the Authority Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016 are consistent, in all material respects, with those financial statements in accordance with proper practices as defined in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16 and applicable law.

Fiona Blatcher
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

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X September 2016



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