

# The Audit Findings for Merseyside Pension Fund

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Year ended 31 March 2019

September 2019



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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 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 control weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all defalcations or other irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might identify. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. 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.

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# Headlines

This table summarises the key findings and other matters arising from the statutory audit of Merseyside Pension Fund ('the Pension Fund') and the preparation of the Pension Fund's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 for those charged with governance.

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<b>Financial Statements</b>	<p>Under International Standards of Audit (UK) (ISAs) and the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion, the Pension Fund's financial statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Pension Fund and its income and expenditure for the year; and</li><li>• have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and prepared in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.</li></ul>	<p>Our audit work was undertaken on site during June and July. We reported our draft Audit Findings Report to the Pensions Committee, as a sub-group to those charged with governance, on 14 July 2019. This report updates that report to the current position. Our findings are summarised on pages 4 to 10. Subject to the completion of audit work we have not identified any adjustments to the financial statements that have resulted in an adjustment to the Pension Fund's reported financial position. Audit adjustments identified are detailed in Appendix A.</p> <p>As at this time our work is substantially complete and there are no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion or material changes to the financial statements, subject to the following outstanding matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Obtaining and reviewing the signed management representation letter; and,</li><li>- updating our post balance sheet events review, to the date of signing the opinion.</li></ul> <p>Our anticipated audit report opinion will be unqualified.</p>
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## Acknowledgements

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.

# Summary

## Overview of the scope of our audit

This Audit Findings Report presents the observations arising from the audit that are significant to the responsibility of those charged with governance to oversee the financial reporting process, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK) 260 and the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'). Its contents have been discussed with management

As auditor we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and the Code, 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.

## Audit approach

Our audit approach was based on a thorough understanding of the Pension Fund's business and is risk based, and in particular included:

- An evaluation of the Pension Fund's internal controls environment, including its IT systems and controls;
- Controls testing of the Pension Fund's benefits payable system; and
- Substantive testing on significant transactions and material account balances, including the procedures outlined in this report in relation to the key audit risks

We have not had to alter or change our audit plan, as communicated to the Pension Committee in March 2019 but as part of our work on disclosures we have discussed the potential impact upon the Fund of the McCloud judgement.

## Conclusion

We have substantially completed our audit of your financial statements and subject to the completion of audit work we have not identified any adjustments to the financial statements that have resulted in an adjustment to the Pension Fund's reported financial position. We anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion following the Wirral Council Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting on 23 September 2019.

## Our approach to materiality

The concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law.

Materiality calculations remain the same as reported in our audit plan. We detail in the table below our determination of materiality for Merseyside Pension Fund.

	Pension Fund Amount (£)	Qualitative factors considered
Materiality for the financial statements	£85.00m	Considered to be the level above which users of the accounts would wish to be aware of misstatements, in the context of overall expenditure – calculated as 1.0% of prior year (2017-18) net assets.
Performance materiality	£63.75m	Assessed to be 75% of financial statement materiality.
Trivial matters	£4.25m	ISA 260 (UK) defines 'clearly trivial' as matters that are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any quantitative or qualitative criteria.

# Significant findings – audit risks

Risks identified in our Audit Plan	Commentary
<p><b>1 Improper revenue recognition</b> Under ISA 240 (UK) there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>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><b>Auditor commentary</b></p> <p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at the 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"> <li>• there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition</li> <li>• opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul> <p>Therefore we do not consider this to be a significant risk for Merseyside Pension Fund.</p> <p>Our audit work has not identified any matters that would indicate the rebuttal was incorrect.</p>
<p><b>2 Management override of controls</b> Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p> <p>We identified management override of controls as a risk requiring special audit consideration.</p>	<p><b>Auditor commentary</b></p> <p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– review of accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management</li> <li>– testing of journal entries</li> <li>– review of unusual significant transactions.</li> </ul> <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><b>3 The valuation of Level 3 investments is incorrect</b> 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> <p>We identified the valuation of level 3 investments as a risk requiring special audit consideration.</p>	<p><b>Auditor commentary</b></p> <p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gained an understanding of the Fund’s process for valuing level 3 investments and evaluate the design of the associated controls</li> <li>• reviewed the nature and basis of estimated values and consider what assurance management has over the year end valuations provided for these types of investments.</li> <li>• consideration of the competence, expertise and objectivity of any management experts used.</li> <li>• for a sample of investments, tested the valuation by obtaining and reviewing the audited accounts, (where available) at the latest date for individual investments and agreeing these to the fund manager reports at that date. Reconcile those values to the values at 31 March 2019 with reference to known movements in the intervening period.</li> </ul> <p>Our work has not identified any significant issues in respect of this risk.</p>

# Significant findings – key judgements and estimates

	Summary of management's policy	Audit Comments	Assessment
<b>Level 3 investments</b>	The Pension Fund has investments in direct property, unquoted investments and pooled investments that in total are valued on the balance sheet as at 31 March 2019 at £2.451bn. These investments are not traded on an open exchange/market and the valuation of the investment is highly subjective due to a lack of observable inputs. In order to determine the value, management engage the services of a property valuer for direct property and rely on the valuations provided by the general partners to the private equity funds which the Fund invests in. The value of the investments has increased by £260m in 2018/19, largely due to acquisitions and improvements in market conditions.	Management determine the value of Level 3 Investments through placing reliance on the expertise property valuer and the investment managers. As such we have sought confirmations of year end valuations from all main mandate managers and send a letter to the valuer to understand his skills, competence and independence from the Fund in valuing the property. We have also tested a sample of level 3 investments to audited accounts to determine if the values estimated are reasonable. We have found no issues with this testing and are satisfied that the estimate is appropriately disclosed in the accounts.	
<b>Level 2 investment</b>	The Pension Fund have investments in unquoted bonds and pooled investments that in total are valued on the balance sheet as at 31 March 2019 at £2.435bn. The investments are not traded on an open exchange/market and the valuation of the investment is subjective. In order to determine the value, management rely on the information which they are given from the various fund managers. The value of the investment has increased by £24m in 2018/19.	Management determine the value of Level 2 Investments through placing reliance on the expertise of the various fund managers. As such we have sought confirmations of year end valuations from all main mandate managers and also tested a sample of unit values used to value level 2 investments to externally quoted information sources, or where not quoted, to unit values provided by the investment manager's own independent custodian. We have found no issues with this testing and are satisfied that the estimate is appropriately disclosed in the accounts.	

## Assessment

-  We disagree with the estimation process or judgements that underpin the estimate and consider the estimate to be potentially materially misstated
-  We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider optimistic
-  We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider cautious
-  We consider management's process and key assumptions to be reasonable

# Significant findings - other issues

Issue	Commentary	Auditor view
<p><b>Potential impact of the McCloud judgement</b></p> <p>The Court of Appeal has ruled that there was age discrimination in the judges and firefighters pension schemes where transitional protections were given to scheme members.</p> <p>The Government applied to the Supreme Court for permission to appeal this ruling, but this permission to appeal was unsuccessful. The case will now be remitted back to employment tribunal for remedy.</p> <p>The legal ruling around age discrimination (McCloud - Court of Appeal) has implications not just for pension funds, but also for other public sector pension schemes where they have implemented transitional arrangements on changing benefits i.e. the 2012 underpin for the LGPS.</p>	<p>Discussion is ongoing in the sector regarding the potential impact of the ruling on the financial statements of Local Government bodies.</p> <p>The Fund has requested a updated statement from the actuary which accounts for the impact of the McCloud ruling and this will be included in the updated final set of accounts.</p> <p>The updated actuary statement includes an amount of £78m for the estimated impact on increased liabilities due to the McCloud ruling.</p>	<p>Since the fund adopts Option C in relation to disclosing the actuarial present value of retirement benefits, this issue forms part of our assessment of the 'Other Information' issued alongside the accounts, as opposed to being covered by our audit opinion on the accounts.</p> <p>The potential impact of the McCloud judgment has been reflected within the wording of the updated actuary's statement and is such that a reader of the accounts will understand the position and not be mislead.</p> <p>The 2019 Triennial Valuation of the actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits is expected to include the impact of the McCloud judgment. This should be available following the conclusion of the 2019 actuarial funding valuation and be available for the 2019/20 financial statements.</p>

# Other matters discussed with management - Going concern

## Our responsibility

As auditors, we are required to “obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence about the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern assumption in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and to conclude whether there is a material uncertainty about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern” (ISA (UK) 570).

## Going concern commentary

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### Management's assessment process

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.

### Auditor commentary

- We are satisfied that management's assessment that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2018/19 financial statements.

### Work performed

We have assessed the judgment made by management as well as the forecasted financial information which they have provided us which supports the assessment that the Fund will continue as a going concern for at least 12 months from the date of our audit opinion.

### Auditor commentary

- The Net Assets of the Fund at 31/3/19 were £8.6bn. This is approximately 25-30 times the annual benefit payments due.
- The Fund has £4.4bn of Level 1 assets. These assets are liquid and can be accessed quickly for cashflow purposes if required.
- The Local Government Pension Scheme is a statutory scheme and there are no events or conditions that would indicate the winding up of the scheme.
- No issues have been identified from the work performed

## Concluding comments

### Auditor commentary

We are satisfied that management's assessment that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2018/19 financial statements and that we have nothing to report on in relation to going concern.

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# 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 <b>Matters in relation to fraud</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with the Pensions Committee. We have not been made aware of any other incidents in the period and no other issues have been identified during the course of our audit procedures.</li> </ul>
② <b>Matters in relation to related parties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are not aware of any related parties or related party transactions which have not been disclosed.</li> </ul>
③ <b>Matters in relation to laws and regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
④ <b>Written representations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A letter of representation has been requested from the Pension Fund which is included in the Pensions Committee papers. We are in discussions with management over requesting specific representations over the M&amp;G valuation due to the likelihood that we will not receive the ISAE 3402 controls report before we sign the opinion on the accounts.</li> </ul>
⑤ <b>Confirmation requests from third parties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We requested direct confirmations from the custodian and all main mandate fund managers, plus a sample of managers for alternative investments for investment balances. For one of the Fund's Investment Managers, State Street, it is noted that the gap assurance letter only covers the period to 31/12/18 and not up to the MPF year end of 31/3/19. This is consistent with State Street's policy of not providing gap assurance letters beyond 3 months. However, through our assurance procedures we are satisfied that we have appropriate assurance over the valuation of the investments in the accounts as at 31 March 2019.</li> </ul>
⑥ <b>Disclosures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our review found no material omissions in the financial statements.</li> </ul>
⑦ <b>Audit evidence and explanations/significant difficulties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All information and explanations requested from management was provided.</li> </ul>
⑧ <b>Matters on which we report by exception</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are required to give a separate opinion for the Pension Fund Annual Report on whether the financial statements included therein are consistent with the audited financial statements. We propose to issue our 'consistency' opinion on the Pension Funds Annual Report along with our opinion on the accounts.</li> </ul>

# 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 Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and confirm that we, as a firm, and each covered person, 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 Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and we as a firm, and each covered person, confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Further, we have complied with the requirements of the National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note 01 issued in December 2017 which sets out supplementary guidance on ethical requirements for auditors of local public bodies.

Details of fees charged are detailed are below.

<b>Audit Fees</b>	<b>Proposed fee</b>	<b>Final fee</b>
<b>Pension Fund Audit</b>	£28,399	£30,399
<b>Total audit fees (excluding VAT)</b>	<b>£28,399</b>	<b>£30,399*</b>

\*The additional fee charged relates to extra procedures undertaken to gain assurance over the impact on the accounts in relation to the McCloud Judgment

## Audit and Non-audit related services

For the purposes of our audit we have made enquiries of all Grant Thornton UK LLP teams providing services to the Pension Fund. The following non-audit services were identified:

	<b>Fees £</b>	<b>Threats identified</b>	<b>Safeguards</b>
<b>Audit related</b>			
IAS19 procedures for other bodies admitted to the pension fund	£7,500 (£750 per letter – 10 letters produced to date)	Self-Interest (because this is a recurring fee)	<p>The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the fee for this work is relatively small in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £28,399 and in particular relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP's turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors all mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level.</p> <p>The Fund has accrued for a fee of £2,180 for IAS 19 work. The amount to be recharged is to be confirmed but we are satisfied that the amount disclosed in the accounts would only differ from that which would be recharged by an insignificant amount .</p>
<b>Non-audit related</b>			
None			

These services are consistent with the Fund's policy on the allotment of non-audit work to your auditors. None of the services provided are subject to contingent fees

# Audit Adjustments

We are required to report all non trivial misstatements to those charged with governance, whether or not the accounts have been adjusted by management.

## Impact of adjusted misstatements

All adjusted misstatements are set out in detail below along with the impact on the key statements and the reported net expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2019.

Detail	Pension Fund Account £'000	Net Asset Statement £' 000	Impact on total net assets £'000
1 None identified.			
<b>Overall impact</b>			

## Misclassification 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.

Disclosure omission	Detail	Adjusted?
<b>Fair Value Classification of Bond incorrect</b>	Per note 14a of the accounts £665m of UK Public Sector Quoted Bonds have been incorrectly classified as Level 2 in the fair value hierarchy. This investment has fully observable inputs and so should be recorded as Level 1 in the fair value hierarchy.	✓

# Audit Adjustments

## Impact of unadjusted misstatements

The table below provides details of adjustments identified during the 2018/19 audit which have not been made within the final set of financial statements. The Wirral Council Audit & Risk Management Committee is required to approve management's proposed treatment of all items recorded within the table below:

Detail	Pension Fund Account £'000	Net Asset Statement £' 000	Impact on total net assets £'000	Reason for not adjusting
1 None identified.				
<b>Overall impact</b>				

## Impact of prior year unadjusted misstatements

The table below provides details of adjustments identified during the prior year audit which had not been made within the final set of 2017/18 financial statements.

Detail	Pension Fund Account £'000	Net Asset Statement £' 000	Impact on total net assets £'000	Reason for not adjusting
<b>None</b>				

# Audit opinion

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

## Independent auditor's report to the members of Wirral Council on the pension fund financial statements of Merseyside Pension Fund

### Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Merseyside Pension Fund (the 'pension fund') administered by Wirral Council (the 'Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2019 which comprise the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and Notes to the Merseyside Pension Fund Accounts, including a summary of significant accounting policies. 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 2018/19.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the pension fund during the year ended 31 March 2019 and of the amount and disposition at that date of the fund's assets and liabilities, other than liabilities to pay promised retirement benefits after the end of the fund year;
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

### Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the 'Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements' section of our report. We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the pension fund's financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Conclusions relating to going concern

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

- the Director of Finance and Investment (S151)'s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the pension fund's financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Director of Finance and Investment (S151) has not disclosed in the pension fund's financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Authority's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for the pension fund for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the pension fund's financial statements are authorised for issue.

### Other information

The Director of Finance and Investment (S151) is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Authority's Statement of Accounts 2018/19, other than the pension fund's financial statements, our auditor's report thereon and our auditor's report on the Authority's financial statements. Our opinion on the pension fund's financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

# Audit opinion

## Opinion on other matter required by the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the Code of Audit Practice)

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit of the pension fund's financial statements and our knowledge of the pension fund the other information published together with the pension fund's financial statements in the Authority's Statement of Accounts 2018/19, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the pension fund's financial statements.

### Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Under the Code of Audit Practice, we are required to report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matters.

### Responsibilities of the Authority, the Director of Finance and Investment (S151) and Those Charged with Governance for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts, the Authority is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Authority, that officer is the Director of Finance and Investment (S151). The Director of Finance and Investment (S151) is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the pension fund's 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 2018/19, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Director of Finance and Investment (S151) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the pension fund's financial statements, the Director of Finance and Investment (S151) is responsible for assessing the pension fund'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 there is an intention by government that the services provided by the pension fund will no longer be provided.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is Those Charged with Governance. Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Authority's financial reporting process.

### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

### Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 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 audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's 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.

[Signature]

Grant Patterson, Key Audit Partner  
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Local Auditor

Birmingham

[Date]

