

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL (the "Authority")

Issue of audit opinion on the financial statements

In our audit report for the year ended 31 March 2018 issued on 26 July 2018 we reported that, in our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2018 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- had been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2017/18; and
- had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Issue of qualified conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

In our audit report for the year ended 31 March 2018 issued on 26 July 2018 we reported a qualified conclusion in the following terms:

Qualified conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2017, except for the effects of the matter described in the basis for qualified conclusion section of our report we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2018.

Basis for qualified conclusion

In considering the Authority's arrangements for securing efficiency, economy and effectiveness in its use of resources we identified the following matter:

In February 2017, Ofsted issued its report on the inspection of the Authority's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The overall judgement was that children's services were rated as inadequate.

The report concluded that performance management and quality assurance systems have not been robust enough to alert political and senior leaders to critical weaknesses. In particular, leaders have not ensured that children with disabilities receive a safe service that meets their needs and protects them from harm. The report also noted that too many vulnerable children with disabilities have been left without adequate help or protection and that as a result, children have been left in situations of unmet need and unassessed risk.

Since issuing its report Ofsted has published the outcome of a monitoring inspection carried out in February 2018. This notes the improvements made in response to the inspection report and the work still required. As at 31 March 2018, the overall inadequate rating remained in place.

This matter is evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for understanding and using appropriate and reliable financial and performance information to support informed decision making and performance management and for planning, organising and developing the workforce effectively to deliver strategic priorities.

Certificate

In our report dated 26 July 2018, we explained that we could not formally conclude the audit on that date until we had completed the work necessary to issue our Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) Component Assurance statement for the year ended 31 March 2018. We have now completed this work.

No matters have come to our attention since that date that would have a material impact on the financial statements on which we gave an unqualified opinion or a significant impact on our conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources.

We certify that we have completed the audit of the financial statements of the Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Alex Walling

Alex Walling
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

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29 August 2018