

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

26th September 2024

Financial Compliance Report

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Ian Woodall Cabinet Member for Finance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Debra Goodall
Report Author	Job Title: Head of Finance & Customer Services Contact email: debra.goodall@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee **RECOMMEND** that:

- 1) **Progress on the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 Audit processes be noted.**
- 2) **Any areas of concern within this key compliance report are raised with Executive.**

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 From a Governance point of view, the financial framework under which the Council works is set out in the Constitution. In addition to this there are legislative reporting requirements which set out what needs to be done and by when. The Accounting Policies report which was tabled at the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on the 23rd March 2023 set out the Financial Governance Framework, and associated references to key documentation, that the Council, its Member and Officers work to. This are (in summary):

- **The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.** These set out: The framework for Executive Decisions, Decisions outside the budget or policy framework, Urgent Decisions outside of the Budget or Policy Framework, Virement rules, In-year changes to policy framework and, Call-in of decisions outside the budget or policy framework. These rules set out how decisions can be made, by whom and how they can be challenged.
- **Financial Procedure Rules** which are set out in Part 14 of the Constitution. These “operational policies” run to 36 pages and set out how the organisation financially runs its “day to day” business.
- **Finance Protocols** which set out requirements and expectations of the Finance Team and Services in terms of financial administration and demarcation of duties.

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- 2.2 Audit Committee training was undertaken on the 28th May, and Local Government Finance training was given on the 30th July.
- 2.3 One of the legislative reporting requirements the Council had not achieved is the delivery of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts. As such, the Council was issued with a Section 24 Statement. Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) were also issued with a Section 24 Statement for the same non delivery of the 2020/21 accounts which is understandable given that officers support both Councils via a shared service.
- 2.4 Draft 2020/21 Accounts have been presented to Audit Committee for comment in May and have been open for the required Public Inspection. 2021/22 to 2023/4 are being worked on in sequence with 21/22 and 22/23 being in draft by August.
- 2.5 The 2024/5 budget was approved at Council on the 26th February 2024.

Legislative Requirements

- 2.6 The previous section sets out how the Council works, however equally important are the Central Government Legislative Requirements to which we deliver to and are compared to other Councils across the Council. This section lists those key deliverables.
- 2.7 The following are key legislative deliverables, which were circulated by the Government in December 2023 for the period December 2023, through the 2024/5 financial year. Delivery against these requirements will be set out in the final column of the table.

Form	Code	Description	Proposed Dispatch	Deadline	Proposed Publication	Position
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q3	CPR3	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1, Q2 and Q3 2023-24	15-Dec-23	19-Jan-24	15-Feb-24	Delivered 26/1/24
Non-Domestic Rates Forecast	NNDR1	Billing authority forecasts of the amount of non-domestic rates to be collected in the 2024-25	15-Dec-23	31-Jan-24	21-Feb-24	Delivered 9/2/24 (Civica issue)
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q3	QRC3	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q3 2023-24	15-Dec-23	12-Jan-24	14-Feb-24	Delivered 15/2/24 (Civica issue)
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q3	QB3	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q3 2023-24	15-Dec-23	08-Jan-24	15-Feb-24	Delivered 17/1/24
Quarterly Revenue Update - Quarters 3 & 4	QRU3	Quarter 1 to 3 2023-24 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update.	15-Dec-23	26-Jan-24	07-Mar-24	Delivered 19/2/24

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Council Tax Requirement/ Parish Council Tax	CTR1/2/3/4	Information on council tax levels set by local authorities in 2024-25 and Council tax levels for 2024-25 set by parishes.	02/02/2024 (tbc)	11-Mar-24	21-Mar-24	Delivered 26/2/24
of which: Parish council tax	-	-	-	11-Mar-24	08-May-24	Delivered 26/2/24
Revenue Account Budget	RA	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2024-25 Budget	16-Feb-24	05-Apr-24	20-Jun-24	Draft completed. 8/4/24
Capital Estimates Return	CER	Capital forecast for 2024-25	23-Feb-24	22-Mar-24	13-Jun-24	Delivered 22/3/24
Non-Domestic Rates Outturn-unaudited	NNDR3	Collects information from all billing authority on the amount of non-domestic rates collected in 2023-24- provisional data	28-Mar-24	30-Apr-24	10-Jul-24	Draft delivered to Pool 14/4/24
Non-Domestic Rates Outturn-audited	NNDR3	Collects information from all billing authority on the amount of non-domestic rates collected in 2023-24- final data	n/a	30-Sep-24	15-Nov-24	
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q4	QB4	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q4 2023-24	22-Mar-24	05-Apr-24	13-Jun-24	Delivered 5/4/24
Capital payments & receipts Q4 and provisional outturn	CPR4	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 2023-24. Expanded collection, used as provisional outturn.	22-Mar-24	19-Apr-24	13-Jun-24	Delivered 29/4/24
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q4	QRC4	Annual data of levels of council tax and non-domestic rates collected by local authorities in 2023-24 and Q4 2023-24	12-Apr-24	03-May-24	19-Jun-24	Delivered 7/5/24
Capital Outturn Return	COR	Final capital outturn figures for 2023-24	26-Apr-24	26-Jul-24	10-Oct-24	Delivered 29/07/24
Revenue Outturn suite - provisional	RO	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2023-24 Outturn (provisional)	26-Apr-24	28-Jun-24	29-Aug-24	Delivered 19/7/24
Revenue Outturn suite - certified	RO	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2023-24 Outturn (final)	n/a	11-Oct-24	12-Dec-24	
Exit payments	-	Local authority exit payments 2023-24	03-May-24	07-Jun-24	18-Jul-24	Delivered 30/06/2024

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Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q1	QB1	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q1 2024-25	24-Jun-24	05-Jul-24	08-Aug-24	Delivered 05/07/24
Quarterly Revenue Update - Q1	QRU1	Q1 2024-25 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update	28-Jun-24	02-Aug-24	12-Sep-24	Delivered 2/08/24
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q1	CPR1	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1 2024-25	21-Jun-24	19-Jul-24	08-Aug-24	Delivered 19/07/24
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q1	QRC1	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q1 2024-25	21-Jun-24	12-Jul-24	14-Aug-24	Delivered 01/07/24
Local Government Pension Funds	SF3	Collect information on income and expenditure on local government pension schemes for 2023-24	05-Jul-24	13-Sep-24	23-Oct-24	
Council Tax Base/ Supplementary	CTB	Information about the 2024 council tax base for each billing authority.	20-Sep-24	11-Oct-24	06-Nov-24	
Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q2	QB2	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q2 2024-25	23-Sep-24	04-Oct-24	14-Nov-24	
Quarterly Revenue Update - Q2	QRU2	Quarter 1 & 2 2024-25 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update	20-Sep-24	25-Oct-24	05-Dec-24	
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q2	CPR2	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1 and Q2 2024-25	20-Sep-24	20-Oct-24	14-Nov-24	
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q2	QRC2	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q2 2024-25	20-Sep-24	04-Oct-24	20-Nov-24	
Capital Payments & Receipts - Q3	CPR3	Cumulative capital expenditure and receipts for Q1, Q2 and Q3 2024-25	13-Dec-24	17-Jan-25	13-Feb-25	
Non-Domestic Rates Forecast	NNDR1	Billing authority forecasts of the amount of non-domestic rates to be collected in the 2025-26	13-Dec-24	31-Jan-25	19-Feb-25	
Quarterly Revenue Update - Quarters 3 & 4	QRU3	Quarter 1 to 3 2024-25 data and forecast end year local authority revenue expenditure update.	13-Dec-24	24-Jan-25	06-Mar-25	

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Quarterly Borrowing & Lending - Q3	QB3	Local authority borrowing and investments from all local authorities to the end of Q3 2024-25	13-Dec-24	06-Jan-25	13-Feb-25	
Council Tax & NDR Collection - Q3	QRC3	Quarterly return of how much council tax and non-domestic rates are collected in Q3 2024-25	13-Dec-24	10-Jan-25	12-Feb-25	
Council Tax Requirement/ Parish Council Tax	CTR1/2/3/4	Information on council tax levels set by local authorities in 2025-26. Council tax levels for 2025-26 set by parishes	Early Feb 2025	12-Mar-25	20-Mar-25	
of which: Parish council tax	-	-	Early Feb 2025	12-Mar-25	07-May-25	
Revenue Account Budget	RA	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing for 2025-26 Budget	14-Feb-25	04-Apr-25	19-Jun-25	
Capital Estimates Return	CER	Capital forecast for 2025-26	21-Feb-25	21-Mar-25	12-Jun-25	
Monthly Borrowing & Lending	MB	Monthly sample used to provide an estimate of the level of net borrowing by local authorities to go into the ONS/HMT monthly publication Public Sector Finance Statistics	5 working days before 1st working day of the month	Day 5 of each month	for quarter months only, see QB1, QB2, QB3, QB4 dates	Delivered to date
Local Government Finance Statistics	LGFS33	Annual compilation of finance data collected from local authorities covering out-turn data for 2022-23	N/A	N/A	Spring 2024	

Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts – **23/4 Delivered**

2.8 In wider sets of deliverables (outside the 2024/5 DLUHC Listing) we have the following returns that have been delivered:

- **Budget**
 - Delivered by 11th March in preceding financial year – **2024/5 Budget and MTFP delivered 26th Feb 2024**
 - Council Tax Base – Yearly – **2024/25 delivered on 9th January 2024**
 - Council Tax Resolution – **Yearly 2024/5 delivered on 26th February 2024**
 - Council Tax Billing – Yearly – **Bills distributed in March 2024**
- **Policies**
 - Treasury and Asset Management Strategies
 - **2024/5 Strategy Approved 26th Feb 2024**
 - **2023/4 Half Yearly Report delivered in Q3 Monitoring Report 18 March 24**

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- 2023/4 Outturn Report **delivered in September 24.**
- Council Tax Support Scheme – **24/5 Approved on 9th January 2024.**
- Minimum Revenue Provision – yearly – **Approved as part of the 24/5 MTFP.**
- Financial Monitoring – **delivered quarterly to Executive – Q1 24/5 in Sept 2024.**
- Risk Management – **Delivered quarterly to this Committee (Q4 23/4 in July 24)**
- Savings Report – **Delivered quarterly to this Committee (Q1 24/5 delivered today)**
- Financial Controls (still in development)
 - Clearance of suspense accounts – now part of the closure of accounts process.
 - Bank Reconciliation - **linked to above point although a separate stream assessing/clearing 2023/4 and prior year items.**
- Over £500 spending.
 - **Updated to May 2024.**

The following deliverables, prior to December 2023 are still to be delivered:

- **Closure**
 - Draft Accounts for 2021/22 will be presented to Committee this evening and 2022/23 before the end of October.
 - 2020/21 Audit **see later section.**
- Government Returns
 - VAT – Monthly
 - **Still to be delivered after 20/21 – linked to closure of accounts/suspense clearance, discussions ongoing with HMRC and Tax advisors PS Tax.**
 - Revenue Outturn Reports
 - **Still to be delivered for 21/22 – dependent draft accounts being presented today.**
 - Whole of Government Accounts Returns – August
 - **Still to be delivered for 20/21, 21/22 and 22/23.**

2.9 The key returns that have still not been delivered are the Revenue and Capital Outturn forms for 2021/22 and the VAT returns. These will now be completed following the compilation of 21/22, 22/23 and 23/24 accounts.

Update on the Statement of Accounts

2.10 The key Closure deliverables for each financial year are set out below:

- Closure 2020/21
 - Following agreement of opening balance positions the 2020/21 Accounts were opened to Public Inspection following the May Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.
 - Sign off of 20/21 Accounts – to be confirmed with the External Auditors.
- Closure 2021/22
 - Updated Outturn position – still to be provided following the full closure of these accounts.
 - Draft Accounts planned to be presented to this Committee today (without any 2020/21 Audit Adjustments) and then put out for Public Inspection.
 - Audit of Accounts following Audit of 2020/21 Accounts.

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- Sign off of the Accounts – to be confirmed with External Auditors.
- Closure 2022/23
 - Draft Provisional Outturn Report – Executive Report delivered on the 12th September 2023. This will be updated following the draft closure of the accounts.
 - Draft Accounts planned to be presented in October to allow a month for Public Inspection to comply with the new Audit backstop requirements (without any 2020/21 or 2021/22 Audit Adjustments).
 - Audit of Accounts following Audit of 2020/21 and 2021/22 Accounts.
- Closure 2023/24
 - Draft provisional Outturn Report presented to Executive in July 2024.
 - RO/CO Returns have been provided to Government.
 - Draft Accounts planned to be presented to the November Audit, Governance and Standards Committee (without any 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 Audit Adjustments) and then put out to public consultation as per the updated backstop requirements.
 - Audit of Accounts dependent on changes to legislation given that the Council's External Auditors now change to being Bishop Flemming.
- **Closure Process being undertaken (high level view)**
 - The Council have been closing 3 years in parallel and concurrently.
 - DG has updated the 21/2 and future years formats so easier to manipulate and complete.
 - IAS19 Pension Reports have been received and will be addressed on a concurrent basis.
 - Initial PPE valuations have been received and updates to these are being made following discussions with the valuers. All three years are being provided at the same time and will be combined into a single document.
 - NNDR/Council Tax (Collection Fund) – Journals awaiting actioning.
 - Reconciliations – significant team of 5 now working on these over all the open financial years.
 - Bank Reconciliation – Banks have been reconciled.
 - VAT working plan required in order to move from central assessment in Q2 2024/5.
 - Working in parallel with Rubicon to clear their existing Audit queries due to their Companies Act reporting requirements.
- Value for Money Opinions for 2021/22 and 2022/23. External Auditors delivered their joint Value for Money Opinions in November 2023:
 - S24 Recommendation still in place and extended for 2021/2 and 2022/3 Accounts.
 - 5 of the 6 2020/21 Key Recommendations either delivered or now linked to Improvement Recommendations.
 - 9 of 13 2020/21 Improvement Recommendations either fully or partially delivered.
 - One new Key Recommendation – linked to Workforce Strategy.
 - Ten updated Improvement Recommendations.

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- We appointed 4 staff from the interviews in January – all have now started. We have interviewed for 5 further posts in the summer to bring the team almost up to establishment and reduce the reliance on Agency.

2.11 Following the General Election in July 2024, the New Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Jim McMahon OBE MP wrote to Councils on the 30th July. In this letter the minister notes that the significant and unacceptable backlog of unaudited accounts, which will likely rise again to around 1,000 later this year. This situation undermines trust and transparency in the way taxpayers' money is being spent and auditors cannot focus on up-to-date accounts, where assurance is most valuable.

2.12 To tackle the backlog, The Minister intends to lay secondary legislation when parliamentary time allows to provide for an initial backstop date of 13 December 2024 for financial years (FYs) up to and including 2022/23 and five subsequent backstop dates: 2015/16 through to 2019/20 must be signed off by the 30th December 2023.

Financial Year	Backstop date
2023/24	28 February 2025
2024/25	27 February 2026
2025/26	31 January 2027
2026/27	30 November 2027
2027/28	30 November 2028

2.13 Parliamentary approval was given on the 9th September, for financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28, the date by which local bodies should publish 'draft' (unaudited) accounts will change from 31 May to 30 June following the financial year to which they relate. This will give those preparing accounts more time to ensure they are high-quality accounts. A new suite of guidance is planned by the NAO and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) on these measures, and we continue to work with other organisations to consider what guidance would be most constructive and helpful for local bodies.

2.14 The Minister expects that there will be full assurance, with "clean" opinions for many bodies by the first backstop date of 13 December 2024. However, due to the time constraints, auditors are likely to issue 'disclaimed' audit opinions (no assurance) on many accounts – early indications are that this could be several hundred in this first phase which may, in the short term, cause additional concern. It is recognised that aspects of these proposals are uncomfortable. Without this action by the Government, audits would continue to be delayed and the system would move even further away from timely assurance. The minister's guidance is set out in **Appendix A**.

2.15 Bishop Fleming, our Auditors for 23/4 onwards, are still waiting for the formal outcomes following the approval of the financial instrument. Their view is that it is better for them to pause issuing any audit plans for now. When they have the outcomes, they will be in a better position to set out what work they as auditors need to do on disclaimed audits.

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- 2.16 We are on the 23a version on TechOne and expect to upgrade to 24b in the Autumn. This upgrade has given access to more functionality. However, Redditch and Bromsgrove are still the only Councils on Cash Receipting, when the weekly updates come in they have to do additional checks to ensure the functionality is working as expected.

Update on the Budget and ongoing Monitoring.

- 2.17 The Councils 2024/25 Budget was approved on the 26th February 2024 at Council. Budgets and are loaded onto TechOne.
- 2.18 Quarter One 2024/5 Financial and Performance monitoring went to Executive in September 2024.

Compliance Items

- 2.19 There are a number of areas where compliance will be measured going forwards. Compliance to process and timetable is a key underlying theme of both the Draft External Audit Report 2020/21 and the Combined 2021/22 & 2022/23. These items are being measured to improve how we work and change behaviours. This will lead to an improved financial health/knowledge across both Councils. Not all these measures can be put in place instantly but there should be the full suite by the middle of the summer (Debt indicators depend on the clearing of suspense and the updating of the bank reconciliations).

Training:

- Closure Training took place in March with 83 attending.
- Mandatory Budget Manager Training (including the use of TechOne) took place in September 2023 – upskilling budget managers with the tools to input their forecasts directly onto TechOne.
- Mandatory Financial Awareness Training for managers took place in August and September.
- Payments Purchase Order Training takes place monthly.

New tranches of training are being organised

Treasury Management

- The Half Yearly 2023/4 Treasury Management Report was presented to Executive on the 18th March.
- The 2024/5 Strategies were approved by Council in February.
- The 2023/4 Outturn Report was approved by Council in September.

Audit VFM Report Requirements (From the draft 2021/2 and 22/3 Reports)

- More Budget Consultation.
- Wider savings monitoring will be undertaken by this Committee quarterly.

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- Capital and its deliverability will be reviewed as part of the Budget Tranche 2.
- Benchmarking is now incorporated into the budget process (using LG Futures data).
- The Internal Audit Service will be externally assessed in early 2024.
- The Council will seek an independent Audit Committee member and ensure the Committee remains apolitical in nature.
- The whistleblowing policy will be updated before the end of the financial year.
- Procurement and contract rules will be updated by the end of the financial year (to reflect changes to legislation happening in April 2024).
- Performance Indicators will be reviewed and updated following Strategic Priority setting sessions.

The Council is still to run sessions to assess its “risk appetite.”

Errors:

- Non delivery of GPC Card Data (monthly basis) – still to be started.
- Mis-coding on TechOne per month – by Service Area – work is ongoing to clear the mis-codings on a monthly basis in conjunction with work going on to reconcile previous years.

Procurement:

- The new ‘No Compliance No Order’ process has been live since April 2023.
- The number of contracts in place is growing regularly. We hope that eventually we get to the place where the number of orders coming to procurement for approval as contracts are not in place are minimal.
- Council in July approved an increase of the Key Decision Level from £50k to £200k. Finance and Performance Monitoring Reports now set out:
 - All contracts requiring renewal over the next year that are over the present £200k threshold and these are placed on the forward plan.
 - All contracts requiring renewal over the next year that are between £50k and £200k for reference.
 - All contracts that are being procured by Bromsgrove over this period that relate to Redditch Services.

2.20 Work is ongoing on the clearance of the Cash Receipting suspense accounts. The Council now has processes in place for the different types of error that have taken place since the implementation of the TechOne system. Corrections will be actioned by journal although conversations are taking place with TechOne to ensure as much as possible can be automated. As reported earlier in this report, this will ensure the delivery of accounts from 2021/2 to 2023/4 to the timescales set out. One of the processes is the clearance of Treasury transactions which by their nature are a manual process but of significant size.

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Summary

2.21 This report sets out the policies (local and national) that underpins the Council finances and the key deliverables. The 20/21 Accounts have now been submitted for Audit and the report sets out the Plan for the delivery of other years accounts as per the updated guidance that has now been approved. This report is now updated for data as at the end of August and is delivered to each Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at Redditch to update it on progress against targets and also alert them to any issues and risks.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 This paper sets out the financial frameworks within which the Council works.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report, however the frameworks are generally linked to statute or the Council's Constitution.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's Corporate Plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the Borough and our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all our Strategic Purposes.

Climate Change Implications

5.2 There are no direct climate change implications arising as a result of this report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising as a result of this report.

Operational Implications

6.2 Operational implications have been dealt with as part of the 2024/25 MTFP, quarterly monitoring and the Closedown process.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The financial stability and sustainability of the Council is a core underlying theme of the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Interim Auditors Annual Report on Redditch Borough Council 2021/22 & 2/22/23 – Audit Governance and Standards Committee November 2023, Council December 2023.

Section 24 Report to Audit and Council – November 2022, November 2023.

Accounting Policies Report – March, June, July, September, November 2023 and January, March, May and July 2024 Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.

Finance Recovery Report – June 2023 and October 2023, January and September 2024 – Executive

Programme Management Office Requirements – July 2023 – Executive

Approvals to Spend Report - July 2023 – Executive

9. Appendices

Appendix A – The Minister’s Update

Appendix A – The Minister’s Update



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution*

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Josh Goodman

Chief Executive

Office for Local Government

September 2024

Dear Josh,

Office for Local Government – review of long-term role, and short-term remit

I am committed to resetting the relationship between local and central government and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of central government and the sector. I have therefore decided to review the role of Oflog by the end of 2024 to ensure that it will add the greatest possible value to the system of transparency, accountability and support of local government. I will welcome the views of the sector over the coming months.

In the meantime, I would like Oflog to continue to deliver its previous remit, with the exception that we have agreed that Oflog should pause on piloting and rolling out its current model of ‘early warning conversations’ while we consider the Government’s overall approach to early warning and interventions.

Oflog’s short-term remit, effective immediately, is as follows:

Inform

We need to empower communities to have a voice on what their local authority is doing. It can be hard to navigate the wealth of available data – we are rich on data but poor on insights. Although the current Oflog Data Explorer is live, it is incomplete and covers only a fraction of local authority activity. Oflog will:

- continue to update data for existing metrics on the Data Explorer;
- continue to add new metrics to the Data Explorer, with a focus on areas most relevant to the government’s missions;

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- continue to improve the Data Explorer, including ensuring it better explains the data's limitations and how it should be used responsibly by third parties; and
- develop options for new, additional, or alternative data tools to help citizens understand local authorities' performance, being clear about how these would add value to existing tools and reporting provided by central government and the sector.

As Oflog is an office within my department, I will approve all new metrics for the Data Explorer prior to publication.

Support

Oflog will continue its work to understand the current landscape of support available to local authorities and, where there are gaps, will inform discussions with MHCLG officials about how these gaps might be best filled.

In parallel, Oflog should continue its programme of webinars that convene groups of similar LAs to learn from each other. It should also continue to take a "test and learn" approach to new forms of support. This could include publishing new analysis, research or tools on local authority performance and best practice.

I am interested in what Oflog could do to improve LAs' digital and data capability. Oflog should develop a proposition, working across government.

Warn

We have agreed that Oflog should pause on piloting and conducting its current model of 'early warning conversations' while we consider the Government's overall approach to early warning and interventions. I would like Oflog to work with MHCLG officials on options to help identify when LAs might need support to recover, rebuild or reform.

This remit will be updated after further consideration of Oflog's role in the sector.

Yours sincerely



Jim McMahon OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution