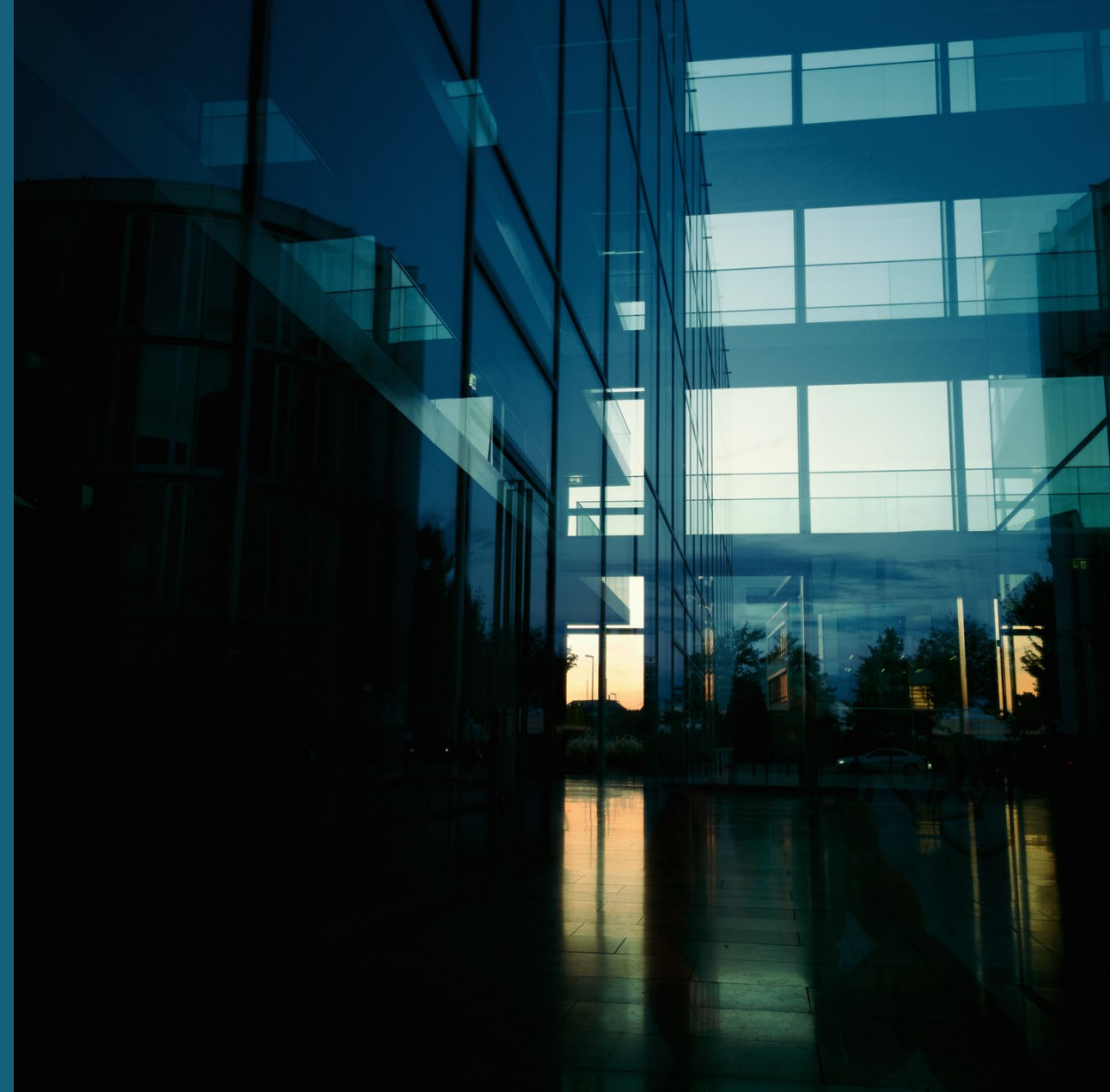


Auditor's Annual Report

London Borough of Lambeth – year
ended 31 March 2021

March 2022



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Section 01: **Introduction**

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Auditor's Annual Report

Our Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) summarises the work we have undertaken as the auditor for London Borough of Lambeth ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2021. Although this report is addressed to the Council, it is designed to be read by a wider audience including members of the public and other external stakeholders.

Our responsibilities are defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the National Audit Office ('the NAO'). The remaining sections of the AAR outline how we have discharged these responsibilities and the findings from our work. These are summarised below.



Opinion on the financial statements

We issued our audit report on 5th January 2022. Our opinion on the financial statements was unqualified.



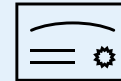
Value for Money arrangements

In our audit report issued we reported that we had not completed our work on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and had not issued recommendations in relation to identified significant weaknesses in those arrangements at the time of reporting. Section 3 confirms that we have now completed this work and provides our commentary on the Council's arrangements.



Wider reporting responsibilities

In line with prior years, we expect to complete appropriate audit work on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) return once this has been completed. At present HM Treasury are continuing to review the OSCAR II system and no dates for submission or audit have been set. We will keep the Council informed of any updates.



Audit certificate

Following the completion of our work we would normally issue our audit certificate which formally closes the audit for the 2020/21 financial year. At this stage we are unable to certify completion of the 2020/21 audit because of the delay to the WGA return and three outstanding objections in respect of prior period financial statements.

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Section 02:

Audit of the financial statements

2. Audit of the financial statements

The scope of our audit and the results of our opinion

Our audit was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Code, and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs).

The purpose of our audit is to provide reasonable assurance to users that the financial statements are free from material error. We do this by expressing an opinion on whether the statements are prepared, in all material respects, in line with the financial reporting framework applicable to the Council and whether they give a true and fair view of the Council's financial position as at 31 March 2021 and of its financial performance for the year then ended. Our audit report, issued on 5th January 2022 gave an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Qualitative aspects of the Council's accounting practices

We have reviewed the Authority's accounting policies and disclosures and concluded they comply with the 2020/21 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, appropriately tailored to the Authority's circumstances. The accounts have been prepared on the correct (continued provision of service) going concern basis.

Draft accounts were provided by the authority on 15th July 2021 and were of a high quality. Supporting working papers were made available prior to the commencement of the audit and were of a high quality. Staff members were timely and extremely thorough in response to evidence requests and audit enquiries.

Significant matters discussed with management

We have discussed the following significant matters with management:

- The impact of Covid-19 on the council and the associated impacts this may have on the risks of material misstatement to the valuation of property, plant and equipment, the assessed provision for expected credit losses and the potential overall impact on the council's financial position.
- Going concern and the basis of management's assessment of its current position. We have reviewed management's initial assessment and considered this against budget forecasts and Cabinet finance papers to support the judgement.

Significant difficulties during the audit

During the course of the audit, we did not encounter any significant difficulties and we have had the full co-operation of management.

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2. Audit of the financial statements

Internal control recommendations

As part of our audit we considered the internal controls in place that are relevant to the preparation of the financial statements. We did this to design audit procedures that allow us to express our opinion on the financial statements, but this did not extend to us expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal controls. We identified the following deficiencies in internal control as part of our audit.

Completeness of Property, Plant & Equipment valuations

Description of deficiency

During the course of our review of the councils Property, Plant & Equipment valuations we identified that a number of the Council's assets (value £3.836m) had not been revalued in the preceding 5 years. This is not in line with the Council's policy or the code requirements.

Potential effects

Where assets have not been subject to revaluation the value of assets as recorded in the financial statements, and associated accounting entries related to their continued use, may be misstated. In view of the value of assets that have not been subject to revaluation, we consider that there is unlikely to be a material misstatement in the financial statement.

Recommendation

The Council should ensure that it reviews all Plant, Property and Equipment valuation dates to ensure that all assets are included and have been revalued within the 5 year rolling valuation programme and their values included within the FAR and financial statements.

Management response

Management can confirm that the majority of the outstanding valuations relate to car parking spaces on council estates, and the valuation work on these has now been completed. A small remaining balance relates to a few assets on which work is in progress as at 31st March 2022. An update to Mazars will be provided during the audit of the accounts for 21/22 in respect of all valuations that were outstanding as of the end of the financial year ended 31st March 2021.

Bank reconciliation

Description of deficiency

Review of the bank reconciliation process performed by the Council has noted that, within individual reconciliations, there are a number of items that have been within the reconciliation for a period of time and still require adjustment within the general ledger.

Potential effects

The continued existence of a large number of effective reconciling items within the reconciliation, increases the complexity of the process and the risk of manual errors arising through the continued inclusion of significant items requiring adjustment.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Council review the individual bank reconciliations and undertake appropriate update procedures to ensure entries have been appropriately resolved and adjusted within the general ledger and bank reconciliation.

Management response

The council has reviewed the recommendation and has carried out several checks to ensure that any unreconciled items are reduced to a minimum. Transactions outstanding from the prior year amounted to £54k and these are in the process of being resolved.

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Section 03:

Commentary on VFM arrangements

3. VFM arrangements – Overall summary

Approach to Value for Money arrangements work

We are required to consider whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out and sets out the reporting criteria that we are required to consider. The reporting criteria are:

- **Financial sustainability** - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services
- **Governance** - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks
- **Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness** - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

At the planning stage of the audit, we undertake work so we can understand the arrangements that the Council has in place under each of the reporting criteria; as part of this work we may identify risks of significant weaknesses in those arrangements. Where we identify significant risks, we design a programme of work (risk-based procedures) to enable us to decide whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements. Although we describe this work as planning work, we keep our understanding of arrangements under review and update our risk assessment throughout the audit to reflect emerging issues that may suggest there are further risks of significant weaknesses.

Where our risk-based procedures identify actual significant weaknesses in arrangements, we are required to report these and make recommendations for improvement.

The table below summarises the outcomes of our work against each reporting criteria. On the following page we outline further detail of the work we have undertaken against each reporting criteria, including the judgements we have applied.

Reporting criteria	Commentary page reference	Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?	Actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?
Financial sustainability	10	No	No
Governance	12	No	No
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	15	No	No

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3. VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

Overall commentary on the Financial Sustainability reporting criteria

Background to financial sustainability in 2020/21

The Council began the 2020/21 financial year as the first national lockdown began, which brought with it a range of operational requirements needed in order to effectively respond to the range of challenges the pandemic presents. Central government made a series of policy announcements as part of the national response to Covid-19, many of which impacted on the Council. Consequently the Council was at the forefront of efforts to protect local residents, including the most vulnerable, and to support local businesses.

Some of the Government’s initiatives to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic were supported by additional funding, and so the Council received significant additional funding in 2020/21. This included general grants to support its Covid-19 response of £28.1m, specific grants of £21.8m of which the Council had discretion over to determine the use of £17.3m, and compensation for business rate reliefs of £25.1m, alongside significant funding provided to support local business in line with the government’s national initiatives. This funding helped the Council to support residents and businesses through the year, and provided immediate funding to help mitigate some of the financial pressures caused by the pandemic. The Council’s financial sustainability challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic will continue through the medium term and this places considerable pressure on the Council to maintain effective financial sustainability arrangements.

The Council’s financial planning and monitoring arrangements

In February 2020 the Council set a balanced budget for the 2020/21 financial year. This required an increase in Council Tax of 1.99% (including 2% Adult Care precept). Throughout the year the Council updated its budget forecast, enabling budgets to remain up-to-date in the fast-changing and uncertain operating environment of the pandemic.

Within the original budget approved in February 2020, the Council had identified a budget reduction (savings) requirement of £9.8m alongside a range of initiatives and measures to deliver these reductions.

The Council’s financial planning and budgeting arrangements are well established and include a wide range of activities and consultations. The budget setting process includes engagement with senior Council officers and incorporates discussion about the delivery of statutory services/priorities and the impact on resources. Where additional resources are required these are scrutinised and challenged before they are included in the budget estimates. Workshops with officers and Members are a key part of the budgeting arrangements, and these are detailed and extensive.

The Council provided regular reports of its financial position to Cabinet throughout the year, and at year end reported its revenue outturn position for 2020/21 as an overall overspend of £8.487m. We have reviewed a sample of the reports presented for 2020/21, these were detailed and comprehensive and incorporate monitoring of the revenue budget, the capital programme and a range of other financial measures and other performance information for officers and Members to review and consider overall performance. The Council follows an established timetable for reporting to Cabinet which includes reporting to directorate and divisional management teams as well as the strategic management team.

The Council’s arrangements for identifying, managing and monitoring funding gaps and savings

The Council produces a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) each year alongside its annual budget. The MTFS sets out the resources available to deliver the Council’s overall commitment to provide services that meet the needs of people locally over the planned four year period and is updated and extended as part of each years budget setting process.

3. VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

Overall commentary on the Financial Sustainability reporting criteria - continued

A key part of the MTFS is to highlight the budget issues that need to be addressed by the Council in each of the years covered. It reflects assumptions made to allow forecasting of the level of available resources from all sources together with the budget pressures relating to both capital and revenue spending. It also assesses the adequacy of reserves held which may impact on the Council’s resources.

The Council’s budget setting process, which begins in the summer, is a detailed and comprehensive process. There is detailed consultation and discussion with officers and Members on the assumptions and principles on which the budget is to be based. As part of the budget setting process, the Council explicitly identifies its budget reduction requirements for the remaining years of the MTFS the budget relates to, this being through detailed consideration of budgetary pressures, funding estimates, and impact of national and local initiatives.

A range of officer meetings and discussion take place to support the budget and MTFS development, to review proposals for savings and budget reductions, with each proposal supported by evidenced assessments of deliverability and potential savings. Proposals are subject to consultation with staff, officers and Members and are presented to meetings attended by Cabinet & Deputy Cabinet Members and senior officers, Overview & Scrutiny, and Cabinet before submission to, and approval at, Full Council.

We have reviewed a range of the budget preparation documents and meetings held as part of the budget setting process. This confirmed that the documents were comprehensive and detailed and the process for development had been completed on a timely basis and delivered the intended outcomes to assist with the budget preparation.

The budget reduction requirement for 2021/22 that was identified in the MTFS for the 2020/21 to

2024/25 period was £14m, and confirmed that a further £14.6m was required in the following year. The budget reports for each year are clear on the means by which the savings will be delivered and clearly articulate the size of the challenge the Council faces in the medium term.

Council’s arrangements and approach to 2021/22 financial planning

The Council’s arrangements for the 2021/22 budget setting process have largely followed the arrangements in place for 2020/21. The budget for 2021/22 was approved at the March 2021 Council meeting. The Council set a balanced budget with a total net budget for Council services of £331m with an increase in Council Tax of 1.99% (including 3% Adult Care precept). The budget included £14m of recurrent budget reductions and £12.3m use of reserves.

We have reviewed the supporting evidence relating to the preparation of the 2021/22 budget and these demonstrate that the arrangements are consistent with the previous year, detailed and robust and properly applied.

Based on the above considerations we are satisfied there is not a significant weakness in the Council’s arrangements in relation to financial sustainability.

3. VFM arrangements – Governance

Overall commentary on the Governance reporting criteria

The Council’s risk management and monitoring arrangements

The Council has a well established risk management system alongside an embedded governance structure across the organisation. The Council has continued to refresh its Risk Management Strategy each year, with a forward looking focus (the strategy approved in September 2020 covered the 2020/23 period) and is well integrated within the Council’s service planning arrangements. The risk management arrangements detail the importance of maintaining strong arrangements and includes directorate, divisional and project risk registers, all of which are informed by detailed assessments of the key risks impacting on each area.

These detailed registers inform the level above and ultimately feed into the Council’s corporate risk register which sets out the key strategic and corporate risks. The risk registers apply a risk score both before and after the identification and application of any mitigation measures and enable the Council to manage the risks actively and take action where necessary. We have reviewed the risk management strategy and examples of directorate and divisional risk registers, as well as the corporate risk register. Our review confirms the strategy is clear and detailed, and the registers appear comprehensive, containing sufficient and appropriate detail to inform Council officers and Members.

The Council reports its risk registers through its governance framework, with registers presented and discussed at a range of member and officer meetings, and feeding into the regular risk update reports to Cabinet and the Corporate Committee. Our attendance at the Corporate Committee meetings has confirmed that the Committee understands its role in the risk management framework and provides challenge to management on the overall risk management strategy, associated registers, corresponding risks and mitigating actions.

The Council maintains an internal audit function, with the service largely provided by an external professional services firm, with an external Head of Internal Audit. It provides assurance over the effective operation of internal controls. The services is managed overall by the Strategic Director for Finance and Investment, who also oversees the arrangements to prevent and detect fraud (which is managed internally). The annual Internal Audit plan is ordinarily agreed with management at the start of the financial year and is reviewed by the Corporate Committee prior to final approval.

During 2020/21, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on Internal Audit’s plans and the Corporate Committee was kept informed of progress and implications for the overall delivery. The audit plan is based on an assessment of risks identified by the Council and is determined to ensure there is assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and control. We have reviewed the Internal Audit plans for 2020/21 and 2021/22 and confirmed they are consistent with the risk based approach. The Council has comprehensive anti-fraud and corruption policies which are updated as required. During 2020/21 the Council’s anti-fraud work has included review of processes to minimise any loss on business grant payments made to businesses.

Internal Audit progress reports are presented to each Corporate Committee meeting, including follow up reporting on recommendations from previous Internal Audit reports and overall assessment of progress in delivering recommendations across all reports. Throughout the year we have attended all Corporate Committee meetings, and from our attendance at meetings we are satisfied this allows the Corporate Committee Members to engage with the reports and challenge the papers and reports which they receive from management, internal audit and external audit.

3. VFM arrangements – Governance

Overall commentary on the Governance reporting criteria - continued

The Council’s risk management and monitoring arrangements (continued)

At the end of each financial year the external Head of Internal Audit provides an opinion based on the work completed during the year. For 2020/21 the Head of Internal Audit concluded that an adequate level of assurance could be given that the Council’s overall framework of governance, risk management and control remains appropriate and has been complied with. Whilst this reflected the significant impact of the pandemic, the annual report highlighted that improvements continue to be made in key control areas

Council arrangements for budget setting and budgetary control

The 2020/21 Annual Revenue and Capital Budget was approved in February 2020, setting out the estimates of the financial challenge for the financial year 2020/21, as supported by the overarching MTFS. Quarterly financial monitoring reports were prepared throughout 2020/21 which highlighted key issues, including any potential impact on budgets in 2021/22 and beyond, with the financial monitoring reports presented to senior managers, Members and then to Cabinet for approval.

Over the summer of 2020, there was continued discussion between officers and Members to consider the current financial position and the impact on the budget of the Council and how to manage the impact of the pandemic on the council and its service delivery. Members were engaged closely in discussions about the financial implications for the Council of the pandemic and ongoing lobbying to maintain the financial plans that had been developed with the Council’s MTFS and, through this engagement, the Council was able to maintain its commitment to its existing plans whilst continuing to maintain service delivery.

The Council has well established budget monitoring arrangements. Internal finance teams are aligned with the Council’s management portfolio structure and the team work closely with

cost centre managers to review, discuss and consider the financial pressures impacting on specific service areas.

The Council maintains a detailed internal budget monitoring timetable for finance teams to ensure that reports and details are completed on a timely basis. Overall financial monitoring reports are prepared for the whole Council position in respect of both its Capital and Revenue budgets and these reports are presented to Cabinet throughout the year. The format of the report has been subject to some review and update to ensure relevant information, including that around the pandemic where an additional Covid-19 dashboard was prepared and reported upon, together with how the Council is delivering in respect of its previously identified key performance indicators.

Council decision making arrangements and control framework

The Council’s decision making arrangements are established in the Council Constitution, with decisions being either made by Members (Cabinet, Council, or other decision making committees) or delegated to Cabinet portfolio leads, or officers as appropriate. All Cabinet and Key Decision reports include Statutory Officer Comments, together with assessments of Finance, Legal issues, Risk Management, Equalities and Organisational Implications. The Council has a range of overview and scrutiny committees that challenge and scrutinise Council decisions.

During 2020/21 the Council adapted its decision making arrangements to respond to the challenges of Covid-19, focusing its meeting structure to ensure decisions were made at an appropriate level and included the Council and its relevant partners. The structure enabled the Council to proactively manage its emerging risks and to take properly informed decisions in an appropriate timescale. It also developed its overall response to the pandemic ‘New Beginnings: Building Lambeth’s Recovery’ to help focus its response to the wide range of issues that impacting on the Council and its residents.

3. VFM arrangements – Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Overall commentary on the Governance reporting criteria - continued

The Council has a Corporate Committee, which acts as the audit committee for the Council, and has the appropriate status within the organisation to challenge management and obtain assurance on the operation of the internal control framework. The Committee has a wide range of responsibilities, but includes an agreed workplan that addresses governance issues, and requests reports on specific internal control issues if considered appropriate. The Corporate Committee met regularly throughout the year, with minimal cancellations as a result of the pandemic, and received a range of reports on internal controls. Where the Committee identifies areas where it requires additional assurance, such as on IT disaster recovery and Treasury Management, reports are brought to future meetings.

Based on the above considerations we are satisfied there is not a significant weakness in the Council’s arrangements in relation to governance.

3. VFM arrangements – Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Overall commentary on the Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness reporting criteria

The Council's arrangements for assessing performance and evaluating service delivery

The Council prepares performance monitoring and financial monitoring reports which are presented to senior management, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committee, often as part of the overall budget monitoring as these include key performance. The overarching financial monitoring position is included in the performance reports. During 2020/21, financial monitoring reports provided information about the financial pressures being experienced, the response to them, updates on the impact of the pandemic and management of associated financial costs / funding received.

This analysis highlighted areas of new or increased service demand whether arising from the pandemic or other service pressures, and included the impact of the many government initiatives and policies on the Council's financial and operational performance. These reports are also used to identify service delivery challenges, for example where increased costs are incurred to address service backlogs or underlying underperformance. Where such issues are highlighted through financial monitoring, the resources required as an investment to address this are identified. During 2020/21, many of the key performance indicators (KPIs) were suspended due to the focus on Covid-19 pressures. Performance reporting was subject to regular revision to take account of the circumstances and developments in report identified by Officers and Members.

As part of the ongoing budget monitoring the Council has developed a range of agreed performance indicators for all directorates at two levels, Tier 1: Borough indicators for the four main objectives of the Borough Plan, and Tier 2: Priority Service KPIs supporting the above. These indicators are reviewed by Services and reported initially to senior officers so that issues requiring action are understood and actioned. Detailed performance commentary is prepared for various levels, including summary high level analysis within Finance and reporting performance to Cabinet.

For 2020/21, as a result of Covid-19, the Council decided to roll over its plans from 2019/20 and

monitor performance against these, with appropriate allowance made for the impact of the pandemic. At the end of 2020/21, a new planning cycle was initiated aligned to the risk management framework, with business plans finalised towards the end of 2020/21 for action in 2021/22. The planning process continues to be updated so that reports have a greater focus on considering Council performance against targets.

In addition to the corporate performance reporting, the Council completes a range of internal performance and management reporting to evaluate performance and identify areas for improvement.

The Council's arrangements for effective partnership working

Through various committees the Council monitors the work and associated service delivery of key partnerships including an ongoing assessment of changes to risks as set out in the applicable risk register. The Council's key partnerships include those with its three wholly owned housing subsidiaries (Homes for Lambeth) and its relationship with health care partners as part of an integrated health and care system (Lambeth Together).

The three Council owned housing companies all work with the Council as it is a significant customer and the developed business plans are influenced by the delivery of services to the Council and any associated generation of income. The governance arrangements in place within the Council to ensure efficient oversight of the companies and their working are continuing to develop as the work and arrangements continue to increase and specific projects, which had been subject to some delay as a result of the pandemic, are completed and associated sales and rentals are completed.

3. VFM arrangements – Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Overall commentary on the Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness reporting criteria - continued

During 2020/21 the Council has continued to work closely with the local healthcare partners to manage services with the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on health and social care. As part of the response to the pandemic the Council became part of the Lambeth Together, to provide overall leadership and guidance and be drive a fully integrated health and care system, bringing together the current work and planning changes to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities. This gave rise to the Lambeth Together Transformation Programme, with a focus on strategic outcomes of better population health outcomes, better experience of care and better experience of providing care.

Subsequently the Council has worked extensively with these partners to develop a Recovery Plan, recognising that they need to continue to work together through the various arrangements to address delivery issues and ensure further learning and adaption. The developed Recovery Plan has taken the learning and experience from the development of responses to Covid-19 and the existing inequalities in health outcomes of Lambeth’s population.

The Council’s arrangements for procurement and commissioning services

The Council’s Constitution contains details of, and a link to, specific Procedure Rules as supporting the Procurement policy and strategy and sets out the process that the Council must follow when procuring goods or services. We have reviewed the procedure rules and confirmed that these appear comprehensive and cover the procedures, the quotation and tender process, any use of frameworks, the post tender evaluation and development of relevant contract monitoring processes. The constitution includes separate details on the process to be followed when entering into individual contracts arising from a procurement process.

The Council has a Procurement Unit that provides a lead and direction on the procurement and commissioning of services. To support this review and analysis, the Council has a well set up

electronic contract management system (eCMS) that provides an analysis of timing for contracts and subsequent procurement. This register allows the Council to be able to plan its procurement and commissioning activities well in advance. In support of the procurement around this listing the Council has a dedicated Head of Procurement, supported by a Contracts Manager, who are developing and implementing a council-wide contract management framework.

The Head of Procurement and Corporate Contract Management unit are responsible for working with commissioners to shape the Council’s strategic plans for contract management, as well as assisting in developing specifications, identifying opportunities for improvement within contracts, reviewing contract management information, monitoring KPIs, considering the value for money of contracts and ensuring that the contracts stay up to date throughout the period.

Where contract management information suggests that contracts are not being delivered to the specification, the Council seeks to engage with suppliers to develop and implement improvements to processes and service delivery. The maintenance of dialogue with suppliers is crucial in managing the relationship, delivering services and in ensuring disputes and disagreements are minimised. The Council establishes expected outcomes and benefits from procurement in a series of key performance indicators within contracts, these being specific to each contract, and subject to active monitoring to ensure the benefits are being delivered.

In addition, as part of its procurement the Council continues to be committed to responsible procurement, a process whereby the Council seeks to meet its need in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis that generates benefits to the Council, society, the economy and the environment.

Based on the above considerations we are satisfied there is not a significant weakness in the Council’s arrangements in relation to improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

04

Section 04:

**Other reporting responsibilities and
our fees**

4. Other reporting responsibilities and our fees

Matters we report by exception

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 provides auditors with specific powers where matters come to our attention that, in their judgement, require specific reporting action to be taken. Auditors have the power to:

- issue a report in the public interest;
- make statutory recommendations that must be considered and responded to publicly;
- apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to the law; and
- issue an advisory notice under schedule 8 of the 2014 Act.

We have not exercised any of these powers as part of our 2020/21 audit.

The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account.

At the date of this report there remain 3 open objections relating to 2018/19. There are no objections outstanding for 2019/20 and we have not received any objections for 2020/21. However, until we close the 2018/19 objections, we cannot certify completion of any of the 3 financial years.

Reporting to the NAO in respect of Whole of Government Accounts consolidation data

The NAO, as group auditor, requires us to complete the WGA Assurance Statement in respect of its consolidation data, and to carry out certain tests on the data.

For 2020/21 the NAO has yet to issue its group instructions on WGA to auditors.

4. Other reporting responsibilities and our fees

Fees for work as the Council's auditor

We reported our proposed fees for the delivery of our work under the Code of Audit Practice in our Audit Strategy Memorandum presented to the Corporate Committee in March 2021. Having completed our work for the 2020/21 financial year, we have proposed final fees and are currently seeking agreement with the Director of Finance & Property:

Area of work	2019/20 fees	2020/21 fees
Planned fee in respect of our work under the Code of Audit Practice	£160,038	£160,038
Additional fees in respect of the new VFM approach	n/a	£10,500
Additional fees in respect of changes in scope (including additional work on PPE valuation, IAS19, Going concern)	£29,800	£21,950
Additional fees in respect of the Redress scheme and associated changes in accounting	£5,600	-
Additional fees in respect of the required audit of Group accounts and associated disclosures	£8,200	£8,200
Total fees	£203,638	£200,688

Fees for other work

We confirm that we have not undertaken any non-audit services for the Council in the year.

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Mazars is an internationally integrated partnership, specialising in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax and legal services*. Operating in over 90 countries and territories around the world, we draw on the expertise of 40,400 professionals – 24,400 in Mazars' integrated partnership and 16,000 via the Mazars North America Alliance – to assist clients of all sizes at every stage in their development.

*where permitted under applicable country laws.