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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Disclaimer of Opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements of East Cambridgeshire District Council ('the Council') and its subsidiaries (the 'Group') for the year ended 31 March 2024. The financial statements comprise the:

- Authority and Group Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Authority and Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Authority and Group Balance Sheet,
- Authority and Group Cash Flow Statement
- the related notes 1 to 32 to the Authority financial statements and the related notes G1 to G4 to the Group financial statements including material accounting policy information, and
- the Collection Fund and the related notes 1 to 7.

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 2023/24.

We do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements of the Authority. Because of the significance of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 required any outstanding accountability statements for years ended 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2023 to be approved not later than 13 December 2024 and the accountability statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 to be approved not later than 28 February 2025 ('the backstop date').

The audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 for East Cambridgeshire District Council was not completed for the reasons set out in our disclaimer of opinion on those financial statements dated 25 November 2024.

Our planned audit work in the current year was focused on transactions in the year and the current year balance sheet.

Due to delays in receiving audit evidence in sufficient time before the backstop date, we did not have the required resource available and, have been unable to complete our audit procedures on:

- Balance Sheet - Grants Received in Advance (23/4 £3.716 million, 22/3 £3.467 million);
- Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement – Finance & Assets (23/4 Net Expenditure £6.348 million, 22/3 Net Expenditure £6.777 million.
- Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement – Operational Services (23/4 Net Expenditure £5.149 million, 22/3 Net Expenditure £4.078 million.
- Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement – Interest Receivable and Investment Income (23/4 Income £2.115 million, 22/3 income £0.809 million.
- Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement – (Surplus) or deficit in the revaluation of non-current assets (23/4 £0.487 million, 22/3 £0.991 million).

As a result of the disclaimer(s) of opinion in the prior year(s) and the scope of our audit work which was impacted by the backstop date, we do not have sufficient appropriate audit evidence over the following:

- in the Group and Authority balance sheet and accompanying notes: the opening balances, closing reserves position and the valuation of property assets held at valuation included in 'Other Land and Buildings' and 'Heritage Assets' that were not revalued in year.
- in the Group and Authority Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account and accompanying notes: comparatives and income and expenditure transactions that are impacted by the opening balances shown in the prior year balance sheet
- in the Group and Authority Cash Flow Statement and accompanying notes: opening balances, comparatives and in-year cash flow movements that are calculated as a movement between the opening and closing balance sheet
- in the Collection Fund and accompanying notes: opening balances, comparatives and in-year movements that are calculated as a movement between the opening and closing balance

Therefore, we are disclaiming our opinion on the financial statements.

Matters on which we report by exception

Notwithstanding our disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements we have nothing to report in respect of whether the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit, performed subject to the pervasive limitation described above, or our knowledge of the Group and the Authority.

We report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- 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 (as amended)
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we are not satisfied that the Group and the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the Section 151 Officer

As explained more fully in the 'Statement of Responsibilities' set out on page 20, the Section 151 Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Group 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, 2023/24, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Section 151 Officer 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 financial statements, the Section 151 Officer is responsible for assessing the Group and the Authority'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 the Group and the Authority either intends to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Group and the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report.

However, because of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

We are independent of the Group and the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Code of Audit Practice 2024 and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2024, as to whether East Cambridgeshire District Council had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether East Cambridgeshire District Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether East Cambridgeshire District Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Certificate

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until the NAO, as group auditor, has confirmed that no further assurances will be required from us as component auditors of East Cambridgeshire District Council. Until we have completed these procedures, we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of East Cambridgeshire District Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 85 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Group and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

MARK HODGSON

ERNST & YOUNG LLP

Date: 20th February 2025

Mark Hodgson (Key Audit Partner)
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)
Cambridge