

COUNCIL – TUESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2024

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR A MORLEY TO COUNCILLOR N RUSHTON

“Given the government's plans to introduce legislation to reset the audit backlog, could the portfolio holder please explain how the council is positioned to meet the backlog date for the financial year 2023-2024?”

REPOSENSE FROM COUNCILLOR N RUSHTON TO COUNCILLOR A MORLEY

“The revised backstop date for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts is now 28 February 2025. Prior to the statement on 30 July 2024 by the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, the backstop date for the 2023/24 financial year was 31 May 2025. The Council had intended to publish the unaudited Statement of Accounts by this initial backstop date. Consequently, preliminary discussions were held with the external auditor, Azets, to outline a high-level timetable.

However, due to the Government’s decision to advance the deadline, the Council is unable to meet the revised backstop date. This is because the requirement to set a balanced budget for 2025/26 coincides with the period for preparing the Statement of Accounts. Given the significance of this task, it is not feasible for the same group of staff to manage both tasks simultaneously.

Following discussions with our new external auditor, Azets, the Council's S151 Officer has written to inform the Government of this issue, as requested in the letter from Catherine Frances, Director General for Local Government and Public Services dated 20 September 2024.

The Council aims to publish the unaudited Statement of Accounts 2024/25 in May 2025 and has discussed the practicalities of this timeline with Azets. The Council is currently awaiting further guidance from the Government regarding the next steps.”