

Grant Thornton UK LLP
2 Glass Wharf,
Bristol,
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Date: 25 February 2025

Ref:

Officer: Aidan Dunn

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25 February 2025

Dear Grant Thornton UK LLP

Dorset Council
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

This representation letter is provided in connection with the audit of the financial statements of Dorset Council for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

Financial Statements

- i. We have fulfilled our responsibilities for the preparation of the Council's financial statements in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 ("the Code"); in particular the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance therewith.
- ii. We have complied with the requirements of all statutory directions affecting the Council and these matters have been appropriately reflected and disclosed in the financial statements.
- iii. The Council has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of any regulatory authorities that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.
- iv. We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud.
- v. Significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable. Such accounting estimates include land and buildings valuations and the valuation of the net pension fund liability. We are satisfied that the material judgements used in the preparation of the financial statements are soundly based, in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements. We understand our responsibilities includes identifying and considering alternative, methods, assumptions or source data that would be equally valid under the financial reporting framework, and why these alternatives were rejected in favour of the estimate used. We are satisfied that the methods, the data and the significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates and their related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement or disclosure that is reasonable in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements.

- vi. We confirm that we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme assets and liabilities for IAS19 Employee Benefits disclosures are consistent with our knowledge. We confirm that all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for. We also confirm that all significant post-employment benefits have been identified and properly accounted for.
- vii. Except as disclosed in the financial statements:
 - a. there are no unrecorded liabilities, actual or contingent;
 - b. none of the assets of the Council has been assigned, pledged or mortgaged; and
 - c. there are no material prior year charges or credits, nor exceptional or non-recurring items requiring separate disclosure.
- viii. Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code.
- ix. All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.
- x. We have considered the adjusted misstatements and misclassification and disclosures changes schedules included in your Audit Findings Report. The Council's financial statements have been amended for these misstatements, misclassifications and disclosure changes and are free of material misstatements, including omissions.
- xi. We have considered the unadjusted misstatements schedule included in your Audit Findings Report. We have not adjusted the financial statements for these misstatements brought to our attention as they are immaterial to the results of the Council and its financial position at the year-end.
- xii. Actual or possible litigation and claims have been accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards.
 - i. We have considered whether the Council are required to reflect a liability in respect of equal pay claims within its financial statements. We confirm that we are satisfied that no liability needs to be recognised on the grounds that:
 - a. The Council has been discussing terms and conditions in detail with the recognised trade unions since it was formed in 2019. No concerns about equal pay have been raised. A Collective Agreement has now been reached with the recognised trade unions as part of the single status agenda and will be implemented on 1 April 2025.
 - b. the Council has adopted the equality proofed Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) Job Evaluation Scheme which ensures that work of equal value is allocated to the same salary banding. The scheme has recently been reviewed with the recognised trade unions to ensure that it complies with equal pay legislation.
 - c. the Council's Pay Policy Statement determines its approach to pay and is published externally to ensure full transparency.
 - d. role and working arrangements whereby individuals or groups may work less time than their contractual hours do not exist in the Council. This has been confirmed through a recent review of working practice in Waste and Highways functions, which are areas where this has been identified as a common practice in other employers.
 - ii. We have no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.

- iii. We have updated our going concern assessment. We continue to believe that the Council's financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis and have not identified any material uncertainties related to going concern on the grounds that:
 - a. the nature of the Council means that, notwithstanding any intention to cease its operations in their current form, it will continue to be appropriate to adopt the going concern basis of accounting because, in such an event, services it performs can be expected to continue to be delivered by related public authorities and preparing the financial statements on a going concern basis will still provide a faithful representation of the items in the financial statements;
 - b. the financial reporting framework permits the entity to prepare its financial statements on the basis of the presumption set out under a) above; and
 - c. the Council's system of internal control has not identified any events or conditions relevant to going concern.
- iv. We believe that no further disclosures relating to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern need to be made in the financial statements.
- v. The Council has complied with all aspects of ring-fenced grants that could have a material effect on the Council's financial statements in the event of non-compliance.

Information Provided

- vi. All transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

We have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.

- vii. On 30 September 2024 parliament approved the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024. These Regulations set a publication date for financial statements in respect of 2023/24 of 28 February 2025. The new National Audit Office Code which was approved on 14 November 2024 also requires that where auditors are unable to conclude their work, they should issue either a qualified audit opinion or a disclaimer of opinion by this date, known as the 'statutory backstop date'. It has not been possible to provide you with the all the required information for you to complete your audit for year ending 31 March 2024 by the statutory backstop date. This is due to a disclaimed opinion being issued on the 2022/23 financial statements which in turn impacts on the opening balance position for the 2023/24 financial year. This includes the following:
 - a. providing you with:
 - i. access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the Council's financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - ii. additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of your audit; and
 - iii. access to persons within the Council via remote arrangements from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
 - b. communicating to you all deficiencies in internal control of which management is aware.
 - c. disclosing to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
 - d. disclosing to you all information in relation to fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects the Council and involves:
 - i. management;
 - ii. employees who have significant roles in internal control; or

- iii. others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- e. disclosing to you all information in relation to allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.
- f. disclosing to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, including those relating to health and safety, whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.
- g. disclosing to you all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.

Annual Governance Statement

- viii. We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) fairly reflects the Council's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS.

Narrative Report

- ix. The disclosures within the Narrative Report fairly reflect our understanding of the Council's financial and operating performance over the period covered by the Council's financial statements.

Approval

The approval of this letter of representation was minuted by the Council's Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 24 February 2025.

Yours faithfully

Name.....Aidan Dunn

Position.....Executive Director (Corporate Development) (Chief Financial Officer)

Date.....**25 February 2025**

Signed on behalf of the Council