

Report to	Corporate Governance Committee
Date of meeting	8 th July 2020
Lead Member / Officer	Julian Thompson Hill
Report author	Steve Gadd, Head of Finance and Property
Title	Draft Statement of Accounts 2019/20

1. What is the report about?

To provide an overview of the draft Statement of Accounts 2019/20 and the process underpinning it.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The Corporate Governance Committee has delegated responsibility to approve the audited accounts which it is hoped will be presented on 9th September 2019. Presenting the draft accounts gives an early indication of the council's financial position and can highlight any issues in the accounts or the process prior to the accounts being audited.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 To note the position as presented in the draft accounts (see Appendix 1).

4. Report details

The council has a statutory duty to produce a statement of accounts that complies with approved accounting standards. The audited accounts have to be formally approved by elected members on behalf of the council. This role has been delegated to the Corporate Governance Committee. The draft accounts have now been finalised and were signed by the Head of Finance on the 15th June (3rd June last year). The draft accounts have been made available for audit as required and will be open to public inspection from 3rd August

to 28th August. These dates are later than usual due to the current restrictions related to Covid 19.

Given the role of the Committee in approving the final accounts, it is beneficial to provide an update and overview at draft stage for consideration before submitting the final accounts in September.

As reported previously to Corporate Governance the statutory deadlines for Local Government are being brought forward as detailed in the table below:

	Current Dates	Interim Dates for SofA 2018/19 and 2019/20	Final Position from 2020/21
Final date on which the Chief Finance Officer must sign and date the statement of accounts	30th June	15th June	31st May
Date that council must approve and publish an audited statement of accounts	30th September	15th September	31st July

Many Local Authorities highlighted the severe work pressures imposed by the financial response to Covid 19 and lobbied for a formal extension of the deadline for 2019/20 accounts. Although late in the process a letter was received on 30th April 2020 from Welsh Government to Directors of Finance confirming the following:

“To provide some certainty and a framework for completion of the annual accounts, we recommend Welsh authorities adopt a timetable for the 2019-20 accounts in line with the revised English requirements. This will require preparation and certification of draft accounts by 31 August 2020 and publication of final audited accounts by 30 November 2020 for all local government bodies in Wales. We would encourage councils to approve earlier wherever possible and engage with their auditors to help manage overall pressure on Audit Wales. If working towards this later timetable, bodies will need to ensure they publish the required notices as set out in the Regulations.”

After an internal discussion DCC decided to try and keep to the original deadlines. The good news is that the Council achieved the original statutory deadline and has therefore maintained the good progress towards achieving both the interim and final unaudited accounts as shown in the table below:

Statement of Accounts	Signed off by S151 Officer and passed to WAO
2015/16	21-Jun-16
2016/17	13-Jun-17
2017/18	15-Jun-18
2018/19	06-Jun-19 (target)
2019/20	15-Jun-20 (revised target)
2020/21	31-May-21 (mandatory)

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The publication of the Statement of Accounts underpins the financial stewardship and governance of the council and therefore supports all council services and priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no additional cost implications as a result of this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

It is the professional judgement of the Section 151 Officer that a Well-being Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The council's procedures and processes underpinning the production of the accounts are regularly reviewed by the Wales Audit Office. Professional opinions are drawn from numerous other disciplines beyond finance, such as legal, property valuation, HR and pensions.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The Statement of Accounts is a key element of the council's governance framework. It is important that elected members are assured that the accounts have been produced in compliance with the relevant standards and that the process underpinning the production of the accounts is robust. It is very pleasing that a draft Statement of Accounts was signed off by the original deadline of 15th June. This has involved a great deal of hard work across the finance service especially considering the information requirements due to the financial response to Covid 19 and the technical challenges of home working.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The council would be in breach of its statutory duty if it could not approve the accounts by 30th November.

11. Power to make the decision

Local authorities are required under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs. The Appointed Auditor is required by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 to examine and certify the accounts of the council and must be satisfied that the accounts have been completed in compliance with the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2018.