

Staffordshire Pension Fund

Audit results report

Year ended 31 March 2021

14 December 2021

12 December 2023 - All changes are
highlighted in blue

The EY logo consists of the letters 'EY' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A yellow triangle is positioned above the 'Y'.

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working world



Staffordshire Pension Fund

14 December 21

12 December 2023

Dear Members

We are pleased to attach our draft audit results report summarising the status of our audit for the forthcoming meeting of the Audit & Standards Committee. We will update the Committee at its meeting on 14 December 2021 on further progress to that date and explain the remaining steps for the issue of our final opinion.

The audit is designed to express an opinion on the 2020/21 financial statements and address current statutory and regulatory requirements. This report contains our findings related to the areas of audit emphasis, our views on Staffordshire Pension Fund's accounting policies and judgements and material internal control findings. Our audit of the Fund's accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 is materially complete. We anticipate [issuing](#) an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements in the form at Section 3.

This report is intended solely for the use of the Audit & Standards Committee, other members of the Authority, and senior management. It should not be used for any other purpose or given to any other party without obtaining our written consent.

We would like to thank your staff for their help during the engagement given the additional pressures they have faced responding to the pandemic and working remotely.

Yours faithfully

Hassan Rohimun

Associate Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Encl

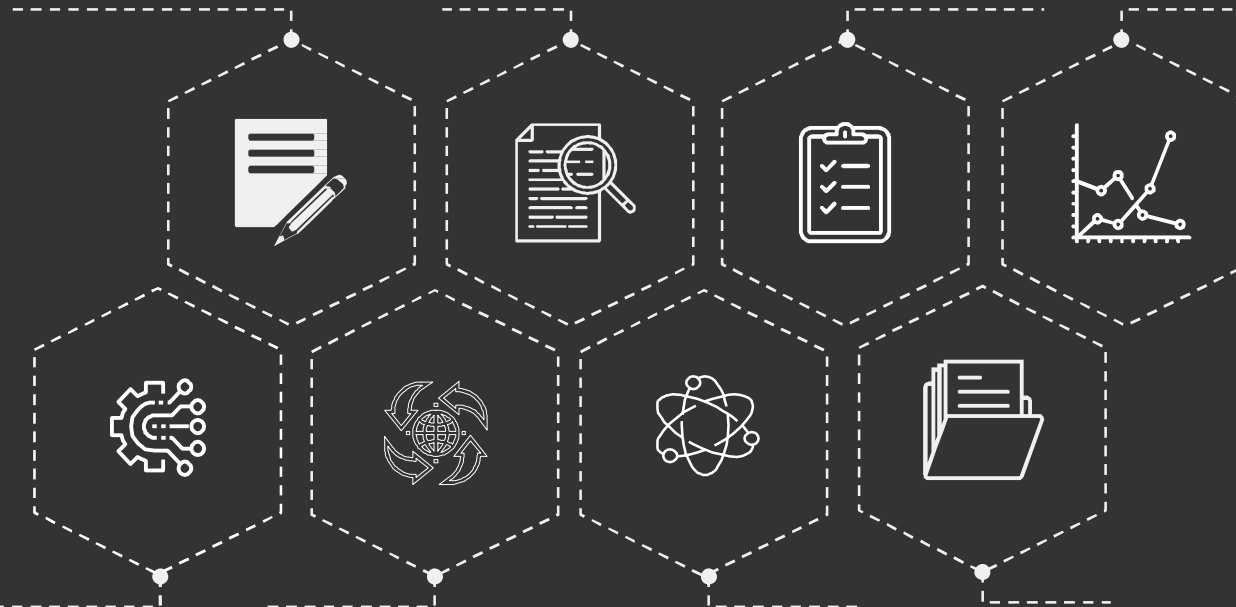
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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)" issued by the PSAA (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/terms-of-appointment/terms-of-appointment-and-further-guidance-1-july-2021/>) sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee and management of Staffordshire Pension Fund in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee and management of Staffordshire Pension Fund those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Committee and management of Staffordshire Pension Fund for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01 Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Scope update

In our audit planning report dated 25 June 2021, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements. We have conducted our audit in accordance with the plan.

Changes in materiality and audit risks - we updated our planning materiality assessment using the draft financial statements and have also reconsidered our risk assessment. There are no new audit risks.

Planning Materiality	Performance Materiality	Audit Differences
Our planning materiality represents 1% of the prior year's net assets, consistent year on year (2019/20: 1% of net assets).	Performance materiality represents 75% of planning materiality (2019/20: 50%).	We will report all uncorrected misstatements relating to the primary statements (net asset statement and fund account) greater than 5% of planning materiality (2019/20: 5% of PM).
£47.4m - as reported in the audit plan	£35.5m - as reported in the audit plan	£2.3m - as reported in the audit plan
£61.2m - final	£45.9m - final	£3.06m - final

Executive Summary

Scope update (continued)

Information Produced by the Entity (IPE): We identified an increased risk around the completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of information produced by the entity due to the inability of the audit team to verify original documents or re-run reports on-site from the Fund's systems. We undertook the following to address this risk:

- Used the screen sharing function of Microsoft Teams to evidence re-running of reports used to generate the IPE we audited; and
- Agree IPE to scanned documents or other system screenshots.

Status of the audit

We have completed the procedures outlined in our Audit Plan subject to:

- the completion of the final conclusion procedures including subsequent events;
- receipt of the approved final statements;
- receipt of the signed management letter of representation; and
- final manager and partner review

We anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion on the financial statements in the form which appears at Section 3.

Auditing accounting estimates

A revised auditing standard has been issued for the audit of accounting estimates. The revised standard requires auditors to consider inherent risks associated with the production of accounting estimates. These could relate, for example, to the complexity of the method applied, subjectivity in the choice of data or assumptions or a high degree of estimation uncertainty. As part of this, auditors now consider risk on a spectrum (from low to high inherent risk) rather than a simplified classification of whether or not there is a significant risk. At the same time, we may see the number of significant risks we report for accounting estimates to increase as a result of the revised guidance in this area. The changes to the standard have affected the nature and extent of information requested and increased the level of audit work required.

Executive Summary

Areas of audit focus

Our audit plan identified significant risks and areas of focus for our audit of the Fund's financial statements. We summarise below our latest findings.

Significant risk	Findings & conclusions
Management Override: Misstatements due to fraud or error	We have completed our testing and found no indications of management override of controls.
Posting of investment journals	We have completed our testing and have nothing to report.
Valuation of unquoted investments	We have completed our testing and have nothing to report.

Other area of audit focus	Findings & conclusions
Valuation of directly held properties	The Fund's draft accounts include £468m directly held property. For 2020/21, in line with the updated RICS guidance, material uncertainty clause has been removed by the valuer. We considered the work of the Fund's external valuer and we also engaged our own internal valuation specialists (EY Real Estates) to review a sample of the properties and we found that overall the valuations were reasonable. We have not identified any issues and have nothing to report in this area. We have also concluded that it is appropriate not to include Emphasis of Matter paragraph to our audit opinion.
Going concern	The Fund provided a going concern assessment and following audit review revised its disclosure note.

We request that you review these and other matters set out in this report to ensure:

- There are no residual further considerations or matters that could impact these issues
- You concur with the resolution of the issue
- There are no further significant issues you are aware of to be considered before the financial report is finalised

There are no matters, other than those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Pension Committee.

Audit differences

We have not identified any adjusted or unadjusted audit differences that are above our reporting threshold as specified in Section 04.



Executive Summary

Control observations

We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements and which is unknown to you.

Other reporting issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement included within the Staffordshire County Council annual report for consistency with our knowledge of the Fund. We have no matters to report as a result of this work.

We have no other matters to report.

Independence

Please refer to Section 07 for our update on Independence.



02

Areas of Audit Focus



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Risk of Management Override: Misstatements due to fraud or error

What is the risk?

As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What did we do and what judgements did we focus on?

In order to address this risk we:

- Tested the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements;
- Reviewed accounting estimates for evidence of management bias; and
- Evaluated the business rationale for significant unusual transactions.

What are our conclusions?

Our conclusion is subject to the completion of remaining audit procedures as outlined within the Executive Summary on page 6. To date, we have not identified any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override.

We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied.

We did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the Fund's normal course of business



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Risk of Management Override: Year end investment journals

What is the risk?

The Pension Fund posts year end manual journals in relation to the valuation of its investments and the recognition of investment income. There is a risk that, due to fraud or error, investment journals posted into the general ledger are incorrect, which could result in a misstatement of year-end investment value and/or investment income.

What did we do and what judgements did we focus on?

- Tested journals at year-end to ensure there are no unexpected or unusual postings;
- Undertook a review of reconciliations to the fund manager and custodian reports and investigated any reconciling differences;
- Re-performed the detailed investment note using the reports we have acquired directly from the custodians or fund managers, including the agreement of investment additions and disposals in the year;
- Sought to obtain further independent support for the valuation of pooled year-end investments where this can be obtained;
- Checked the reconciliation of holdings included in the Net Assets Statement back to the source reports; and
- Reviewed accounting estimates for evidence of management bias.

We utilised our data analytics capabilities to assist with our work, including journal entry testing. We assessed journal entries for evidence of management bias and evaluated for business rationale.

What are our conclusions?

We have not identified any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override. We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied. We did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the Pension Fund's normal course of business. Our final conclusion for this audit area is subject to completion of the remaining audit procedures as outlined within Executive Summary on page 6 of this report.



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Valuation of unquoted investments

What is the risk?

Valuation of unquoted investments

The Fund's investments include unquoted pooled investment vehicles such as private equity and private debt (Level 3 Investments).

Investment managers make judgements to value those investments as their prices are not publicly available. The material nature of Investments means that any error in judgement could result in a material valuation error.

Market volatility means such judgments can quickly become outdated, especially when there is a significant time period between the latest available audited information and the fund year end. Such variations could have a material impact on the financial statements.

As these investments are more complex to value, we have identified the Fund's investments in Level 3 investments as a significant risk, as even a small movement in these assumptions could have a material impact on the financial statements.

What did we do and what judgements did we focus on?

Our audit approach has included the following procedures:

- Assessing the competence of management experts;
- Reviewing the basis of valuation for property investments and other unquoted investments and assessing the appropriateness of the valuation methods used;
- Comparing the investment value included in the financial statements to direct confirmations from the Fund Managers.
- Review the basis of valuation for level 3 investments and ensure it is in line with the accounting policy.
- Reviewing the latest audited accounts for the relevant fund managers and ensuring there are no matters arising that highlight weaknesses in the funds valuation;
- Obtain copies of the ISAE3402 reports over internal control for any control exceptions raised in relation to the valuation of investments; and
- Performing analytical procedures and checking the valuation output for reasonableness against our own expectations.

What are our conclusions?

We have completed our planned procedures including obtaining all relevant internal control reports. We are satisfied that the valuation of level 3 investments is materially stated.



Areas of Audit Focus



Valuation of directly held property

The fund holds £468.4m as directly held property, which is valued annually by an external valuer. The market uncertainty in 2020 due to Covid-19 resulted in the valuer including a material uncertainty paragraph in the prior year valuation report which was also disclosed in the notes to the financial statements. We have emphasised the disclosure in our prior year audit opinion. For 2020/21, in line with the updated RICS guidance, the material uncertainty clause has been removed by the valuer.

We considered the work of the Fund's external valuer and we also engaged our own internal valuation specialists (EY Real Estates) to review a sample of the properties and we found that overall the valuations were reasonable. We tested a further sample of properties to gain assurance that their valuation was reasonably stated in the accounts. This required verifying lease rental payments via third party information provided by the Fund's property advisors. We have not identified any issues and have nothing to report in this area. We have also concluded that it is appropriate not to include Emphasis of Matter paragraph to our audit opinion.



Going concern disclosure

There is a presumption that the Fund will continue as a going concern. However, the current and future uncertainty presented by the Covid-19 pandemic [and increased cost of living](#) increases the need for the Fund to undertake a going concern assessment to support its assertion. From an audit perspective, the auditor's report going concern concept is a 12-month outlook from the audit opinion date, rather than the balance sheet date. So, this year, for example, we have requested evidence of the going concern assessment up to and including at least [March 31, 2025](#).

We have obtained management's going concern assessment and reviewed for any evidence of bias and consistency with the accounts; we have reviewed the financial modelling and forecasts prepared by the Pension Fund for the going concern assessment period. We have ensured that appropriate going concern disclosures have been made within the financial statements. [We are currently awaiting the latest version of the financial statement which includes an updated going concern disclosure.](#)



03 Audit Report



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Opinion

We have audited the Pension Fund financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The Pension Fund financial statements comprise the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes 1 to 25. 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 2020/21.

In our opinion the Pension Fund financial statements:
give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the pension fund during the year ended 31 March 2021 and the amount and disposition of the fund's assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2021; and
have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the pension fund 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 Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) AGN01, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the County Treasurer's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least 12 months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the County Treasurer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report. However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this statement is not a guarantee as to the authority's ability to continue as a going concern.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Staffordshire County Council statement of Accounts 2020/21, set out on pages XX-XX, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The County Treasurer is responsible for the other information contained within the Statement of Accounts 2020/21.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of the other information, we are required to report that fact.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- 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;
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the County Treasurer

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Responsibilities set out on pages [...] the County Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts, which includes the Pension Fund 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 2020/21, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the directors determine 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 County Treasurer is responsible for assessing the Pension Fund'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 Pension Fund either intends to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect irregularities, including fraud. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both those charged with governance of the entity and management.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that are applicable to the Pension Fund and determined that the most significant are the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended), and The Public Service Pensions Act 2013.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

We understood how Staffordshire Pension Fund is complying with those frameworks by understanding the incentive, opportunities and motives for non-compliance, including inquiring of management, the head of internal audit, those charged with governance and obtaining and reading documentation relating to the procedures in place to identify, evaluate and comply with laws and regulations, and whether they are aware of instances of non-compliance. We corroborated this through our reading of the Pension Committee, Pensions Board minutes, through enquiry of employees to confirm Pension policies, and through the inspection of employee handbooks and other information. Based on this understanding we designed our audit procedures to identify non-compliance with such laws and regulations. Our procedures had a focus on compliance with the accounting framework through obtaining sufficient audit evidence in line with the level of risk identified and with relevant legislation.

We assessed the susceptibility of the Pension Fund's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur by understanding the potential incentives and opportunities for management to manipulate the financial statements, and performed procedures to understand the areas in which this would most likely arise. Based on our risk assessment procedures we identified management override of controls and the manipulation of investment journals to be our fraud risks.

To address our fraud risks we tested the consistency of the investment asset valuation from the independent sources of the Custodian and the fund managers to the financial statements. We have also tested specific journal entries identified by applying risk criteria to the entire population of journals. For each journal selected, we tested specific transactions back to source documentation to confirm that the journals were authorised and accounted for appropriately.

In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override. In addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, we tested the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessed whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluated the business rationale of any identified significant transactions that were unusual or outside the normal course of business.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Staffordshire County Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 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 Staffordshire County Council and the Staffordshire County Council's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Hassan Rohimun (Key Audit Partner)
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)
City
Date



04 Audit Differences





Audit Differences

In the normal course of any audit, we identify misstatements between amounts we believe should be recorded in the financial statements and the disclosures and amounts actually recorded. These differences are classified as “known” or “judgemental”. Known differences represent items that can be accurately quantified and relate to a definite set of facts or circumstances. Judgemental differences generally involve estimation and relate to facts or circumstances that are uncertain or open to interpretation.

Summary of unadjusted and adjusted differences

At the date of this report there are no unadjusted or adjusted audit differences which require your attention.

The draft financial statements and supporting working papers were of a good quality. We worked with management to make enhancements to the management commentary and notes to the financial statements which have been agreed by management.



05 Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Consistency of other information published with the financial statements

We must give an opinion on the consistency of the financial and non-financial information in the Staffordshire Pension Fund Annual Report with the audited financial statements. We have no matters to report.

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Authority to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. "a report in the public interest"). We also have a duty to make written recommendations to the Authority, copied to the Secretary of State, and take action in accordance with our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. We have had no reason to exercise these duties.

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Fund's financial reporting process. We have no matters to report.



06

Assessment of Control Environment



Assessment of Control Environment

Financial controls

It is the responsibility of the Pension Fund to develop and implement systems of internal financial control and to put in place proper arrangements to monitor their adequacy and effectiveness in practice. Our responsibility as your auditor is to consider whether the Fund has put adequate arrangements in place to satisfy itself that the systems of internal financial control are both adequate and effective in practice.

As part of our audit of the financial statements, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. As we have adopted a fully substantive approach, we have therefore not tested the operation of controls.

Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control.

We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements of which you are not aware.



07

Independence

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and the Pension Fund, and its members and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to the Pension Fund, its members and senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2020 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity.

Services provided by Ernst & Young

The next page includes a summary of the fees that you have paid to us in the year ended 31 March 2021 in line with the disclosures set out in FRC Ethical Standard and in statute. Full details of the services that we have provided are shown below.

As at the date of this report, there are no future services which have been contracted and no written proposal to provide non-audit services has been submitted. We confirm that we have not undertaken non-audit work.

Other communications

EY Transparency Report 2020

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2020:

[EY UK Transparency Report 2020 | EY UK](#)

Fee analysis

As part of our reporting on our independence, we set out below a summary of the fees paid for the year ended 31 March 2021.

In our Audit Plan we have communicated our proposal to increase the scale fee for 2019/20 to £50,340. This proposal is currently being considered by PSAA as part of their national consideration of EY's fee proposals. The table below does not reflect those proposals. On completion of the audit we will finalise our fees and provide supporting details to the Director of Corporate Services for agreement.

	Final fee 2020/21	Planned fee 2020/21	Final Fee 2019/20
	£	£	£
Scale Fee – Code work	22,050	22,050	22,050
Additional work and associated fees:			
IAS 19 Assurance Work – annual approach (1)	9,500	9,500	9,500
Triennial Review Procedures (2)	-	-	11,500
Going concern assessment. EOM disclosures including EY consultations (3)	TBC	2,000-5,000	4,250 -
Additional work to obtain assurance over directly held property in light of Covid-19. (4)	TBC	3,000-7,000	5,750
Proposed increase to the scale fee due to changes in work required to address professional and regulatory requirements and scope associated with risk (5)	28,920	28,920	28,920
Total indicative Pension Fund fee	TBC	TBC	81,340

Fee analysis (continued)

- 1. In line with prior year, additional fee of £9,500 takes into account the additional work required to respond to twelve IAS19 assurance requests from scheduled bodies.*
- 2. In prior year we reported in the Audit Plan that as a result of the triennial valuation of the Fund we would be required to undertake additional testing of membership date. We have tested data for a sample of 250 members.
Items 1 and 2 are outside of the PSAA fee regime and we will seek agreement with the County Treasurer.*
- 3. We reported in the Audit Plan that we would need to carry out additional work to review, assess and challenge the Authority's going concern assessment and associated disclosure and the impact of C-19 on the valuation of directly held property.*
- 4. We have had to undertaken additional work on directly held properties and engaged our EYRE specialists in light of the impact of Covid-19 on the valuation of the assets.*
- 5. We remain in discussion with PSAA about increasing the scale fee to reflect the additional work auditors are required to do to meet regulatory requirements. In our view the scale fee for the Staffordshire PF audit should be increased by £28,290.*







08 Appendices

Appendix A

Required communications with the Audit Committee

There are certain communications that we must provide to the Audit Committees of UK clients. We have detailed these here together with a reference of when and where they were covered:

		 Our Reporting to you
 Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the audit committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter.	Audit planning report 25 June 2021
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified.	Audit planning report 25 June 2021
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures • Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit • Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management • Written representations that we are seeking • Expected modifications to the audit report • Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	This Audit Results Report

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty • Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements • The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	This Audit Results Report
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion • The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods • A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected • Material misstatements corrected by management 	This Audit Results Report
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiry of the audit committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements. 	This Audit Results Report
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the Authority • Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist • Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the Authority, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements. • The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected • Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit Committee responsibility. 	This Audit Results Report

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the Authority's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-disclosure by management • Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions • Disagreement over disclosures • Non-compliance with laws and regulations • Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the Authority 	This Audit Results Report
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principal threats • Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness • An overall assessment of threats and safeguards • Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communications whenever significant judgments are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p> <p>For public interest entities and listed companies, communication of minimum requirements as detailed in the FRC Revised Ethical Standard 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships between EY, the company and senior management, its affiliates and its connected parties • Services provided by EY that may reasonably bear on the auditors' objectivity and independence • Related safeguards • Fees charged by EY analysed into appropriate categories such as statutory audit fees, tax advisory fees, other non-audit service fees • A statement of compliance with the Ethical Standard, including any non-EY firms or external experts used in the audit 	<p>Audit planning report 25 June 2021 and This Audit results report</p>

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of any inconsistencies between the Ethical Standard and Group's policy for the provision of non-audit services, and any apparent breach of that policy • Details of any contingent fee arrangements for non-audit services • Where EY has determined it is appropriate to apply more restrictive rules than permitted under the Ethical Standard • The audit committee should also be provided an opportunity to discuss matters affecting auditor independence 	
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management's refusal for us to request confirmations • Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures. 	We have received all requested confirmations
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur • Enquiry of the audit committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the audit committee may be aware of 	We have inquired management and those charged with governance. We have not identified any material instances or non-compliance with laws and regulations
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit. 	This Audit Results Report

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance 	This Audit Results Report
Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise 	This Audit Results Report
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	This Audit Results Report
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakdown of fee information when the audit planning report is agreed Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit Any non-audit work 	This Audit Planning Report 25 June 2021 and This Audit results report

Management representation letter

Staffordshire Pension Fund.

Management Representation Letter

12 December 2023

Hassan Rohimun
Associate Partner
Ernst & Young LLP
2 St Peter's Square
Manchester
M2 3DF

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Staffordshire Pension Fund ("the Fund") for the year ended 31 March 2021. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the Fund during the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and of the amount and disposition of the Fund's assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2021, other than liabilities to pay pensions and benefits after the end of the period, have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of the Fund's financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
2. We confirm that the Fund is a Registered Pension Scheme. We are not aware of any reason why the tax status of the scheme should change.
3. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Fund, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position and the financial performance of the Fund in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.

Management representation letter

4. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.
5. As members of management of the Fund, we believe that the Fund has a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/2021 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.
6. There are no unadjusted audit differences identified during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented.

B. Non-compliance with laws and regulations including fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for determining that the Fund's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible for identifying and addressing any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have not made any reports to The Pensions Regulator, nor are we aware of any such reports having been made by any of our advisors.
5. There have been no other communications with The Pensions Regulator or other regulatory bodies during the Fund year or subsequently concerning matters of noncompliance with any legal duty.
6. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the Fund (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
 - Involving financial improprieties
 - Related to laws or regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the Fund's financial statements
 - Related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Fund, its ability to continue, or to avoid material penalties
 - Involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal control, or others
 - In relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
 - Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters.
 - Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit.
 - Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

Management representation letter

2. You have been informed of all changes to the Fund rules.
3. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and all material transactions, events and conditions are reflected in the financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of members of the management of the Fund and committees of members of the management of the Fund (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the period to the most recent meeting on the following [date].
5. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Fund's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the period end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.
6. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding annuities held in the name of the members of the management of the Fund.
7. We have disclosed to you, and the Fund has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.
8. No transactions have been made which are not in the interests of the Fund members or the Fund during the fund year or subsequently.
9. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/2021
10. From the date of our last management representation letter through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate.

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Notes to the financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

E. Going Concern

3. Note 2 to the financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

F. Subsequent Events

1. Other than the events described in Note 6 to the financial statements, there have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

Management representation letter

E. Going Concern

3. Note 2 to the financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

F. Subsequent Events

1. Other than the events described in Note 6 to the financial statements, there have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

G. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement within the Statement of Accounts, and the Pension Fund Annual Report.

2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

H. Independence

1. We confirm that, under section 27 of the Pensions Act 1995, no members of the management of the Fund of the Scheme is connected with, or is an associate of, Ernst & Young LLP which would render Ernst & Young LLP ineligible to act as auditor to the Scheme.

I. Derivative Financial Instruments

1. We confirm that all investments in derivative financial instruments have been made after due consideration by the members of the management of the Fund of the limitations in their use imposed by The LGPS Management and Investment of Funds Regulations 2016. The Fund's Investment Strategy Statement has been duly reviewed to ensure that such investments comply with any limitations imposed by its provisions. The financial statements disclose all transactions in derivative financial instruments that have been entered into during the period, those still held by the members of the management of the Fund at the Fund's year end and the terms and conditions relating thereto.

2. Management has duly considered and deemed as appropriate the assumptions and methodologies used in the valuation of 'over the counter' derivative financial instruments which the Fund is holding, and these have been communicated to you.

J. Pooling investments, including the use of collective investment vehicles and shared services

1. We confirm that all investments in pooling arrangements, including the use of collective investment vehicles and shared services, meet the criteria set out in the November 2015 investment reform and criteria guidance and that the requirements of the LGPS Management and Investment of Funds Regulations 2016 in respect of these investments has been followed.

K. Actuarial valuation

1. The latest report of the actuary Hymans Roberson as at 31 March 2021 and date [...] has been provided to you. To the best of our knowledge and belief we confirm that the information supplied by us to the actuary was true and that no significant information was omitted which may have a bearing on their report.

Management representation letter

L. Use of the Work of a Specialist

We agree with the findings of the specialists that we have engaged to value directly held property and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

M. Estimates

Valuation of Complex Investments Estimate

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the valuation of complex investments have taken into account all relevant information of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the valuation of complex investments.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the valuation of complex investments appropriately reflect full available information that might affect fair value of the investment assets. the fair value on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate, including those describing estimation uncertainty, are complete and are reasonable in the context of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the valuation of complex investments.
6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate and disclosures in the financial statements.

Actuarial Present Value of Promised Retirement Benefits Estimate

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits have taken into account all relevant information of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by the actuary producing the estimate have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making this estimate.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making this estimate appropriately reflect all available information at the point of making the estimate on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate, including those describing estimation uncertainty, are complete and are reasonable in the context of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits.
6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate and disclosures in the financial statements

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