



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 19 JANUARY 2022

SUBJECT: 2020/21 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT TO COUNCIL

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Council with a copy of the External Auditor's Annual Audit Report to Council on the 2020/21 audit.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Council for consideration as a suite of reports on the Annual Audit and Accounts for 2020/21.

2. REASON FOR URGENCY

- 2.1 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, on the Chair certifying that, in his/her opinion it requires to be considered on the grounds of urgency in order to give early consideration to the annual accounts for 2020/21, which should have been presented for consideration by 30 November 2021.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council considers and notes the contents of the attached report from the Council's External Auditors.**

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's External Auditor, Audit Scotland, provides an Annual Report to those in charge of governance who are the Council and the Controller of Audit each year. This report is a significant document and covers:
- The audit of the 2020/21 annual accounts
 - Financial management and sustainability
 - Governance and transparency
 - Value for Money
 - Findings which require action and management's response
- 4.2 A copy of the External Auditor's covering report is attached as **APPENDIX 1** for information and the report itself forms **APPENDIX 2** to this report. A

representative of the Council's External Auditors will present the report at the meeting.

- 4.3 The report follows completion of the Annual Audit of the Council's Annual Accounts, the deadline for which was again extended this year in response to the covid-19 pandemic. The Council has received an unqualified Audit Opinion for 2020/21 on the Council's annual accounts and on the Connected Charities accounts.
- 4.4 The report includes an Action Plan (**APPENDIX 1** to the Auditor's Report) dealing with areas where the External Auditor has identified room for improvement. The most significant of these for the Council is financial sustainability, with the need to identify what savings will be made to meet the funding gaps anticipated in the short to medium term and a cross-Council transformation plan to generate the savings.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This is referenced in **Appendix 1** to the report.

(b) Policy and Legal

The audit is conducted in terms of statutory powers afforded to Audit Scotland, the appointed External Auditor for the Council.

(c) Financial Implications

There are no issues arising directly from this report. The report notes that the current level of service provision is not financially sustainable.

(d) Risk Implications

The work undertaken by External Audit provides assurance to Members on the Council's performance management, financial statements and the actions taken by the Council to address significant matters arising out of the audit process.

(e) Staffing Implications

Preparation of the Council's annual financial statements requires significant resource input as part of the scheduled work of the accountancy team within Financial Services.

(f) Property

There are no property issues arising directly from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equalities issues arising directly from this report.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impact

There are no implications for climate change or biodiversity arising from this report.

(i) Consultations

The content of **APPENDIX 2** to this report has been discussed with CMT and relevant officers of the Council.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The annual audit by External Audit gives Council assurance that the Council's Financial Statements give a true and fair view of its financial position at 31 March 2021 and that appropriate internal control systems are in place. The Report to those in charge of governance details External Audit's findings and conclusions arising from the audit and the planned management actions to address matters which have been highlighted.**

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Background Papers: Attached

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