



Louise Mason FCA
Local Government Auditor

Northern Ireland Audit Office

106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

Direct Line : (028) 9025 1048
Fax : (028) 9025 1051
E-mail : louise.mason@niauditoffice.gov.uk
webaddress : www.niauditoffice.gov.uk

Dr Adrian E. Kerr
Chief Executive
Local Government Staff Commission
Commission House
18-22 Gordon Street
Belfast
BT1 2LG

21st November 2016

Dear Dr Kerr

Annual Audit Letter 2015-16

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 and the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014. The Code of Audit Practice, published in March 2016, prescribes the way in which audit functions under the legislation are to be carried out. The Code is supported further by a Statement of Responsibilities of Local Government Auditors and Local Government Bodies. These documents are available on the NIAO website.

Statement of Accounts

Under the legislation noted above, management has specific responsibilities regarding the production of financial statements and having effective governance arrangements in place to deliver the corporate objectives. The publication of the financial statements is an essential means to account for the stewardship and use of public money each year.

As external auditor, it is my responsibility to form an opinion on whether:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Commission and its expenditure and income for the year;
- the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework as set out in legislation, applicable accounting standards or other direction;
- other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the part of the remuneration report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for Communities' directions.

I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the organisation's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts.

Economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Organisations are required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of their policies, aims and objectives, while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at their disposal.

My review of the Commission's arrangements for securing value for money covered a wide range of areas including:

- Strategic priorities and financial strategies and policies;
- Financial reporting systems and sound financial internal controls;
- Procurement strategies and policies to deliver sustainable outcomes and value for money;
- Promoting a good governance environment including managing risks and systems of internal control;
- Asset management strategies and policies to safe guard assets, deliver objectives and generate value for money; and
- A framework in place to manage the work force to effectively support the achievement of strategic priorities.

On the basis of my review this year, I am satisfied the Commission has in place proper arrangements in place to securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

Governance Statement

The Commission is required to conduct a review at least once in a financial year of the effectiveness of its governance framework (including its system of internal control) and to then approve an Annual Governance Statement.

I am required to report if the Annual Governance Statement

- does not reflect compliance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015-16;
- does not comply with proper practices specified by the Department of Communities; or
- is misleading or inconsistent with other information I am aware of from my audit.

My review did not highlight any inconsistencies.

Audit Fee

The audit fee is more than the estimate included in the accounts. This is reflective of a number of issues with the draft accounts.

Outlook

Due to the planned closure of the Commission in March 2017, the audit procedures for 2016-17 will include a review of the processes for winding up of the Commission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise Mason". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

LOUISE MASON
Local Government Auditor