

[Draft] Auditor's Annual Report

Lincolnshire County Council – year
ended 31 March 2023

November 2023

Page 121



Contents

- 01 [Introduction](#)
- 02 [Audit of the financial statements](#)
- 03 [Commentary on VFM arrangements](#)
- 04 [Other reporting responsibilities](#)

Page 122

[Appendix A: Further information on our audit of the financial statements](#)

Our reports are prepared in the context of the 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors and addressed to members or officers are prepared for the sole use of the Council. No responsibility is accepted to any member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party.

Mazars LLP is the UK firm of Mazars, an international advisory and accountancy group. Mazars LLP is registered by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

01

Section 01: **Introduction**

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Auditor's Annual Report

Our Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) summarises the work we have undertaken as the auditor for Lincolnshire County Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2023. Although this report is addressed to the Council, it is designed to be read by a wider audience including members of the public and other external stakeholders.

Our responsibilities are defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the National Audit Office ('the NAO'). The remaining sections of the AAR outline how we have discharged these responsibilities and the findings from our work. These are summarised below.

Page 124



Opinion on the financial statements

Our audit report, to be issued by December 2023, is expected to give an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Our audit was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Code, and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs).



Value for Money arrangements

In our audit report issued we reported that we had completed our work on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and had not issued recommendations in relation to identified significant weaknesses in those arrangements. Section 3 provides our commentary on the Council's arrangements.



Wider reporting responsibilities

At the date of reporting our work on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return remains incomplete whilst we wait for instructions from the National Audit Office

02

Section 02:

Audit of the financial statements

2. Audit of the financial statements

The scope of our audit and the results of our opinion

At Appendix A, we have set out the main financial statement risks addressed in our audit – detailed findings were presented to the Audit Committee on 13 November 2023.

In the table below, we set out the main audit outcomes for 2022/23.

Audit Area	Outcomes
Financial Statements	<p>The purpose of our audit is to provide reasonable assurance to users that the financial statements are free from material error. We do this by expressing an opinion on whether the statements are prepared, in all material respects, in line with the financial reporting framework applicable to the Council and whether they give a true and fair view of the Council's financial position as at 31 March 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended.</p> <p>Our audit report, to be issued by December 2023, is expected to give an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.</p>
Qualitative aspects of the Council's accounting practices	<p>We reviewed the Council's accounting policies and disclosures and concluded they complied with the 2022/23 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, appropriately tailored to the Council's circumstances.</p>
Internal Control Recommendations	<p>As part of our audit, we considered the internal controls in place that are relevant to the preparation of the financial statements. We did this to design audit procedures that allow us to express our opinion on the financial statements, but this did not extend to us expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal controls. We did not identify any 'High – level 3' recommendations for 2022/23.</p>
Annual Governance Statement	<p>We did not identify any matters where, in our opinion, the governance statement did not comply with the guidance issued by CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.</p>
Wider responsibilities	<p>Our powers and responsibilities under the 2014 Act are broad and include the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue a report in the public interest; • make statutory recommendations that must be considered and responded to publicly; • apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law; and • issue an advisory notice under schedule 8 of the 2014 Act. <p>We have not exercised any of these powers as part of our 2022/23 audit. The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account. No such objections have been raised.</p>

03

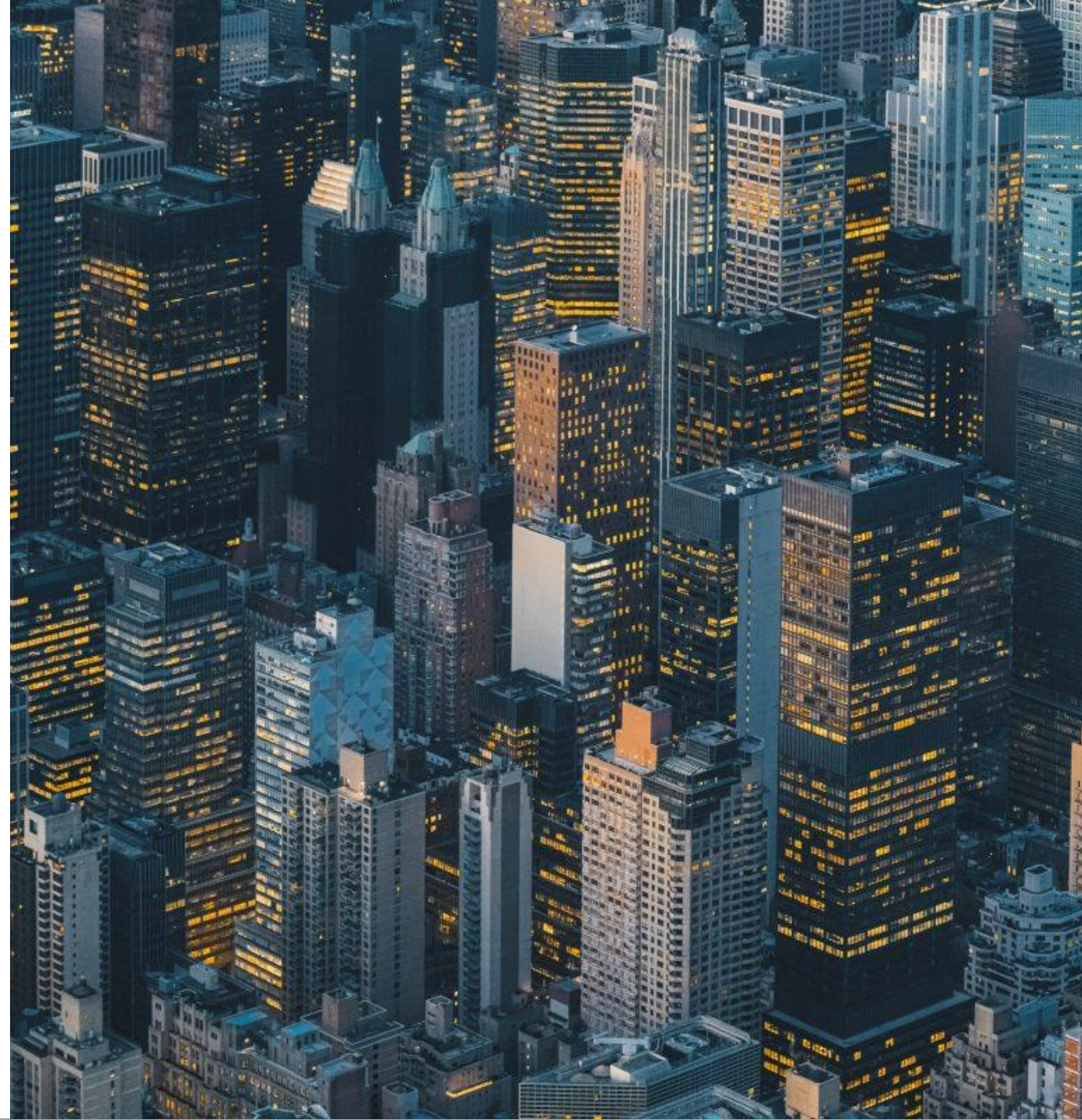
Section 03:

Commentary on VFM arrangements

3. Commentary on VFM arrangements

Overall summary

Page 128



3. VFM arrangements – Overall summary

Approach to Value for Money arrangements work

We are required to consider whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out and sets out the reporting criteria that we are required to consider. The reporting criteria are:



Financial sustainability - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services



Governance - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

Page 129
Our work is carried out in three main phases.

Phase 1 - Planning and risk assessment

At the planning stage of the audit, we undertake work so we can understand the arrangements that the Council has in place under each of the reporting criteria; as part of this work we may identify risks of significant weaknesses in those arrangements.

We obtain our understanding of arrangements for each of the specified reporting criteria using a variety of information sources which may include:

- NAO guidance and supporting information
- Information from internal and external sources including regulators
- Knowledge from previous audits and other audit work undertaken in the year
- Interviews and discussions with staff and directors

Although we describe this work as planning work, we keep our understanding of arrangements under review and update our risk assessment throughout the audit to reflect emerging issues that may suggest there are further risks of significant weaknesses.

Phase 2 - Additional risk-based procedures and evaluation

Where we identify risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements, we design a programme of work to enable us to decide whether there are actual significant weaknesses in arrangements. We use our professional judgement and have regard to guidance issued by the NAO in determining the extent to which an identified weakness is significant.

Phase 3 - Reporting the outcomes of our work and our recommendations

We are required to provide a summary of the work we have undertaken and the judgments we have reached against each of the specified reporting criteria in this Auditor's Annual Report. We do this as part of our Commentary on VFM arrangements which we set out for each criteria later in this section.

We also make recommendations where we identify weaknesses in arrangements or other matters that require attention from the Council. We refer to two distinct types of recommendation through the remainder of this report:

- **Recommendations arising from significant weaknesses in arrangements**

We make these recommendations for improvement where we have identified a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Where such significant weaknesses in arrangements are identified, we report these (and our associated recommendations) at any point during the audit.


- **Other recommendations**

We make other recommendations when we identify areas for potential improvement or weaknesses in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant but still require action to be taken

The table on the following page summarises the outcomes of our work against each reporting criteria, including whether we have identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements or made other recommendations.

3. VFM arrangements – Overall summary

Overall summary by reporting criteria

Reporting criteria	Commentary page reference	Identified risks of significant weakness?	Actual significant weaknesses identified?	Other recommendations made?
 Financial sustainability	11	No	No	No
 Governance	16	No	No	No
 Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	19	No	No	No

Page 130

3. Commentary on VFM arrangements

Financial Sustainability

How the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services

Page 131



3. VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

Overall commentary on the Financial Sustainability reporting criteria

Significant weakness in 2021/22	Nil.
Significant weaknesses identified in 2022/23	Nil.

Position brought forward from 2021/22

We reported in our Annual Auditor’s Report for 2021/22, that we had;

- Reviewed the 2021/22 financial performance and forecasts during the year and considered the Council’s financial outturn position as presented in the financial statements;
- Reviewed the 2022/23;
 - Revenue and Capital budgets and Medium-Term Financial Plan;
 - Considered the Council’s latest financial monitoring information and its updated medium-term outlook.
- Updated our risk assessment for any new or emerging issues through discussions with management and updating our review of committee reports;
- Reviewed the Council’s Annual governance Statement for any significant issues; and
- Considered the general findings from our audit work in other areas.

As set out in the table above, there are no indications of a significant weakness in the Council’s arrangements for financial sustainability brought forward from 2021/22. The Council’s underlying arrangements in relation to financial sustainability are not significantly different in 2022/23.

Overall responsibilities for financial governance

We have reviewed the Council’s overall governance framework, including Council and committee reports, the Annual Governance Statement, and Statement of Accounts for 2022/23. These confirm the Council undertook its responsibility to define the strategic aims and objectives, approve budgets and monitor financial performance against budgets and plans to best meet the needs of the Council’s service users.

The Council’s financial planning and monitoring arrangements

Through our review of Council and committee reports, meetings with management and relevant work performed on the financial statements, we are satisfied that the Council’s arrangements for budget monitoring remain appropriate, including quarterly reporting to Members and well-established arrangements for year-end financial reporting.

2022/23 Budget Setting and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy

We have read reports to Overview & Scrutiny Management Board, the Executive and Council covering budget setting for 2022/23 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. We also met regularly with Officers throughout the year.

In our view, the Budget Report for 2022/23 adequately explains revenue and capital budgets, with a sufficient link to specific business units, as well as an explanation on the impact to the general fund balance. There is no indication of excessive use of capital flexibilities to support revenue expenditure, nor has our work on the financial statements highlighted any concerns regarding the Council’s policy for setting the Minimum Revenue Provision.

We also reviewed Note 14 of the financial statements, setting out earmarked reserves, and in particular the Financial Volatility Reserve that was established to help the Council deal with the future uncertainties around Local Government funding. The Council did not use this reserve in 2022/23.

There is no indication that the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process is not aligned to supporting plans given the Council has a track record of delivering against budget.

2022/23 Statement of Financial Position

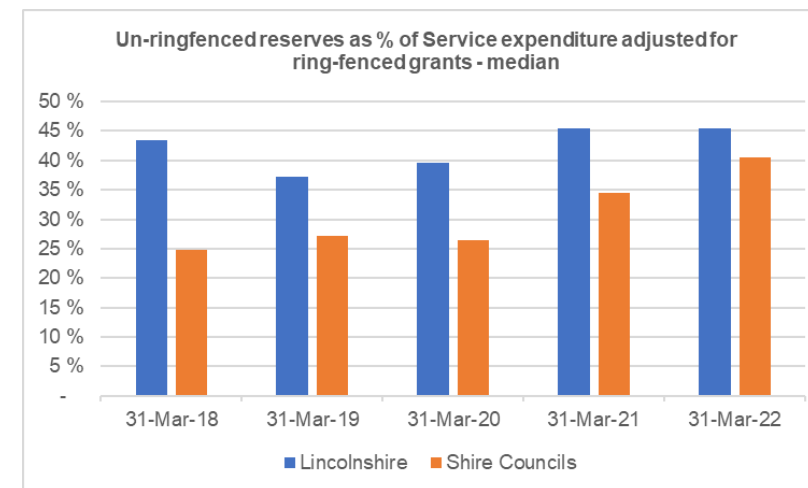
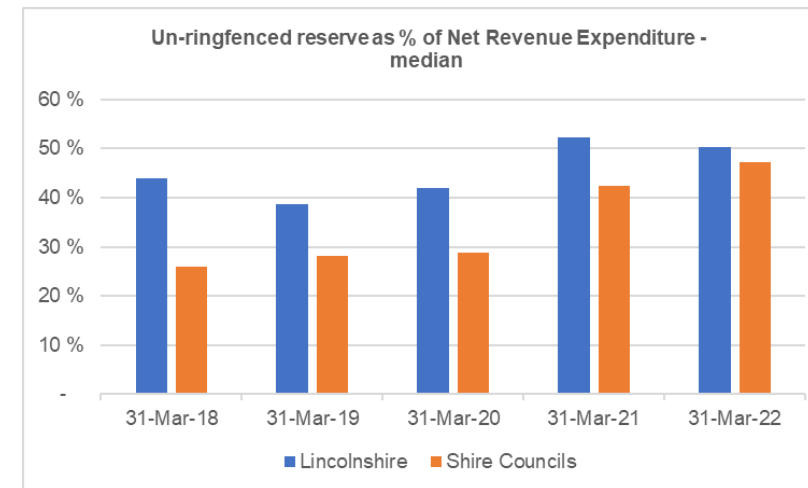
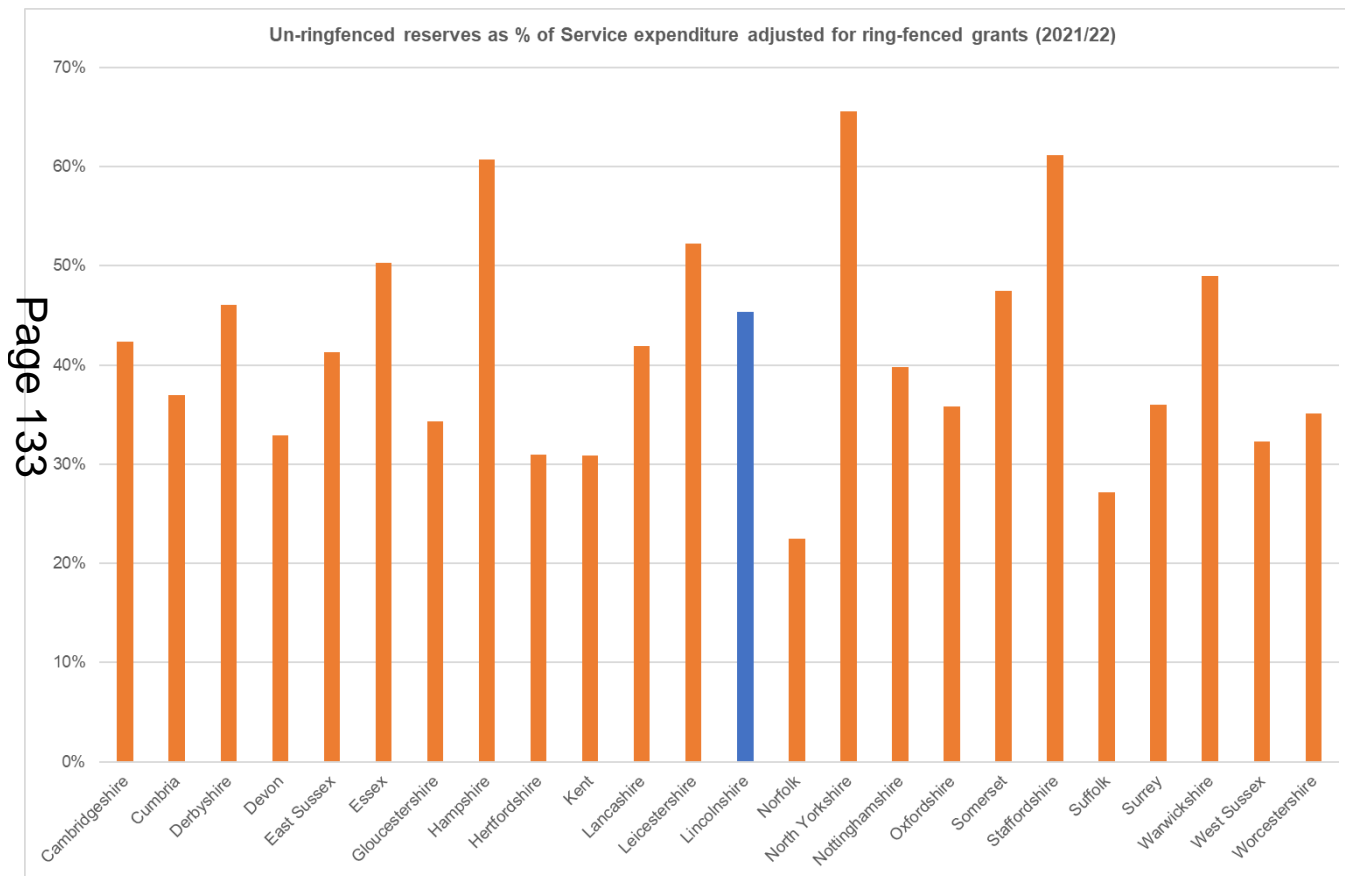
We carried out a high-level analysis of the financial statements subject to our audit, including the Movement in Reserves Statement and the Balance Sheet, our work to date has not highlighted any risks of significant weakness in arrangements or indicators of a risk to the Council’s financial sustainability.

VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability and revenue reserves

We have also performed a more detailed review of the Council's revenue reserves. We reviewed data published in May 2023 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on Local authority general fund earmarked and unallocated reserve levels, 2017-18 to 2021-22.

The Council's reserves have generally been above the median since 2018, however the gap has reduced over time.



Details on the definitions and data quality arrangements are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-general-fund-earmarked-and-unallocated-reserve-levels-2017-18-to-2021-22>

VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

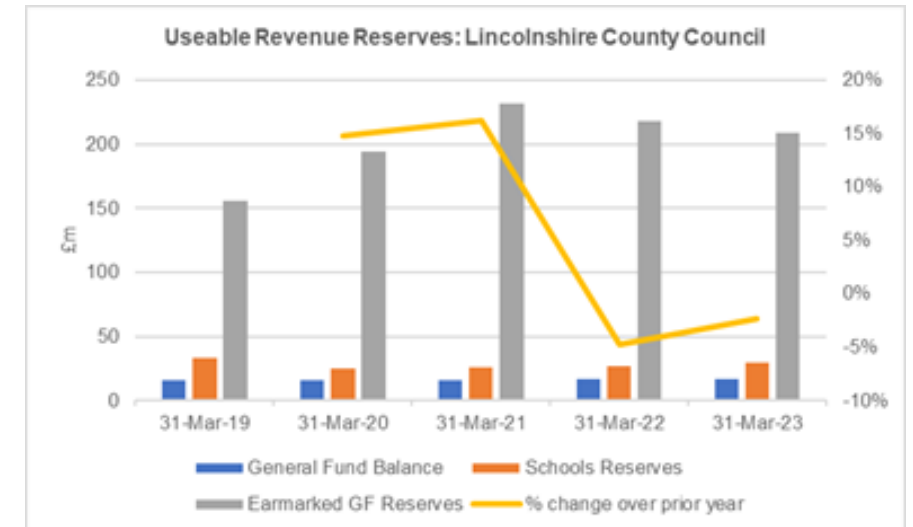
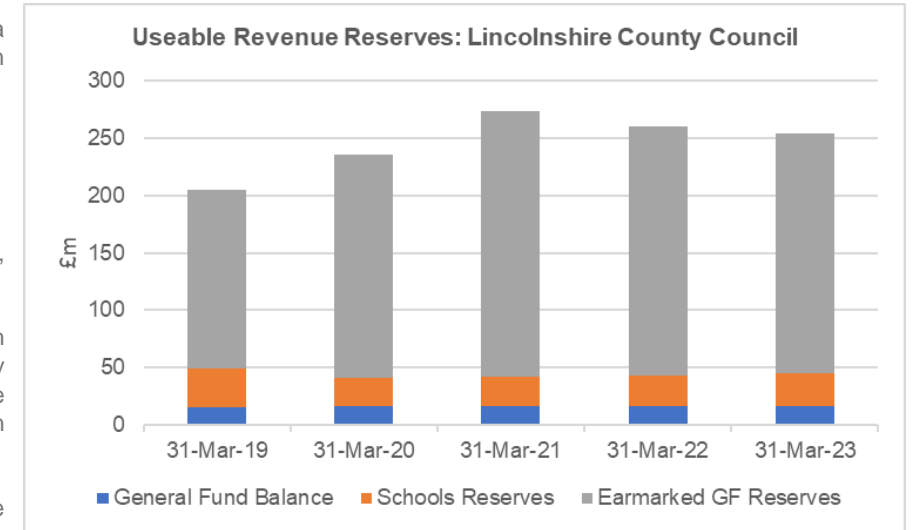
Financial sustainability and reserves (continued)

The purpose of the Council's general fund reserve is to meet costs arising from any unplanned or emergency events. It also acts as a financial buffer to help mitigate against the financial risks the Council faces and can be used to a limited degree to 'smooth' expenditure on a one-off basis across years. Whereas earmarked reserves, including Schools Reserves are set aside for specific purposes.

Through a review of the financial statements, we have considered the Council's revenue reserves over time:

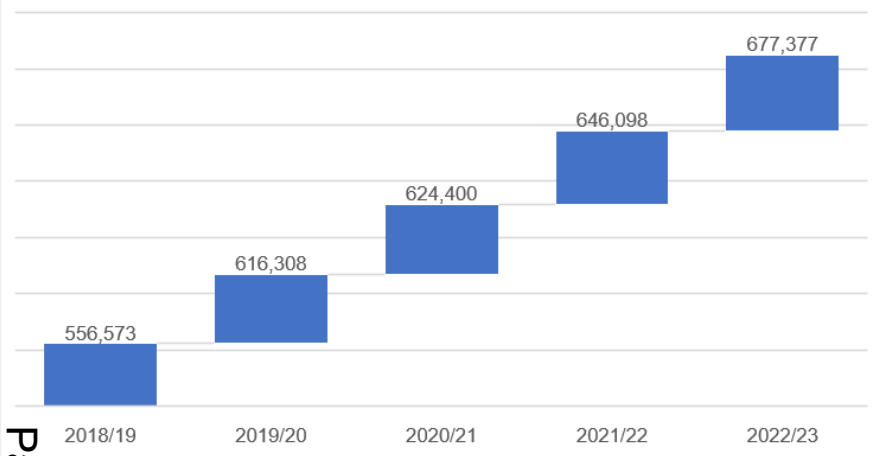
- As set out on the previous page, the Council's opening revenue reserves are above the median for county councils.
- Whilst reserves remain stable, they are finite and whilst the Council's revenue reserves increased by 15% in 2020 and 16% in 2021, they have reduced by -5% in 2022 and -2% in 2023.
- We have no concerns over the Council's current approach, but there are local authorities reliant on protecting revenue reserves through accounting adjustments eg funding transformation spend through capital receipts, minimising the minimum revenue provision to repay debt, applying the statutory override for movements in pooled investment funds. These will not provide a long-term solution and, where these have a significant effect, suggest Members are given clear and transparent information over the effect these measures have on medium term financial planning.

Overall, we are satisfied that the Council's Reserves position does not give rise to a risk of significant weakness in arrangements to secure financial sustainability.

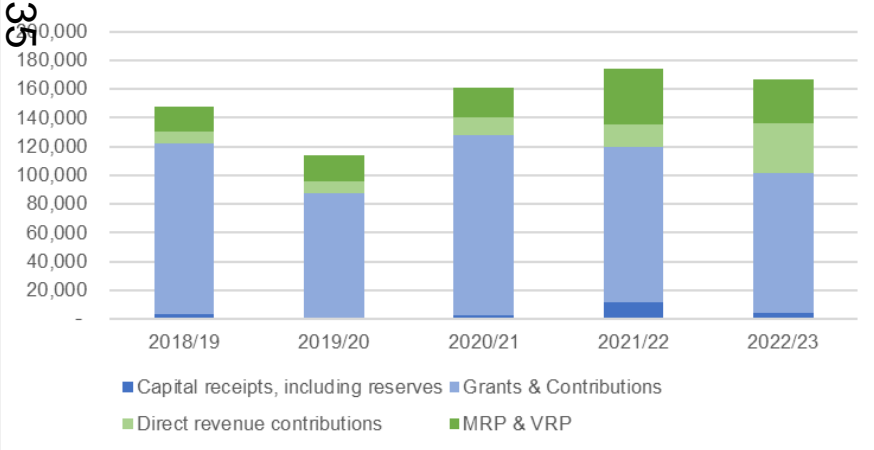


VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

Capital financing requirement
£'000



Sources of capital finance
£'000



The Council's capital expenditure and financing

The Council's arrangements for setting and monitoring capital expenditure are consistent with the previous year, which we deem to be adequate.

We considered the Council's capital financing requirement as set out in Note 41 of the financial statements, which has risen from £556m in 2018/19 to £677m in 2022/23, each increase representing the underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure. We also considered the sources of capital finance in the capital programme, which shows over the past five years capital spend has been mainly financed through grants and contributions, for example in 2022/23:

- £4m from capital receipts
- £97m in grants and contributions
- £35m in direct revenue contributions; and
- £30m through the Minimum Revenue Provision (A minimum amount, set by law, which the Council must charge to the income & expenditure account, for debt redemption or for the discharge of other credit liabilities) and Voluntary Revenue Provision.

In 2022/23, the Council spent £158m on capital additions per

Note 15 of the financial statements and £39m of REFCUS (Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute). Our testing of these balances did not identify any material issues.

We are satisfied the council's capital expenditure and capital financing does not give rise to a risk of significant weakness in arrangements.

Based on the above considerations we are satisfied there is not a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements in relation to financial sustainability for the year ended 31 March 2023.

3. Commentary on VFM arrangements

Governance

How the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

Page 136



3. VFM arrangements – Governance

Overall commentary on the Governance reporting criteria

Significant weakness in 2021/22	Nil.
Significant weaknesses identified in 2022/23	Nil.

Position brought forward from 2021/22

As set out in the table above, there are no indications of a significant weakness in the Council’s arrangements for financial sustainability brought forward from the previous year.

The Authority’s governance structure

Based on our work, we are satisfied that the Council has established governance arrangements, consistent with previous years, in place. These are detailed in the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement. We have considered both documents against our understanding of the Council as part of our audit.

Our review of corporate governance arrangements confirms the Council has an agreed Constitution, setting out how it operates, how decisions are reached and what procedures are followed to ensure that these are transparent and accountable to local people. Any recommendations for amendments to the Constitution need to be approved by Full Council.

Our review of Council and Committee papers confirms that a template covering report is used for all reports, ensuring the purpose, strategic context, governance issues, and recommendations are clear. Minutes are published and reviewed by Committees to evidence the matters discussed, challenge and decisions made.

2023/24 Budget Setting and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The Council’s budget setting and medium-term financial planning follows a similar process and format to previous years and our review is supported by discussions with officers during the year and experience from prior year audits. The arrangements in place for budget setting and updating the Medium-Term Financial Strategy are as expected for a County Council, with arrangements for: consultation, scrutiny, evaluation of financial risk, alignment to directorate/business plans and sources of funding.

We reviewed the Council’s balanced budget for 2023/24 as set by Council in February 2023, which approved a 4.99% increase in Council Tax.

We read the assumptions underpinning the Medium Term Financial Strategy as included in reports to the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Management Board. In our view, these include an adequate level of detail over the assumptions and cost pressures facing the council, which are consistent with our experience at similar sized authorities and therefore not unreasonable. In addition, there is sufficient narrative to explain the rationale and key financial risks.

Whilst the Council has identified significant cost pressures (£74m) and savings (£11m), the budget is balanced while only drawing £7m from reserves. Over the period to 2025/26, the Council estimates that earmarked reserves will fall from £162m to £100m. The Council’s reserves position does not indicate a risk of significant weakness in VFM arrangements for financial sustainability and provide some mitigation against future financial challenges and will assist in addressing future volatility and support savings and efficiencies plans. The Council will need to continue to ensure that any use of reserves to smooth the financial position over the next few years is properly planned and the use of reserves cannot be relied on to provide a long-term solution to funding gaps.

We also reviewed the budget monitoring report to September’s meeting of the Executive covering expenditure incurred in Quarter 1 of 2023/24. The report gives an overview of the financial position for revenue, supported by adequate detail available within the appendices, ultimately showing that the revenue budget is forecast to underspend by £1.3m (equivalent to 0.2% of the net budget).

Our work has not identified that the Council has significant levels of unidentified savings/funding gaps in financial planning that would substantially threaten the delivery of the plan; nor is there an indication of significant levels of unsustainable planned use of reserves to bridge funding gaps.

CIPFA Financial Management Code and Financial Resilience

We reviewed minutes and supporting papers presented to the July 2023 Audit Committee, including a progress review in implementing the requirements of the CIPFA Financial Management Code. We also reviewed an external assurance report that concluded the Council was meeting the CIPFA Financial Management Code and assurance standards, with any areas for development, in our view, inconsequential in terms of risk to the Council’s arrangements for governance and financial sustainability.

VFM arrangements – Governance

Overall commentary on the Governance reporting criteria

Risk management

The Council has an established risk management framework and systems in place which are built into the governance structure of the organisation.

The Audit Committee is responsible for overseeing the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements, challenging risk information and escalating issues to the Executive. We have attended meetings of the Committee and reviewed minutes and reports presented during the year, including matters relating to risk. From our attendance at meetings and review of the minutes, we are satisfied there is sufficient evidence of Member oversight of risk management, including holding Officers to account.

The Annual Governance Statement is a critical component of the Council's governance arrangements. It is an evidenced self-assessment by the Council on the Council's governance, assurance and internal control frameworks for the financial year. No significant weaknesses in internal control have been identified from our work to date and Internal Audit have not identified or raised any significant concerns. We reviewed the Annual Governance Statements as part of our work on the financial statements with no significant issues arising.

We reviewed the Council's annual Combined Assurance Status Report, also presented to Audit Committee, which involves discussion between Internal Audit and each Executive Director assessing information across: critical service delivery activities, key risks, key projects, key partnerships, providing an overall assurance level. We are satisfied that there is no indication of a significant weakness in arrangements for 2022/23

Audit Committee

The Council has an established Audit Committee. We have reviewed supporting documents and confirmed the Audit Committee meets regularly and reviews its programme of work to maintain focus on key aspects of governance and internal control. Our attendance at Audit Committee has confirmed there is an appropriate level of effective challenge.

Internal Audit

We have met with management and the Head of Internal Audit regularly during the year, reviewed Audit Committee reports and attended Audit Committee to observe the performance of Internal Audit and the Audit Committee. We have read the head of internal audit's report presented to June 2023 audit committee and are satisfied it does not highlight any significant weaknesses in arrangements

We also confirmed that the Head of Internal Audit Opinion has been adequately reflected in the Annual Governance Statement. No issues arose from our review to indicate there is a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for governance.

We read The Counter Fraud Annual Report presented to June 2023 Audit Committee, which provides an overview of the investigation and proactive counter fraud work completed in 2022/23. This summary provides information to enable the Committee to review performance and the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements. The progress reports submitted throughout the year and this annual report are the key sources of assurance for the Committee on the adequacy of Council's counter fraud activities. There is no indication of inadequate arrangements in place at the Council from reviewing the report and its findings.

Monitoring officer and Conduct

We have read and reviewed the MO Annual Report for 2022/23 as presented to the July 2023 Audit Committee, there are no matters arising that would indicate a significant weakness in arrangements relating to 2022/23

Overall, we have not identified any indicators of a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements relating to the Governance criteria for the year ended 31 March 2023.

3. Commentary on VFM arrangements

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

How the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

Page 139



3. VFM arrangements – Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Overall commentary on the Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness reporting criteria

Significant weakness in 2021/22	Nil.
Significant weaknesses identified in 2022/23	Nil.

Position brought forward from 2021/22

As set out in the table above, there are no indications of a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements brought forward from the prior year.

Regulators

We reviewed regulatory reports, including OFSTED, where an inspection report issued in April 2023 confirmed Children's Services were "Outstanding".

Corporate Plan and Performance Monitoring

The Council's arrangements are consistent with the prior year, which were deemed adequate, with the Council's Corporate Plan setting out what it wants to achieve for local residents and communities and is published on its website. The Council's overall financial objectives and strategy are documented in the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is reviewed and updated annually.

Our review of minutes and reports confirms the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board receive regular reporting on the measures contained within the Council Business Plan. We reviewed the performance outcome for 2022/23 presented to the Executive as evidence of the Council's approach to evaluating performance. In our view, reports contain sufficient narrative, including the appendices, to demonstrate that there are adequate arrangements for scrutiny in assessing performance and identifying areas for improvement.

Partnerships and Commissioning

Through our work on the financial statements, our testing of expenditure, and consideration of key financial

controls, has not identified any issues relating to procurement.

Better Care Fund (BCF)

Note 33 of the Council's Financial Statements explains the Council is the host for pooled budgets relating to: Proactive Care, Specialties including Learning Disabilities, Integrated Community Equipment Service, and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services; and is responsible for their financial administration. Outside this Better Care Fund is a stand-alone Section 75 Agreement for Sexual Health. Our testing of the financial statements has not identified any material issues over these disclosure notes.

PFI

As set out in Note 26 of the financial statements, in 2001, the Council entered into a 31-year PFI contract for the provision of seven separate schools across the County which is classified as a Service Concession Arrangement. The Council will need to begin planning for hand back at least 7 years before the end of the contract as well as start to consider implications of the obligations, including decarbonisation planning and net zero challenge, and the role of the Council in delivering those contracts.

No issues arose from our testing of the account balance and disclosures as part of our audit work.

Overall, we have not identified any indicators of a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements relating to the Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness criteria for the year ended 31 March 2023.

04

Section 04:

Other reporting responsibilities and our fees

Page 141

4. Other reporting responsibilities and our fees

Matters we report by exception

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 provides auditors with specific powers where matters come to our attention that, in their judgement, require specific reporting action to be taken. Auditors have the power to:

- issue a report in the public interest;
- make statutory recommendations that must be considered and responded to publicly;
- apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to the law; and
- issue an advisory notice.

We have not exercised any of these statutory reporting powers.

The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account. We did not receive any such objections or questions.

Reporting to the NAO in respect of Whole of Government Accounts consolidation data

The NAO, as group auditor, requires us to complete the WGA Assurance Statement in respect of its consolidation data. As at the date of writing, instructions have not yet been received.

4. Other reporting responsibilities and our fees

Fees for work as the Council's auditor

We reported our proposed fees for the delivery of our work under the Code of Audit Practice in our Audit Strategy Memorandum. Having completed our work for the 2022/23 financial year, we can confirm that our fees are as follows:

Area of work	2021/22 Actual fees	2022/23 fees*	2023/24
Planned fee in respect of our work under the Code of Audit Practice	£82,640	£99,863	<i>Published by 30 November</i>
Additional fees in respect of additional testing undertaken to comply with increased regulatory requirements relating to: IAS19 pension liabilities; valuation of land, buildings and investment properties; and major local audit requirements.	£13,940	N/A included in revised scale fee	N/A included in revised scale fee
Additional fees in respect of additional work from the introduction of new auditing standards (ISA 540 estimates)	£4,700	£4,700	N/A included in revised scale fee
Additional fees in respect of additional work from the introduction of new auditing standards (ISA 315)	-	£TBC**	
Additional fees in respect of additional testing undertaken on infrastructure assets	£11,750	N/A – one off cost	N/A – one off cost
Additional fees in respect of additional testing to take account of the triennial pension valuation	£6,500	N/A – one off cost	N/A – one off cost
Additional fees in respect of pension asset ceiling and revisions	-	£TBC**	N/A – one off cost
Additional fees in relation to extended testing on expenditure and accruals to mitigate extrapolation errors	-	£TBC**	N/A – one off cost
Additional fees in respect of the VFM Commentary	£14,000	£13,000	N/A included in revised scale fee
Sub-total: variations	£53,890	£TBC	-
Total fees	£133,530	£TBC	-

*These costs are subject to PSAA review and approval. The Council received **£42,601** of grant funding to meet rising audit costs.

**At the time of issuing this report, the additional fees for 2022/2023 have not been agreed with the Trust.

Fees for other work

In 2022/23, we were engaged to provide assurance related services on the Teachers' Pensions Return (fee £3,500) and Education & Skills Funding (£5,250).



Appendix

Appendix A: Further information on our audit of the financial statements

Main financial statement audit risks and findings

Our audit approach is risk-based and primarily driven by the issues that we consider lead to a higher risk of material misstatement of the accounts. Once we have completed our risk assessment, we develop our audit strategy and design audit procedures in response to this assessment. Following the risk assessment, we identified risks relevant to the audit of financial statements and the significant audit risks and conclusions reached are set out below:

Audit Risk	Level of audit risk	How we addressed the risk	Audit conclusions
Management override of controls This is a mandatory significant risk on all audits due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur.	Significant risk: an area that, in our judgment, requires special audit consideration.	We addressed the risk through performing work over accounting estimates, journal entries and considering whether there were any significant transactions outside the normal course of business or otherwise unusual. In addition, we made enquiries of management and used our data analytics and interrogation software to test accounting journals.	TBC. At the date of writing, there are no significant matters to report.
Valuation of the net pension liability The defined benefit liability relating to the Local Government and Fire-Fighter's pension scheme represents significant balances on the Council's balance sheet and involves a high degree of estimation uncertainty. The Council uses two actuaries to provide an annual valuation of these liabilities in line with the requirements of accounting standards.	Significant risk	Our procedures to address this risk included, but was not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> critically assessing the competency, objectivity and independence of each actuary; liaising with the auditors of the Lincolnshire Pension Fund to gain assurance that the controls in place at the Pension Fund are designed and implemented correctly. This included the processes and controls in place to ensure data provided to the Actuary by the Pension Fund for the purposes of the valuation is complete and accurate; reviewing the appropriateness of the Pension Asset and Liability valuation methodologies applied by the Pension Fund Actuaries, and the key assumptions included within the valuations, including comparing them to expected ranges using a consulting actuary; agreeing the data in the valuation report provided by the Fund Actuaries for accounting purposes to the financial statements; and considering whether the pension asset should be capped. 	TBC. At the date of writing, there are no significant matters to report.
Valuation of land & buildings and investment properties Land, Building and Investment Property assets are significant balances on the Council's balance sheet and the valuation of these assets is complex and is subject to a number of management assumptions and judgements.	Significant risk	Our procedures to address this risk included, but was not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> considering whether the overall valuation methodologies used by the Council's valuers are in line with industry practice, the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Council's accounting policies; assessing whether valuation movements are in line with market expectations by using third party information to provide information on regional valuation trends; critically assessing the approach that the Council adopts to ensure assets that are not subject to revaluation are materially correct; and testing a sample of individual valuations back to source records to ensure appropriateness and to gain assurance over whether the correct accounting treatment has been applied. 	TBC. At the date of writing, there are no significant matters to report.

Mark Surridge, Key Audit Partner

Mazars

Two Chamberlain Square

Birmingham

B3 3AX

Mazars is an internationally integrated partnership, specialising in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax and legal services*. Operating in over 90 countries and territories around the world, we draw on the expertise of 40,400 professionals – 24,400 in Mazars' integrated partnership and 16,000 via the Mazars North America Alliance – to assist clients of all sizes at every stage in their development.

*where permitted under applicable country laws.