

Audit Committee – 24 January 2025

Ernst & Young Audit Results Report – Year ended 31 March 2024

Purpose	The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit Committee with an overview of external audit work undertaken.
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report sets out the external auditors' findings regarding its work regarding the Council's Annual Financial Report, Value for Money and the Annual Governance Statement.
Recommendation(s)	It is recommended that Audit Committee: 1. Notes the Audit Results Report from the Council's external auditor.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	This report seeks authority to note the Audit Results Report for the year ended 31 March 2024.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	Simon Mathers Partner, Ernst & Young LLP SMathers@uk.ey.com

Introduction and background

1. This report introduces to the Audit Committee the external auditors' annual Audit Results Report which details the progress made with regard to the 2023/24 financial year.

2. For New Forest District Council, all Annual Financial Reports up to and including the previous financial year 2022/23, have been produced and approved as final.
3. The government instigated a number of back stop dates to resolve the audit backlog. The back stop date for 2023/24 audits is 28 February 2025 and the external auditor and council are confident of meeting this deadline.

Audit Results Report

4. The Audit Results Report alongside the Annual Financial Report is a public facing document that sets out a number of key financial figures related to the Council's financial performance and sustainability.
5. The independent external auditor's report provides assurance to stakeholders as to the effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment and its efficiency in securing value for money in the use of public funds.
6. It provides assurance on the financial standing of the Council and ensures that commitments to corporate plan can be delivered with adequate and sustainable financing.
7. Ernst & Young LLP are currently working on their process for the issuing of their audit opinions. The audit opinions will be disclaimed due to the back stop process undertaken for the 2022/23 Annual Financial Report. The audit opinion for 2023/24 will be given upon completion of the audit which is anticipated to be done prior to the back stop date of 28 February 2025.

Corporate plan priorities

8. Ensuring the council is being financial responsible, as evidenced by independent external audits, underpins all of our corporate plan themes (People, Place and Prosperity).

Options

9. There are no alternative options to consider.

Consultation undertaken

10. Consultation between the council and our external auditors and advisors has been continuous throughout as the audit has developed.

Financial and resource implications

11. External audit work is undertaken using a contract set up in arrangement with Public Services Audit Appointments Limited and revenue budget is provided for in the council's MTFP.

Legal implications

12. The Council has a legal obligation to contract an external auditor to undertake an annual audit of its Annual Financial Report.

Risk assessment

13. An evaluation of the risks in the body of the appended Audit Results report indicates that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks that been identified at this time

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

14. There are no environmental or climate and nature implications arising directly from this report.

Equalities implications

15. There are no equality matters arising directly from this report.

Crime and disorder implications

16. There are no crime and disorder matters arising directly from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

17. There is a data sharing agreement in place with Ernst & Young LLP.

Appendices:

Ernst & Young
Audit Results Report
Year ended 31 March 2024

Background Papers:

None