



Auditor's Annual Report (DRAFT)
Bolsover District Council– year ended 31 March 2025

January 2026

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Our reports are prepared in the context of the 'PSAA Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and of Audited Bodies' and the 'Appointing Person Terms of Appointment' issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. This document is to be regarded as confidential to Bolsover District Council. It has been prepared for the sole use of Audit Committee as the appropriate sub-committee charged with governance. We do not accept any liability or responsibility to any other person in respect of the whole or part of its contents.

01

Introduction

Introduction

Purpose of the Auditor's Annual Report

Our Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) summarises the work we have undertaken as the auditor for Bolsover District Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2025. 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.



Opinion on the financial statements

At the time of drafting this report our audit work is ongoing. We expect to conclude our work by the February 2026 backstop.



Reporting to the group auditor

In line with group audit instructions issued by the NAO, we have undertaken work on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) return in line with their instructions. We have been unable to conclude our work as we have not yet received confirmation from the NAO that the group audit of the WGA has been completed and that no further work is required to be completed by us.



Value for Money arrangements Our work is ongoing but to date we have not identified any additional risk of significant weakness in arrangements. However, our work is ongoing and we will revisit should information come to our attention which indicates evidence of a significant weakness after issuing this draft report.

02

Audit of the financial statements

Audit of the financial statements

Our audit of the financial statements

Our audit was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Code, and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs). 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 2025 and of its financial performance for the year then ended. **At the time of drafting this Report our audit of the financial statements is ongoing. We expect our audit report will be issued by February 2026.**

A summary of the significant risks we identified when undertaking our audit of the financial statements and the conclusions we reached on each of these is outlined in Appendix A.

We will conclude on these in our final report in February 2026. In this appendix we also outline the uncorrected misstatements we identified and any internal control recommendations we made.

Other reporting responsibilities

Reporting responsibility	Outcome
Narrative Report	We did not identify any significant inconsistencies between the content of the annual report and our knowledge of the Council
Annual Governance Statement	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

Status of our audit

Our audit work is substantially complete. The table below summarises the Council's most significant classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures for which audit work is in progress.

Valuations

We are waiting response of some queries from the valuer at the time of writing this report.



Group Consolidation

We are waiting response of some queries from the Council at the time of writing this report.



Audit Quality Control and Completion procedures

Our audit work is undergoing final stages of review by the Engagement Lead and further quality and compliance checks.



In addition, there are a small number of residual procedures to complete, including updating post balance sheet event considerations to the point of issuing the opinion and obtaining final management representations.

VFM

We issued our draft Auditors Annual Report in November 2025. At the time we had not concluded whether the significant risk identified in our 2023/24 work continued to exist in 2024/25. Our work on group consolidation is ongoing so we have not yet concluded our work. We will report to Members in February our final position.



Status

 Likely to result in a material adjustment or a significant change to disclosures in the financial statements.

 Potential to result in a material adjustment or a significant change to disclosures in the financial statements.

 Not considered likely to result in a material adjustment or a change to disclosures in the financial statements.

 Work on value for money arrangements

Rebuilding assurance

We have completed our initial risk assessment on rebuilding assurance and discussed with the management. We are currently undertaking procedures to rebuild assurance on the 2023/24 closing balances. Our work is subject to internal consultation to ensure our audit report reflects the assurance that we have obtained. At this stage we anticipate a modified opinion associated with prior year balances, however this is subject to satisfactory completion of our audit procedures. We expect to conclude this work by the February backstop and we will present our Audit Completion Report to Members of the Audit Committee.

03

Our work on Value for Money arrangements

VFM arrangements

Overall Summary



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.

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 officers

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.

We outline the risks that we have identified and the work we have done to address those risks on page 22.

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 course of 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 which still require action to be taken.

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

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	14	No	See page 21 for follow up on previous years weakness	No
 Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	17	No	No	Yes – see commentary on page 19

VFM arrangements

Financial Sustainability

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



VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

Overall commentary on Financial Sustainability

Position brought forward from 2023/24

There are no indications of a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for financial sustainability brought forward from 2023/24. The Council's underlying arrangements in relation to financial sustainability are not significantly different in 2024/25.

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 2024/25. These confirm the Council undertook its responsibility to define the strategic aims and objectives, approve budgets and monitor financial performance against budgets and plan 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 to date, we are satisfied that the Council's arrangements for budget monitoring remain appropriate, including reporting to Members. In January 2024 the council presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which showed a balanced budget for 2024/25. In its MTFP the council projected deficits where this would be funded by contributions from reserves, below we have figures from the revised budget for 2024/25.

Year	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Total Spending requirement	19.291	19.717	13.852	14.024	15.159
Total Funding	19.291	19.717	13.852	14.024	14.206
Funding Gap (Surplus)	0	0	0	0	0.953

2024/25 Budget Setting and the Medium-Term Financial Plan

In developing the financial projections, the Council made several assumptions. The major assumptions included staffing budgets which estimated future pay awards. Investment income as a result of treasury management decisions has been increased slightly in all years of the MTFP as interest rates are expected to rise. Inflation specific budgets such as energy costs and fuel were amended to reflect anticipated price changes and continued inflationary pressures. The Council also updated the budget for agreed changes to fees and charges. Our review of the MTFP and outturn did not identify evidence to indicate a significant weakness in arrangements.

In 2022/23 the Council acquired an interest in a subsidiary Dragonfly Development Limited (DDL) which was intended to improve the Council's provision of sustainable housing in the Bolsover district. A full business case was approved by Council in February 2022. Through review of the 2022/23 MTFP we noted the budget did not include any income and expenditure related to DDL. Consequently, recommendations were made in both 2022/23 and 2023/24 to incorporate DDL's financial activity into the MTFP. In 2024/25 the Council has still not included income and expenditure of DDL in MTFP. However following the independent review of Dragonfly companies, the Council has approved bringing the Dragonfly companies back in-house. Given the decision to integrate Dragonfly into the Council's operations, no further recommendation has been raised as additional income and expenditure from Dragonfly is now expected to be limited in the MTFP.

We have confirmed that a monthly delivery update on Dragonfly is reported to Local Growth Scrutiny Committee. Additionally, the Executive Committee in year started receiving quarterly target performance report of Dragonfly starting Q2 24-25. Based on work completed for the year ended 31 March 2025 we have not identified any matters to indicate any significant weakness in arrangements.

VFM arrangements – Financial Sustainability

Overall commentary on the Financial Sustainability reporting criteria – continued

2024/25 Statement of Financial Position and Outturn Report

The Council reported its financial outturn position in the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts. The General Fund balance has decreased to £2.001m in line with the MTFP. This was mainly caused by a £0.683m underspend on salaries through vacancies.

Directorates	Budget £m	Outturn £m	Variance £m
Community services Directorate	9.159	8.259	(0.900)
Corporate Resources Directorate	1.666	1.455	(0.211)
Dragonfly Services	2.886	2.581	(0.305)

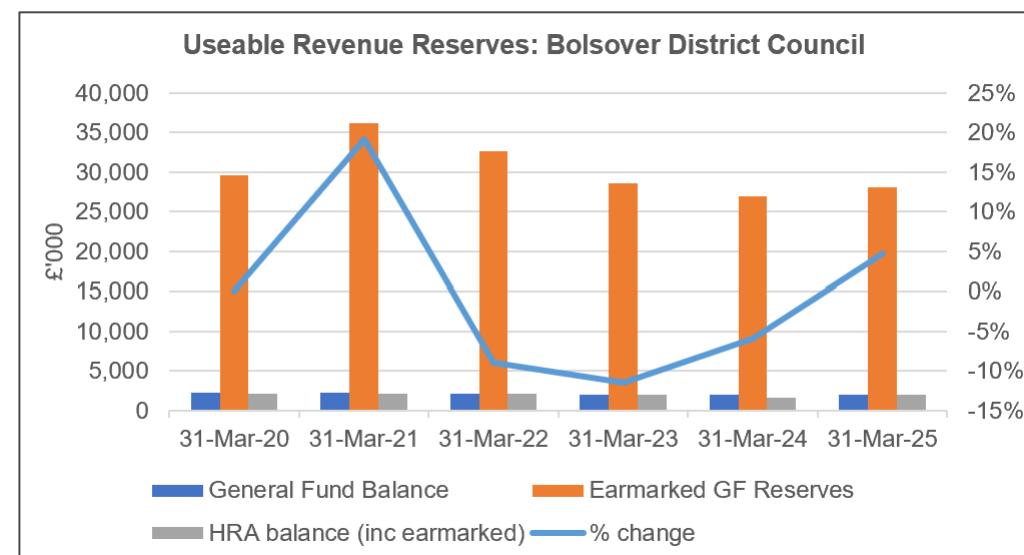
We carried out a high-level analysis of the financial statements subject to our audit, including the Movement in Reserves Statement and our work has not highlighted any risks of a significant weakness in arrangements or indicators of a risk to the Council's financial sustainability.

The Council's usable reserves increased by £3.677m from £49.692m to £53.369 in 2024/25, with:

- General Fund & Earmarked Reserves of £31.516m, up from £30.571m in the prior year
- HRA Reserve of £3.868m, up from £3.186m in 2023/24
- Capital Reserves of £17.985m, up from £15.935m in 2023/24

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, are set aside for specific purposes.

Through a review of the financial statements, we have considered the Council's revenue reserves over time as shown in the charts below. Overall, we are satisfied that the Council's overall reserves position does not indicate any evidence of a risk of significant weakness in arrangements to secure financial sustainability.



Overall, we have not identified a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements relating to Financial Sustainability criteria for the year ended 31 March 2025.

VFM arrangements

Governance

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



VFM arrangements – Governance

Overall commentary on Governance

Position brought forward from 2023/24

The Council's arrangements are not significantly changed since the prior year. In our 2023/25 Auditors Annual Report we reported a significant weakness in arrangements associated with the governance criteria. On page 22 we provide further detail.

The Authority's governance structure

We confirmed the Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which has been designed to be consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) - the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework' 2016 edition. The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and for facilitating the effective exercise of its functions. This governance arrangement is detailed in the Council's Constitution and the summary is included in the Annual Governance Statement. The Council's governance prioritises, as identified in the Framework and Constitution, are:

- Customers,
- Economy,
- Environment; and
- Housing

We have attended the Council's Audit Committee meetings; we have reviewed minutes from the different committees and considered against our understanding of the Council as part of our audit. 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. We confirmed minutes are published and reviewed by Committees to evidence the matters discussed, challenge and decisions made. Based on our work, we are satisfied there is no evidence of a weakness in the Council's governance arrangements.

The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a critical component of the Council's governance arrangements. It is a self-assessment by the Council on its governance, assurance and internal control frameworks for the financial year. While some governance issues have been identified, measures have been implemented to mitigate or minimise the risks associated. Our review of the AGS has not highlighted any risks of significant weakness and we have confirmed that disclosures are in line with the internal audit consortium annual report 2024-25.

Risk management and internal control

The Council has an established risk management framework and systems in place which are built into the governance structure of the organisation. The Council has embedded risk management by the establishment of a Risk Management Group which is led by Members and attended by senior officers, Internal Audit and health and safety officers. The Group regularly reviews all risk registers, offering challenge to the assessment process.

The Group leads on the development and review of all risk related policies, plans and strategies across the Council. These are supported by a Risk Management Strategy which are designed to identify and mitigate the strategic and operational risks. We confirmed the Risk Management framework includes a quarterly reporting process to Audit Committee.

The Risk Management approach, both in the identification of risks and the action taken to address risks, is designed to be flexible and have the ability to respond to change. This includes responding to changing national policies, service delivery arrangements, local circumstances, together with Council priorities. The Council's risk management focus and arrangements are designed to ensure current threats and opportunities are effectively addressed and not stifled by inappropriate risk management arrangements.

We have reviewed the risk register and confirmed risks are reviewed regularly, with each strategic risk identified being assigned a 'risk owner' to ensure there is ownership and accountability. The 'risk owners' are expected to review their allocated strategic risks at quarterly intervals. Additionally, the strategic risks are also communicated to the Audit Committee for additional scrutiny and assurance.

Internal Audit is provided on a consortium basis for Bolsover District Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and Chesterfield Borough Council. The Internal Audit Charter describes the purpose, authority and principal responsibilities of the Internal Audit Consortium that have been established to provide the internal audit service to the three councils. We confirmed an Annual Internal Audit Plan was in place and approved by the Audit Committee.

The Audit Plan is based on an assessment of risks the Council faces and is designed to ensure there is assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control. The planned work can be supplemented, if necessary, by ad hoc reviews in respect of suspected irregularities and other work commissioned by Officers and Members of the Council where relevant to respond to emerging risks and issues. We have reviewed the Internal Audit plans for 2024/25 and confirmed they are consistent with the risk-based approach.

VFM arrangements – Governance

Overall commentary on the Governance reporting criteria - continued

We confirmed Internal Audit progress reports are presented to each Audit Committee meeting including follow up reporting on recommendations from previous Internal Audit reviews. From our attendance at meetings, we are satisfied this allows the Committee to effectively hold management to account. At the end of each financial year the Head of Internal Audit Consortium provides an opinion based on the work completed during the year. For 2024/25 the Head of Internal Audit report concluded that a 'reasonable level of assurance' could be provided on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework for governance, risk management and control.

Throughout the year we have attended Audit Committee meetings. Through attendance at these meetings we have confirmed that the Committee receive regular updates on both internal audit progress and risk management in the form of risk registers. We have seen active member engagement from the Committee who challenge the papers and reports which they receive from officers, internal audit and external audit.

As detailed on page 22 we reported a weakness in the Council's arrangements during 2023/24, as the Council did not finalise the production of group accounts for the 2023/24 financial year until January 2025 which was a delay of six months beyond the expected timetable. This delay meant we were unable to complete our audit procedures before the statutory backstop date of 28 February 2025, resulting in the Council's Statement of Accounts being disclaimed. A significant weakness in arrangements was reported in 2023/24. Our work on group is still ongoing, and therefore, at the time of preparing this draft report, we are unable to conclude on the significant weakness previously identified. We will report when we issue our audit report in early 2026.

Governance structure for Dragonfly Development Limited

Dragonfly companies Governance arrangements are set up under the Shareholder Agreement. This included the establishment of a Shareholder Board. This Board included the Deputy Leader and two other Councillors. The set up of the shareholder Board changed in 2024/25. It is made up of Executive Members and two non-Executive Members. Also, the Council had representatives on the Dragonfly Boards. The Shareholder Agreement details the Governance arrangements of the company.

The Shareholder Board reports to the Growth and Scrutiny Committee. A resolution was passed confirming that any decision taken by the company, including but not limited to strategic decisions, management of the business future direction and development of the company, officers, shareholders of the company, major capital investments, and significant changes to service delivery, requires prior approval from the Council. This decision-making process is intended to ensure alignment with the Council's overall strategic objectives,

financial plans, and public service priorities.

Both, Dragonfly Development Ltd and its subsidiary Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd, have their own risk registers and risk assessments which have been to their Boards, the Shareholder Board and the Council's Corporate Risk Management Group. Governance arrangements are in place designed to ensure oversight of the companies.

Where there are tensions between the Council and component management objectives, the governance arrangements are designed to ensure the Council have decision making power to prevent any decisions the Council did not approve of.

In the year the Council commissioned an independent review to assess to what extent the Companies were delivering benefit for the Council through the lens of governance. The review reported a number of risks associated with oversight and governance however noted that none of these risks had crystallised. The recommendations in the report identified opportunities to manage and mitigate the risks if the current arrangement was to continue. The report was taken to full Council in July 2025 and Members were presented with several future options. Following debate Members approved the option to bring the Dragonfly operations back in house. The Council accepted that in light of local government reorganisation (see page 19) the opportunities that Dragonfly had once created for the Council were no longer attractive. Following the decision working groups have been established to bring the Dragonfly services back in house. These are intended to manage the process and mitigate any risks.

Our work on the Council's group arrangements is still ongoing, and therefore we are currently unable to conclude on the significant weakness previously identified in the prior year.

Based on the work completed to date, we have not identified or reported any additional significant weaknesses in Governance arrangements for the year ended 31 March 2025

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



VFM arrangements – Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Overall commentary on Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Position brought forward from 2023/24

There are no indications of a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements brought forward from the prior year and the Council's arrangements are not significantly changed since the prior year.

Council Plan and Performance Monitoring

The Council has in place the 2024-2028 Council Ambition which encompasses its vision to maximise influence and opportunities within the East Midlands combined County Authority to drive the continued delivery of excellence services, maximise local aspirations and drive economic prosperity for Bolsover District. To achieve this, the Council has four aims designed to deliver this vision through priorities that cover the Council Ambition 2020-2024 and these related to Customers, Economy, Environment and Housing.

The Council has identified the key performance indicators, and target levels of performance, in relation to these priorities. The performance targets are informed by national standards, local benchmarking and experience and arrangements are in place to subject indicators to challenge and confirmation. The Council has in place a performance management framework which includes identified responsibilities of managers and processes for regular performance reporting and corrective action if required. Portfolio holders meet regularly with Assistant Directors and Directors to discuss, amongst other things, the performance of services against targets. Our review of minutes confirmed there was quarterly reporting to the Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and the Executive. These quarterly reports take the form of a dashboard and identify whether the performance is achieved or on/off track. The quarterly reports include an appropriate commentary to explain any significant factors which are affecting performance and actions being taken to correct performance. Based on review of minutes there is evidence of appropriate scrutiny of these reports. On an annual basis, the Council's overall performance is summarised in the Narrative Report as part of the Statement of Accounts. This outlines the Council's progress against its ambitions, highlighting key successes and risk areas. The Narrative Report also includes an agreed plan for subsequent years, including any areas for improvement. This provides the public with an overall assessment of the Council activities for the financial year.

A sample of targets as reported in the Q4 report for 2024/25 have been reviewed and confirmed that this was in line with what has been reported in the narrative report which forms part of the annual financial statements.

The quarterly reports demonstrate that performance has been managed throughout the 2024/25 year and any significant variances have been justified. Based on our work we are satisfied there is evidence to demonstrate arrangements are in place for performance monitoring and management at the Council.

Based on review we are satisfied the Council continues to have arrangements for standing financial instructions, purchase order controls and our work on the financial statements has not identified any significant internal control deficiencies regarding purchasing controls.

As noted in the previous section the Council use Dragonfly Development Ltd & Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd to provide some services to the Council. We confirmed a Dragonfly monthly scrutiny report is presented to Local Growth Scrutiny committee on a monthly basis. This is intended to allow for scrutiny of Dragonfly performance.

Following a full year of operation an independent review of Dragonfly was commissioned by the Council as a proactive measure to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of its current arrangements. The review did not identify any immediate or crystallised risks; rather, it served as a preventive exercise to ensure the Council remained on a sound strategic and operational footing. The review highlighted several governance and operational concerns and presented a range of options for future delivery. In July 2025 the Council voted to bring the Dragonfly services in-house. We will review further arrangements in our work for the year ended 31 March 2026.

We are not aware of any significant matters in 2024/25 which are indicative of a significant weakness in arrangements.

VFM arrangements – Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

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

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

In February 2025, the Government wrote to local authorities formally inviting them to submit proposals to create new structures of unitary authorities – which is a single tier of local government responsible for all local services in an area. Derbyshire's eight district and borough councils, and Derby City Council, have been working in partnership to draw up a joint proposal.

Local government reorganisation (LGR) is a complex undertaking that requires strategic foresight, collaborative leadership, and robust planning. It presents both opportunities and challenges for councils seeking to improve service delivery, financial sustainability, and democratic accountability. Effective planning is essential to ensure a smooth transition and long-term success. It is well recognised that councils continue to deliver their services and duties until reorganisation is complete, including ensuring it maintains standards and exhibits the appropriate standards of governance.

Crucially, the Council will need ensure it puts in place robust arrangements to oversee the agreement and implementation of an agreed plan. This includes effective governance and committed leadership, such that there are clear arrangements for decision-making and manage relationships between partners, especially in joint or competing proposals.

We have held ongoing discussions with senior Council officers throughout the year as the situation has evolved. We do not consider LGR to represent in itself a significant risk of weakness in arrangements. From our review we have not identified any indication that the Council has not complied with its obligations to the LGR process. The Council worked with districts and boroughs in Derbyshire to prepare an interim plan which was approved by full Council in March 2025. The Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council was authorised to continue to participate in discussions with Derbyshire's seven other district and borough councils, Derby City Council and also potentially Derbyshire County Council, with a view to developing a full proposal for local government reorganisation in Derbyshire and Derby. The Full Council will be formally invited to consider the full proposal in the Autumn, prior to its submission to the Government by the required deadline of 28 November 2025.

During the transition period, each council will retain full sovereignty over its assets and liabilities. However, MHCLG expects local leaders to collaborate in establishing voluntary agreements that ensure prudent,

coordinated, and value-for-money decisions on expenditure as proposals are developed.

There are a range of other factors to incorporate into future planning, including but not limited to:

- Robust financial planning, managing transition costs, but also addressing existing deficits and future funding uncertainties.
- Supporting the workforce, including engagement, morale and more detailed determination of employee contracts, redundancies and retention. This includes Ensuring there is sufficient resources available to implement programme management on the delivery of the finally agreed case.
- Maintaining continuity in services, but identifying opportunities/threats on duplication, gaps and service delivery models. This would also include effective consultation and engagement with residents, service users and other stakeholders.
- Considering the impact of technology as a barrier and enabler, including data protection, cyber resilience and ability to integrate systems

Other Recommendation

The Council needs to maintain effective and transparent governance arrangements in the progression of plans for local government reorganisation, including effective leadership and the Standards and Audit Committee should seek specific assurance, once plans are finalised, over the key controls in place to support the transition to a new organisation.

Overall, we have not identified a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements relating to Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness criteria for the year ended 31 March 2025.

VFM arrangements

Identified significant weaknesses in arrangements and our recommendations



VFM arrangements – Prior year significant weaknesses and recommendations

Progress against significant weaknesses and recommendations made in a prior year

As part of our audit work in previous years, we identified the following significant weaknesses, and made recommendations for improvement in the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. These identified weaknesses have been outlined in the table below, along with our view on the Council's progress against the recommendations made, including whether the significant weakness is still relevant in the 2024/25 year.

Previously identified significant weakness in arrangements	Reporting criteria	Recommendation for improvement	Our views on the actions taken to date	Overall conclusions
<p>1 Accounting and Governance Arrangements of Dragonfly companies The Council published its draft statement of accounts for the 2023/24 financial year in July 2024, including group accounts. This is the first year that the Council has been required to prepare group accounts, incorporating the financial results of both the Council and its wholly-owned subsidiary companies (collectively referred to as "Dragonfly companies"). However, the draft group accounts contained material errors due to inconsistencies in the reporting periods for the year ended 31 March 2024 year and prior year balances (year ended 31 March 2023). Further, there were delays in obtaining the financial statements of Dragonfly Companies (Dragonfly Development Ltd and Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd) from their consultants and external auditors to enable the production of final group accounts. These delays meant the Council was not able to finalise the production of updated group accounts for the 2023/24 financial year until January 2025, a delay of 6 months over the expected timetable. As a result of the delay we were unable to complete our audit procedures before the backstop date of 28th February 2025, leading to the Council's statement of accounts being disclaimed.</p> <p>Without proper arrangements to support the production of its draft statement of accounts (which incorporate full range of activities of the Council's group) and the audit of those accounts, the Council risks a continuation of failure to meet the requirement to publish an audited statement of accounts. These matters, in our view, are evidence of a significant weakness in the Council's governance arrangements, in particular how the body ensures supports its statutory financial reporting requirements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.</p>	Governance	The Council should ensure that proper arrangements are established to ensure the timely production of the group statement of accounts, aligning with statutory reporting deadlines. This timetable should be clearly articulated to all stakeholders within the Group.	<p>We have noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council produced and published group accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 by June 2025. • The Council removed previous auditors and appointed a new firm to conduct audits of the Dragonfly companies. The audits of both companies were completed in the summer of 2025. • We have considered the work of the component auditor and not identified any significant matters indicative of continued weakness. No significant matters reported by the component auditor in their reporting. • Our discussions with the component auditor confirmed that some continued challenge but clear that significant improvements have been made as evidenced by the limited findings.. • Council commissioned an independent review into the companies and following have concluded it appropriate to bring the services back in house as benefits set out in the business case are not being met. As such the Council will cease to produce group accounts from 26/27. 	<p>January 2026 update Our work on the Council's group arrangements is still ongoing, and therefore we are currently unable to fully conclude on the Council's actions in response to the significant weakness previously identified in the prior year. We will conclude ahead of issuing our audit report in February 2026.</p>

04

Other reporting responsibilities

Other reporting responsibilities

Wider reporting responsibilities

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 group auditor

Whole of Government Accounts (WGA)

The National Audit Office (NAO), as group auditor, requires us to complete the WGA Assurance Statement in respect of its consolidation data. We have been unable to conclude our work as we have not yet received confirmation from the NAO that the group audit of the WGA has been completed and that no further work is required to be completed by us.

05

Audit fees and other services

Audit fees and other services

Fees for our 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 presented to the Audit Committee in September 2025. Our work on the audit is ongoing Having but we expect our fees are as follows:

Area of work	2024/25 fees	2023/24 fees
Planned fee in respect of our work under the Code of Audit Practice	£160,368	£145,685
Additional fee in respect of: • ISA315 • preparing group accounts • disclaimer accounts • additional VFM significant weakness	N/A	£21,436
Additional fee in respect of rebuilding assurance	TBC	N/A
Total fees	£TBC	£167,121

Fees for other work

We confirm we have been engaged to undertake the following any non-audit services for the Council in the year.

Area of work	2024/25 fees	2023/24 fees
Other services – Agreed upon procedures on housing pooling return	£7,000	£6,000

Appendices

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

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

Significant risks and audit findings

As part of our audit of the Council, we identified significant risks to our opinion on the financial statements during our risk assessment. The table below summarises these risks, how we responded and our findings.

Risk	Our audit response and findings
Management override of controls (Council and Group) Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits	We will update once we have completed our work on the financial statements.
Valuation of land, buildings and investment properties (Council) The financial statements contain material entries on the Balance Sheet as well as material disclosure notes in relation to the Council's holding of land, buildings and investment properties. Although the Council uses a valuation expert to provide information on valuations, there remains a high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with the revaluation of land, buildings and investment property due to the significant judgements and number of variables involved in providing revaluations. We have therefore identified the valuation of land, buildings and investment properties to be an area of significant risk.	We will update once we have completed our work on the financial statements.

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

Significant risks and audit findings *continued*

Risk	Our audit response and findings
<p>Net defined benefit valuation (Council and Group)</p> <p>The Council is an employer in the Local Government Pension Scheme, administered on a local level by the Derbyshire Pension Fund.</p> <p>The defined benefit assets and liabilities are significant items in the Council's balance sheet and the Council engages an actuary to perform an annual valuation in accordance with the requirements of IAS 19 Employee Benefits. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with this valuation, we have identified a significant risk in this area.</p> <p>As part of our testing, procedures will be performed on the net defined liability held by Dragonfly Development Limited</p>	<p>We will update once we have completed our work on the financial statements.</p>
<p>Application of IFRS 16 for the 2024-25 financial year (Council)</p> <p>IFRS 16 is applicable from 1 April 2024, designed to report information that better shows lease transactions and provides a better basis for users of financial statements to assess the amount, timing and uncertainty of cash flows arising from leases.</p> <p>The Council is required to account for its lease arrangements in line with this new standard for the first time in the 2024/25 accounts. This requires the Council to re-classify their leases and account for a right of use asset. Given this is a new standard which could result in significant movements and the need to identify previously unrecognised leases we have identified this as an area of significant risk for our 2024/25 audit.</p>	<p>We will update once we have completed our work on the financial statements.</p>

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

Significant risks and audit findings *continued*

Risk	Our audit response and findings
Group Consolidation The Council is consolidates Dragonfly Group (Dragonfly Development Limited and Dragonfly Management) and produced group accounts for the first time in the 2023/24 financial statements. We reported in our disclaimer of opinion for the year ended 31 March 2024 that the Group financial statements included material errors and the Council was unable to provide sufficient, appropriate evidence to support the figures in the group financial statements were free from material misstatement.	We will update once we have completed our work on the financial statements.

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

Summary of uncorrected misstatements for the Council – to be added on completion of our audit of the financial statements 2024/25

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

Internal control observations for the Council – to be added on completion of our audit of the financial statements 2024/25

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

Follow up on previous year recommendations for the Council – to be added on completion of our audit of the financial statements 2024/25

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