

Independent auditor's report to the members of Shropshire Council

In our auditor's report issued on 26 February 2024, we explained that we could not formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate for Shropshire Council ('the Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2023 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice, until we had:

- completed our work on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We have now completed this work, and the results of our work are set out below.
- completed our consideration of an objection brought to our attention by a local authority elector under Section 27 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. This matter has now been dealt with.

Opinion on the financial statements

In our auditor's report for the year ended 31 March 2023 issued on 26 February 2024 we reported that, in our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the group and of the Authority as at 31 March 2023 and of the group's expenditure and income and the Authority's expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Opinion on the pension fund financial statements

In our auditor's report for the year ended 31 March 2023 issued on 26 February 2024 we reported that, in our opinion the financial statements of Shropshire County Pension Fund:

- give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of Shropshire County Pension Fund during the year ended 31 March 2023 and of the amount and disposition at that date of the fund's assets and liabilities, other than liabilities to pay promised retirement benefits after the end of the fund year;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements – the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Matter on which we are required to report by exception – the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Under the Code of Audit Practice, we are required to report to you if, in our opinion, we have not been able to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2023.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matter except on 17 July 2024 we identified a significant weakness in how the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services. This was in relation to the Council's failure during 2022/23 to maintain its spending within budget and deliver the planned savings and service transformation that would deliver financial sustainability in the medium term.

We recommended that the Authority should re-consider all aspects of service delivery to ensure financial sustainability with efforts being directed toward the identification and delivery of savings that reduce the indicative budget gaps in 2025/26 and in future years along with supporting the replenishment of reserves. In addition, the Authority should ensure that there are alternative options to

deliver a balanced medium term financial strategy in future years, reducing reliance on one-off measures to support the revenue budget (including non-recurrent savings, one-off grants and reserves) and, if required, how the reduction or removal of services in its long-term plan fits with its organisational strategy and the priorities of stakeholders.

Responsibilities of the Authority

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Auditor's responsibilities for the review of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to be satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

We undertake our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General. This guidance sets out the arrangements that fall within the scope of 'proper arrangements'. When reporting on these arrangements, the Code of Audit Practice requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under three specified reporting criteria:

- Financial sustainability: how the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance: how the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

We document our understanding of the arrangements the Authority has in place for each of these three specified reporting criteria, gathering sufficient evidence to support our risk assessment and commentary in our Auditor's Annual Report. In undertaking our work, we consider whether there is evidence to suggest that there are significant weaknesses in arrangements.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements – Audit certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of Shropshire Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 44 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies (up to and including 2022/23 audits) published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Grant Patterson

Grant Patterson, Key Audit Partner

for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Local Auditor

Birmingham

10 June 2026