

LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET

AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 Regulation 9A require the Council to publish its final accountability statements for the financial year ending 31st March 2024 by **28th February 2025**.

Accountability statements include:

- the statement of accounts together with the opinion and any certificate from the local auditor approved in accordance with regulation 9(2)
- the annual governance statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(2)
- the narrative statement prepared in accordance with regulation 8

If the Authority is not able to publish accounts by this date, then the Authority is required to publish a notice explaining the reason.

This notice advises that the council has not been able to publish its accounts for the financial year 2023/24. The reason for the delay is:

1) The Council made a prepayment to the Local Government Pension Scheme in 2020 in respect of secondary contributions for the years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 and continued to make regular payments of secondary contributions for those years and arranged for the Pension Fund to repay the additional contributions back to the Council. The Council sought legal advice about the lawfulness of the prepayment, and separately, regarding the authorisation of the additional payments and repayment of the additional contributions by the pension fund. The council also sought advice on potential tax implications.

2) The situation resulted in the council's Monitoring Officer issuing a report under section 5(2)(a) of the Local Government Housing Act 1989, which in turn meant that the Chief Finance (s151) Officer had to issue a report under Section 114(2)(a) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 for unlawful expenditure. The report was presented to Council on the 28th January 2025 (Item 5 - [Agenda for Council on Tuesday 28th January, 2025, 7.00 pm](#)).

3) Council officers are reviewing the advice and working with those charged with governance on the most appropriate remedial action. This includes the impact that this decision will have on the council's accounts for all affected years; 2020/21, 2021/22,

2022/23 and 2023/24. The external auditors have indicated that they are not able to sign off the accounts until this matter is resolved. The updated accounts will then be reviewed and approved by the auditors before the final accounts are published.

The Council acknowledges that it must publish its accountability statements as soon as reasonably practicable but recognises that there is also a critical dependency on the outcome of the pensions issue outlined above, and the implications on the accounts, to achieve this.

Dated: 28th February 2025

Anisa Darr

Executive Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer)