Independent auditor's report to the members of Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council

Audit completion

Disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements

In our auditor's report, issued on 25 February 2026, for Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council (the 'Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2025, we reported a disclaimer of opinion on the Authority and Group's financial statements.

We explained that we could not formally conclude the audit and issue the audit certificate for the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2025, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice, until we had:

- received confirmation from the National Audit Office (NAO) that the audit of the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) is complete for the year ended 31 March 2025. This work is now complete and the NAO has now concluded their work in respect of WGA for the year ended 31 March 2025 and confirmed that audit certificates held open in relation to this can be issued. We are therefore satisfied all audit work necessary has been completed.
- 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. These matters have now been dealt with.

Qualified opinion on the pension fund financial statements

In our auditor's report, issued on 25 February 2025 for Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund (the 'Pension Fund') for the year ended 31 March 2025, we reported a qualified opinion on the Pension Fund's financial statements.

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 2025.

In our auditor's report for the year ended 31 March 2025 issued on 25 February 2026 we reported that we have nothing to report in respect of whether the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2025 except as set out below.

Financial sustainability

- On 23 February 2025 we identified a significant weakness in relation to the Authority's inability to demonstrate how it would replenish and maintain adequate reserve levels over the medium term following the discovery of historical accounting errors, depleted reserves and reliance on Exceptional Financial Support. We recommended that the Authority develop a medium-term approach to restoring reserves and planning for contingencies. This significant weakness remained in place at 31 March 2025. On 29 August 2025, we raised a revised recommendation that the Authority further develop its Medium-Term Financial Plan to set out how it will replenish its reserves, including minimum reserve levels, strategic contingencies and actions required should Exceptional Financial Support or forecast council tax increases not be secured.
- On 23 February 2025 we identified a significant weakness in relation to insufficiently developed medium-term savings plans, underperformance against savings targets, and the need for the

Authority to strengthen the rigour, ambition and evidence base supporting savings proposals. We recommended that the Authority improve its approach to identifying, planning and delivering savings. This significant weakness remained in place at 31 March 2025. On 29 August 2025, we raised a revised recommendation that the Authority further strengthen the rigour and ambition with which savings are planned, approved and monitored, supported by robust business cases and clear delivery pathways, including actions to bring forward alternative savings in-year where required.

Governance

- On 23 February 2025 we identified a significant weakness in relation to ongoing limitations in the internal control environment, the historical lack of internal audit coverage and slower-than-required implementation of internal audit recommendations. We recommended that the Authority strengthen its internal audit plan, resourcing and response to recommendations. This significant weakness remained in place at 31 March 2025. On 29 August 2025, we raised a revised recommendation that the Authority ensure internal audit coverage is sufficient to provide appropriate assurance over key risks, and that outstanding internal audit recommendations are addressed systematically and promptly.
- On 23 February 2025 we identified a significant weakness in relation to the continuing risks arising from three years of backstopped or disclaimed financial statements, historic accounting errors and the need to improve processes supporting the timely and accurate preparation of accounts. We recommended that the Authority ensure it had the systems and capacity required to produce accurate and timely financial statements. This significant weakness remained in place at 31 March 2025. On 29 August 2025, we raised a revised recommendation that the Authority ensure historical accounting issues are fully resolved and that it has robust processes, capacity and controls in place to support accurate financial reporting and timely responses to audit queries.
- On 23 February 2025 we identified a significant weakness in relation to the Authority’s oversight of major development projects, including the need to strengthen governance, scrutiny and monitoring of key financial and delivery risks following the insourcing of the Authority’s former property company. We recommended that the Authority improve the management and oversight of these project-related risks. This significant weakness remained in place at 31 March 2025. On 29 August 2025, we raised a revised recommendation that the Authority strengthen arrangements for monitoring the financial risks, expected outcomes and costs of major development projects, ensuring lessons learned from previous arrangements are embedded in its future operating model.

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

- On 23 February 2025 we identified a significant weakness in relation to longstanding weaknesses in procurement and contract management, including outstanding Internal Audit recommendations from 2022/23 and insufficient evidence that contract procedure rules were being applied consistently across the organisation. We recommended that the Authority produce a contract management framework, reinforce training, update its procurement regulations and maintain a complete contracts register. This significant weakness remained in place at 31 March 2025, and we have repeated the recommendation.

No matters have come to our attention since that date that would have resulted in any additional exception reporting on the Authority’s arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements – audit certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 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 85 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies 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.

Peter Barber

Peter Barber, Key Audit Partner

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

Bristol

8 July 2026