

**AUDIT COMMITTEE
22 JANUARY 2024**

FINAL ACCOUNTS TIMETABLE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with the Final Accounts Closedown Timetable for 2023/24. This timetable details the target dates for key actions in order to complete the Statement of Accounts (SoA) in line with statutory deadlines.

Summary

2. Under the regulations it is the responsibility of the Group Director of Operations to sign and certify the unaudited SoA 2023/24 by no later than 31 May 2024 and it is also the responsibility of the Audit Committee to approve the audited set of accounts on or before 30 September 2024.
3. The final accounts timetable serves as a tool for monitoring progress against the target dates to ensure compliance with the statutory deadlines. The enclosed timetable will aim to comply with the date of 31 May for the unaudited SoA so that there is less disruption to the normal work schedule of the Council.

Recommendation

4. Members are asked to note the key dates in the Final Accounts Timetable for 2023/24 detailed in Appendix 1.

Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported to provide the Audit Committee with evidence to reflect on progress in delivery of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

**Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations**

Background Papers

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2023/24

Judith Murray: Extension 5204

S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no specific crime and disorder impact.
Health and Well Being	There is no specific health and well being impact.
Carbon Impact	There is no specific carbon impact.
Diversity	There is no specific diversity impact.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Council Plan	There is no specific relevance to the Council Plan beyond the report comprising part of the Council's governance arrangements.
Efficiency	There is no specific efficiency impact.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The report does not impact upon Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

6. The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022 require that the responsible financial officer, by no later than the 31 May, signs and certifies that the SoA presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council for the year to 31 March previous, subject to the views of the External Auditor, Mazars.
 7. The Regulations then require that 'but not later than 30 September', approval needs to be given to the SoA by resolution of a committee, which for Darlington is the Audit Committee. This approval will take into account the views of the External Auditor.
 8. The Final Accounts timetable (**Appendix 1**) is a tool for the effective management and monitoring of the process of closing the Council's accounts.
 9. The timetable is compiled annually by Finance with input from services to ensure that deadlines are achievable and will lead to completion of a SoA for signing by the Section 151 Officer (the responsible financial officer) by the statutory deadline. New and amended processes are considered for the impact on the achievement of dates, as well as reference to the previous year's problems and meeting of deadlines.
 10. The enclosed timetable will enable Finance to produce an unaudited SoA by the 31 May 2024, which will then not distract from the other 'business as usual' such as reviewing the Medium Term Financial Plan.
 11. The Finance Manager closely monitors the achievement of the dates in the timetable throughout the final accounts period, following up delays and missed deadlines. This helps
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to ensure that the overall timetable will be achieved and to identify improvements that can be made to the process.



2023/24 Accounts - General Closure Timetable

<u>Date for Completion</u>	<u>Item</u>
March	29 On-line goods receipting of orders relating to 2023/24 to be completed (including order authorisation).
	29 End of facility for on-line processing of purchase invoices in Business World On! relating to 2023/24 to be posted to period 12 of that year.
	29 Capital Charges to revenue accounts
April	5 All interface files posted to Council's General Ledger
	5 Petty cash and stock valuation certificates, certified by authorised signatories, sent to Financial Services.
	5 Details of purchase invoices and sundry debtor accounts relating to 2023/24 not paid by 31/03/2024 to be given to Departmental Finance Teams for provision in 2023/24 accounts (invoice values above £500 only).
	12 Bank reconciliation to be completed
	12 Work in progress, Retentions & Income in Advance from Building Services included in accounts for both trading and client accounts. Expenditure provisions and provision for future losses for Trading Accounts in Place based Services.
	12 All expenditure and income relating to 2023/24 identified and included in accounts to enable progress of next stages of process.
	12 Control accounts balanced and all holding accounts cleared.
	12 Internal recharges completed including inter-departmental recharges.
	12 Intra-departmental apportionments and reallocations completed
	26 Comparison of out-turn income and expenditure with approved budgets - including analysis of significant variances and any resulting corrective action including coding corrections.
	26 Departmental Financing of capital expenditure.
	30 Accounts Closed
May	1 Commence process of consolidation of individual cost-centre and subjective level accounts into statutory format for Statement of Accounts (SoA).
	31 Produce signed unaudited Statement of Accounts.

Sept 30 Audit Committee Meeting – approval of Statement of Accounts
30 Publication of audited Statement of Accounts

