
WEST OF SCOTLAND EUROPEAN FORUM

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

WEST OF SCOTLAND EUROPEAN FORUM

Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 March 2020

Contents	Page
• Management Commentary	3
• Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts	5
• Movement in Reserves Statement	7
• Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	8
• Balance Sheet	9
• Notes to the Accounts	10
• Annual Governance Statement	16
• Independent Auditor's Report	23

❖ Management Commentary

- ❖ The West of Scotland European Forum (WSEF) was set up in 2007. Its purpose is to develop positive links between the communities of the region and the institutions of the European Union. In this task it follows on from the work previously undertaken by the West of Scotland European Consortium (WSEC). In addition to the local authorities who are members of WSEF, there are a number of other organisations in the region who participate in Forum activities.
- ❖
- ❖ Covering a geographically diverse region stretching from the Southern Uplands to the Highlands and Islands, this varied territory covered by forum members includes the Clydeside conurbation, the City of Glasgow, and several important industrial areas.
- ❖
- ❖ In 2019/20 the Forum continued to work within its “Smarter Working” framework that had been agreed in 2010. Work focused on 2 main issues – the delivery of the 2014-2020 Scottish EU funding programmes (including the South West Scotland Youth Employment Initiative) and proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund which is intended to replace EU Structural Fund programmes in the UK following “Brexit”. In carrying out these tasks the Forum continued its long standing collaboration with The Industrial Communities Alliance (ICA). It also cooperated closely with other Scottish stakeholders in promoting the opportunities provided to seek support from a number of European Territorial Cooperation programmes.
- ❖
- ❖ In 2019/20 the Forum continued to operate in an environment of considerable policy uncertainty, notwithstanding the formal departure of the UK from the EU in January 2020. From that date until the end of December 2020 the UK is in a transition phase. This provides an element of continuity in respect of the arrangements for the delivery of existing EU funding programmes for the 2014-20 period. Very little progress was however made in 2019/20 by the UK Government in elaborating its proposals for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and this will continue to be a priority issue for the Forum in 2020/21.
- ❖
- ❖ The Forum continued its work on promoting the case for continuing Scottish/UK access to certain EU collaborative programmes in the 2021-27 EU funding period.
- ❖
- ❖ The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis. The Forum will however begin a review of its future role in 2020/21 in the light of the conclusion of the transition period referred to above and the terms of any agreement on the future relationship between the UK and the EU.
- ❖
- ❖ In respect of its financial affairs, 2019/20 marked the second year in which the Forum sought to achieve a general balance in its budget having run down its accumulated reserves in a managed fashion over the preceding years. This objective was substantially met in 2019/20 and the maintenance of the balance will protect the organisation in light of the current economic climate.
- ❖
- ❖ It should be noted that, towards the end of the financial year, the operation of the Forum was adversely impacted by COVID 19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown that was imposed in March 2020. In particular the Forum meeting scheduled for 23rd March 2020 had to be cancelled at short notice and urgent items disposed of by written procedure. The extended period of lockdown will have an even greater impact on Forum activities in 2020/21.

Financial results

In 2019/20 total income was £42,038 and total expenditure was £43,122, resulting in a deficit for the year of £1,084, leaving a balance of funds carried forward of £41,435.

Councillor Tony Buchanan
Chair of West of Scotland European Forum

Martin Booth BA CPFA MBA
Executive Director of Finance

❖ **Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts**

1. The lead authority's responsibilities

The lead authority is required:

- To make arrangements for the proper administration of the Forum's financial affairs and to ensure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In Glasgow City Council, that officer is the Executive Director of Finance.
- To manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of the resources and safeguard its assets.
- To ensure the Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with legislation (the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014), and so far as is compatible with that legislation, in accordance with proper accounting practices (section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003), and with the Coronavirus Act 2020.
- To approve the Annual Accounts for signature.

I confirm that these Annual Accounts were approved for signature by the Forum at its meeting on the

Councillor Tony Buchanan
Chair of West of Scotland European Forum

2. The Executive Director of Finance responsibilities

The Executive Director of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Forum's Annual Accounts, in accordance with proper practices, as required by legislation and as set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing these Annual Accounts, the Executive Director of Finance has:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- Made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- Complied with legislation; and
- Complied with the Code.

The Executive Director of Finance has also:

- Kept adequate accounting records, which were up to date; and
- Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that the Annual Accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position of West of Scotland European Forum as at 31 March 2020 and the transactions for the year then ended.

Martin Booth BA CPFA MBA
Executive Director of Finance

❖ Movement in Reserves Statement for the Year ended 31 March 2020

The Code requires reserves to be summarised as usable and unusable. The balance in WOSEF is the sole usable reserve and represents the accumulated surplus of the organisation.

The balance held by the Forum stands at £41,435 as at 31 March 2020, a decrease of £1,084 from last year, due to the deficit on the provision of services in the year.

	Total Reserves £
Balance at 1 April 2018	42,820
Movement in reserves during 2018/19:	
Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services	(301)
Other Comprehensive Income and (Expenditure)	0
Increase or (Decrease) in the year	(301)
Balance at 31 March 2019	42,519
Movement in reserves during 2019/20:	
Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services	(1,084)
Other Comprehensive Income and (Expenditure)	0
Increase or (Decrease) in the year	(1,084)
Balance at 31 March 2020	41,435

❖ Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the year ended 31 March 2020

2018/19 Net Exp. £	Service	Note	2019/20 Net Expenditure £
42,801	Gross expenditure	3	43,122
(42,198)	Gross income	3	(41,798)
603	Cost of Services		1,324
(302)	Interest and investment income		(240)
(302)	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure		(240)
301	(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services		1,084
0	Other Comprehensive (Income) and Expenditure		0
301	Total Comprehensive (Income) and Expenditure		1,084

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – shows income and expenditure incurred in the year relating to the provision of WOSEF services, and other unrealised gains and losses. In total, this reflects the movement in the overall WOSEF reserves shown in the Balance Sheet.

❖ **Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2020**

31 March 2019 £		Note	31 March 2020 £
43,832	Net short-term debtors	6	42,855
43,832	Current Assets		42,855
(1,313)	Short-term creditors	7	(1,420)
(1,313)	Current Liabilities		(1,420)
42,519	Net Assets / (Liabilities)		41,435
42,519	Usable Reserves		41,435
0	Unusable Reserves		0
42,519	Total Reserves		41,435

Balance Sheet – represents the value of the assets and liabilities of WOSEF as at 31 March 2020. The net assets (assets less liabilities) are matched by the total Usable and Unusable Reserves.

The unaudited accounts were issued on the 19th August 2020 and the audited accounts were authorised for issue on

Martin Booth BA CPFA MBA
Executive Director of Finance

❖ Notes to the accounts

The main objective of these notes is to provide further explanation for certain aspects of the core Financial Statements.

1. Statement of accounting policies

- 1.1 The Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 have been compiled on the basis of recommendations made by the Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee (LASAAC) and have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the Code). The Code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) with interpretation appropriate to the public sector. The statements are designed to give a 'true and fair view' of the financial performance and position of the Forum.
- 1.2 The accounting concepts of materiality, accruals, going concern and primacy of legislative requirements have been considered in the application of accounting policies. In this regard the materiality concept means that information is included where the information is of such significance as to justify its inclusion. The accruals concept requires the non-cash effects of transactions to be included in the financial statement for the year in which they occur, not in the period in which the cash is paid or received. The going concern concept assumes that the Forum will not significantly curtail the scale of its operation. Wherever accounting principles and legislative requirements are in conflict, the latter shall apply.
- 1.3 Suppliers' invoices received up to 31 March 2020 have been included in the accounts. In addition, various items of expenditure have been accrued in accordance with the Code where the goods or services were received prior to 31 March 2020. Salaries and wages earned to 31 March 2020 are included in the accounts for 2019/20 irrespective of when the actual payments were made.
- 1.4 Income includes all sums due in respect of subscriptions from member authorities and other organisations and interest earned on fund balances for the year ended 31 March 2020.
- 1.5 There were no complex transactions or potential future uncertainties requiring critical judgements or estimations of uncertainty in preparing the 2019/20 accounts.
- 1.6 Events after the balance sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the statement of accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events may be identified:
 - Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Financial Statements are adjusted to reflect such events; and
 - Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Financial Statements are not adjusted to reflect such events, but where this would have a material effect, the nature and estimated financial impact of such events is disclosed in the notes

2. New standards issued but not yet adopted

The Code requires the disclosure of information relating to the impact of an accounting change that will be required by a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted. This applies to the adoption of the following new or amended standards within the 2020/21 Code:

- Amendments to IAS 28 Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures: Long-term Interests in Associates and Joint Ventures
- Annual Improvements to IFRS Standards 2015 – 2017 Cycle
- Amendments to IAS19 Employee Benefits: Plan Amendment, Curtailment or Settlement

The Code requires implementation from 1 April 2020 and there is therefore no impact on the 2019/20 annual accounts.

Overall, these new or amended standards are not expected to have a significant impact on the Annual Accounts.

3. Income and expenditure statement

The table below provides a detailed breakdown of income and expenditure of the Forum during 2019/20:

2018/19 Net Exp. £		Note	2019/20 Net Expenditure £
Income			
(302)	Interest		(240)
(42,198)	Contributions from participating local authorities	4	(41,798)
(42,500)	Total income		(42,038)
Expenditure			
12,746	Employee costs		13,050
Administration costs:			
26,000	Subscriptions		26,000
1,486	Travel and operational costs		1,258
599	Miscellaneous		794
1,970	Audit fee	10	2,020
42,801	Total expenditure		43,122
301	(Surplus) or deficit for year		1,084
(42,820)	(Surplus) brought forward		(42,519)
(42,519)	Accumulated (surplus) or deficit		(41,435)

4. Local authority subscriptions

The majority of income received by WOSEF is derived from contributions received from the local authorities and other organisations who are members of the Forum.

A detailed breakdown of each member's contribution to the Forum in respect of 2019/20 and the previous year is shown in the table below:-

<i>Annual Subscription 2018/19 £</i>	Local Authority	<i>Annual Subscription 2019/20 £</i>
2,176	East Ayrshire Council	2,176
2,004	South Ayrshire Council	2,004
2,552	Renfrewshire Council	2,552
1,822	West Dunbartonshire Council	1,822
2,004	East Dunbartonshire Council	2,004
2,552	North Ayrshire Council	2,552
1,632	East Renfrewshire Council	1,632
10,880	Glasgow City Council	10,880
1,632	Argyll and Bute Council	1,632
5,440	South Lanarkshire Council	5,440
5,440	North Lanarkshire Council	5,440
1,632	Inverclyde Council	1,632
1,632	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport	1,632
800	Other contributions	400
42,198	Total	41,798

5. Employee benefits

The staff member of the Forum is a Glasgow City Council employee and the council is an admitted body of the Strathclyde Pension Fund.

In accordance with International Accounting Standard 19 (IAS 19) – Employee Benefits, the council is required to disclose certain information concerning assets, liabilities, income and expenditure, of the pension scheme. The Forum's staff pension costs are reflected in the figures disclosed in Glasgow City Council's financial statements.

The Code requires that employee benefits are recognised in the accounts when they are earned rather than when they are paid. As a result, there is a requirement to consider notional entitlements to annual leave earned but not taken as at 31 March. The employee working on the Forum's activities is contracted to Glasgow City Council and therefore any notional liability has been included within the accounts of Glasgow City Council who holds the contract of employment.

6. Short-term debtors

The net short-term debtors figure of £42,855 for 2019/20 is comprised of the following:-

31 March 2019 £	Short-term debtors	31 March 2020 £
43,832	Balance held by GCC on behalf of WOSEF	42,855
43,832	Total sundry debtors	42,855

7. Short-term creditors

The short-term creditors figure for 2019/20 of £1,420 (2018/19 £1,313) comprises the following:-

31 March 2019 £	Short-term creditors	31 March 2020 £
1,313	Accrued audit fees	1,347
	Accrued travel expenses	73
1,313	Total sundry creditors	1,420

8. Remuneration Report

West of Scotland European Forum is a Joint Committee comprised of several local authorities and other organisations. Given that Glasgow City Council (GCC) is the lead authority, the senior management are deemed to be from GCC. Details of remuneration paid to senior management at GCC is available in the remuneration report included within GCC's financial statements. The employee working on the project does not earn more than £50,000. No remuneration was paid to the members of the Forum.

9. Related Parties

Glasgow City Council is the administering body responsible for WOSEF. The related party transactions between WOSEF and Glasgow City Council are shown in the table below:

2018/19 Net Exp/(Inc) £	Debtor/(Creditor) at 31 March 2019 £	Related Party transactions and balances	2019/20 Exp £	2019/20 Inc £	Debtor/(Creditor) at 31 March 2020 £
		Related bodies			
(10,880)	43,832	Glasgow City Council	0	0	42,855

10. Auditor remuneration

WOSEF incurred fees of £2,020 (2018/19 £1,970) for the statutory inspection of the financial statements by Audit Scotland. Fees payable in respect of other services provided by the appointed auditor were £nil (2018/19 £nil).

11. Events after the balance sheet date

There were no material events between 31 March 2020 and the date of signing that require to be reflected in the Financial Statements.

Annual Governance Statement

Scope of responsibility

The West of Scotland European Forum Joint Committee is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Forum also has a statutory duty to make arrangements to secure best value, which is to ensure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, and to ensure public funds and assets are used economically, efficiently and effectively.

In discharging these responsibilities, members must ensure proper arrangements for the governance of the Forum's affairs and facilitate the effective exercise of its functions, which includes the management of risk and stewardship of the resources at its disposal.

WOSEF's financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016) by virtue of the adoption by Glasgow City Council of a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

The Code is regularly reviewed and evidences the Council's commitment to achieving good governance and demonstrates how it complies with recommended standards.

The Forum relies on the Council which has embedded a system of risk management and internal control. While providing reasonable assurance, these systems cannot, however, provide absolute assurance or certainty in entirely eliminating the risk of the Council failing to achieve its aims and objectives; incurring material errors; losses; fraud or breaches of laws and regulations.

The Joint Committee's Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Forum is directed and controlled. Through the framework it is accountable to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Forum to monitor the achievement of its objectives against its plans and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services and outcomes. The governance framework will be continually updated to reflect best practice, new legislative requirements and the expectations of stakeholders.

The Forum has responsibility for ensuring the continuing effectiveness of its governance framework and system of internal control. The main features of the Forum's governance arrangements are as follows:-

- A formal document outlining the Forum's objectives, membership, lead and support authority arrangements, budgetary processes and meeting frequency
- The Forum is supported by a Steering Group of officers from the member councils and other bodies
- Compliance with Glasgow City Council's Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and Financial Regulations
- Regular meetings of WOSEF
- A budget setting process which includes the agreed local authority and other bodies contributions to the annual running costs of the organisation
- The regulation of employee matters through the Council's Code of Conduct for employees

Review of Effectiveness

The Council's governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the new legislative requirements and the expectations of stakeholders. The arrangements established in response to the Coronavirus pandemic are also considered to be fit for purpose. The effectiveness of the framework, including the system of internal control, is considered at least annually and is informed by:

- (a) The work of the members of the Corporate Management Team, including statutory officers, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment.
- (b) Oversight by the Director of Governance and Solicitor to the Council, who is the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- (c) The Head of Audit and Inspection's annual report. Internal Audit adheres to standards and guidelines laid down by relevant bodies and professional institutions and complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which have been adopted by the Relevant Internal Audit Standard Setters (RIASS). The RIASS includes, among others, HM Treasury, the Scottish Government and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
- (d) Observations made by external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.
- (e) The completion of a self-assessment questionnaire by Service Directors and Managing Directors/Chief Executives of subsidiaries and relevant associates. This questionnaire is aligned to the principles contained in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government, and requires assessments to be made of the extent to which arrangements within each Service/organisation comply

with these principles. The responses to the questionnaires are confirmed on a sample basis by Internal Audit, as part of a rolling programme of corporate governance reviews.

- (f) The completion of signed statements of internal control by all Service Directors and the Managing Directors/Chief Executives of subsidiaries and relevant associates. Such statements were received for 2019/20, declaring that “There are, in my opinion, no significant matters that require to be raised in this Certificate, which is provided to support Glasgow City Council's Statement of Internal Control for the financial year 2019/20, as it is my opinion that the procedures which have been designed to ensure proper governance and financial control are operating adequately”.
- (g) The exercising, by the two Scrutiny Committees, of respective remits including scrutiny of the performance of Services, subsidiaries and relevant associates, including financial management, statutory and other performance, and outcomes set through the GCPP Community Plan, which are relevant to partnership working and monitoring internal financial control, corporate risk management and corporate governance, and receiving and considering summaries of internal and external audit reports.

Senior officers have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by Internal and External Audit, and plans to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the systems are in place.

Governance Developments and Future Activity

The following activity is planned, in relation to the governance framework, in 2020/21:

- Continued implementation of the recommendations arising from the review of governance and accountability arrangements and the Best Value Assurance Report.
- Relaunch of the Corporate Asset Management Plan.
- Implementation of a new Customer Care Strategy.
- Continuation of the Council Family Review.
- Continuation of the review of the ALEO Governance Framework.
- Progressing implementation of a new pay and grading scheme.

Update on significant governance issues previously reported

During 2015/16 an Internal Audit into Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity controls concluded that the control environment was unsatisfactory and identified a number of improvement actions for the Council and its (then) ICT partner ACCESS. All of the original findings from that audit have been fully implemented through the corporate Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework. However, Internal Audit has continued to find elements of non-compliance with this by Services/ALEOs. In 2019/20, the Council defined its ICT business continuity (BC) requirements and an overarching service restoration plan was put in place but there remains an ongoing disconnect between BC plan assumptions for ICT recovery times, and the provisions for

Disaster Recovery in DR plans. Work is ongoing by the SIT team and ICT business partners to align BC and application-level DR plans.

Significant Governance Issues

Where the audit opinion arising from an audit states that the control environment has been assessed as unsatisfactory the concerns highlighted are reported in the Annual Governance Statement. During 2019/20 there were two unsatisfactory opinions, however these did not relate to any areas which would affect the Forum

Internal Audit Opinion

The Council has a system of internal control designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. Internal controls cannot eliminate the risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The impact of COVID-19 in March 2020 was a significant event, impacting normal business operations and risk assessments. As a result of the changes to the working arrangements arising from the pandemic response, in March 2020 many of the expected systems and controls will have been subject to change. The opinion expressed in this report therefore applies only to the period before the emergency service delivery arrangements were put in place.

Based on the audit work undertaken, the assurances provided by Service Directors and Managing Directors/Chief Executives of subsidiaries and relevant associates and, excluding the significant issues noted above, it is the Head of Audit and Inspection's opinion that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance and control environment which operated during 2019/20 in the West of Scotland European Forum, for the period before the change to service delivery models in March 2020.

Impact of Coronavirus

The governance arrangements set out in this Statement operated for the majority of the year until the impact of the global Coronavirus pandemic led to changes in emergency responsibilities, decision making structures, priorities and working arrangements from March 2020.

On 17 March 2020, the Council's Emergency Committee implemented temporary decision-making arrangements to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings during the pandemic and ensure that it could react quickly and flexibly to the crisis. This included the suspension of the WOSEF Joint Committee and delegations to officers and Conveners were increased temporarily. These arrangements were reviewed on 21 May 2020 and Committee meetings including WOSEF Joint Committee have now been reinstated.

Flexible working arrangements have been developed, including new ways of using ICT to access and share information. Wherever possible, this accords with existing information security procedures and controls however, in some cases, greater information security risks have been temporarily accepted to enable such activity. Approval, monitoring and support processes are in place for these decisions. Where changes have been agreed to the internal control environment, these are logged and monitored by Internal Audit and will inform additional assurance work in relevant areas.

Certification

It is our opinion that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems of governance and internal control that operate in the West of Scotland European Forum and that the arrangements in place for the whole of 2019/20, both business as usual governance arrangements and those in place in response to Coronavirus, were fit for purpose.

We will continue to review and enhance, as necessary, our governance arrangements.

Councillor Tony Buchanan
Chair of West of Scotland European Forum

Martin Booth BA CPFA MBA
Executive Director of Finance



Independent Auditor's Report

Independent auditor's report to the members of the West of Scotland European Forum and the Accounts Commission

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of the West of Scotland European Forum for the year ended 31 March 2020 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) as adopted by the European Union, and as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the 2019/20 Code).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable law and the 2019/20 Code of the state of affairs of the West of Scotland European Forum as at 31 March 2020 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, as interpreted and adapted by the 2019/20 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the [Code of Audit Practice](#) approved by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I was appointed under arrangements approved by the Accounts Commission on 10 April 2017. The period of total uninterrupted appointment is four years. I am independent of the West of Scotland European Forum in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard were not provided to the West of Scotland European Forum. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require me to report to you where:

- the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Executive Director of Finance has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the West of Scotland European Forum's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Risks of material misstatement

I report in a separate Annual Audit Report, available from the [Audit Scotland website](#), the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that I identified and my conclusions thereon.

Responsibilities of the Executive Director of Finance and the West of Scotland European Forum Joint Committee for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Executive Director of Finance is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Executive Director of Finance determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Executive Director of Finance is responsible for assessing the West of Scotland European Forum's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless deemed inappropriate.

The West of Scotland European Forum Joint Committee is responsible for overseeing the financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved. I therefore design and perform audit procedures which respond to the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website

www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Other information in the annual accounts

The Executive Director of Finance is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the information other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on matters prescribed by the Accounts Commission to the extent explicitly stated later in this report.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read all the other information in the annual accounts and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Report on other requirements

Opinions on matters prescribed by the Accounts Commission

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and
- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

Matters on which I am required to report by exception

I am required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to my responsibilities for the annual accounts, my conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice, including those in respect of Best Value, are set out in my Annual Audit Report.

Use of my report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance

with paragraph 120 of the Code of Audit Practice, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Stephen O'Hagan
Senior Audit Manager
Audit Scotland
4th Floor, South Suite
The Athenaeum Building
8 Nelson Mandela Place
Glasgow
G2 1BT