

Mr Tim Walker
Acting Chief Executive
Arc21
Belfast Castle
Antrim Road
Belfast
BT15 5GR

22 November 2023

Dear Tim,

Annual Audit Letter 2022-23: arc21

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 and the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014. The Code of Audit Practice, published in April 2021, prescribes the way in which audit functions under the legislation are to be carried out. The Code is supported further by a Statement of Responsibilities of Local Government Auditors and Local Government Bodies. These documents are available on the NIAO website.

Statement of Accounts

Under the legislation noted above, management has specific responsibilities regarding the production of financial statements and having effective governance arrangements in place to deliver the corporate objectives. The publication of the financial statements is an essential means to account for the stewardship and use of public money each year.

As external auditor, it is my responsibility to form an opinion on whether:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Joint Committee and its expenditure and income for the year;
- the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework as set out in legislation, applicable accounting standards or other direction;
- other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements;
- the part of the remuneration report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for Communities' directions; and
- the information given in the Narrative Report is consistent with the financial statements.

I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Joint Committee's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts.

The Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 state that the Joint Committee must, no later than 30 September publish its statement of accounts together with any certificate, opinion or report issued, given or made by the local government auditor.

The Joint Committee's 2022-23 certified financial statements were not published until 3 October 2023. This did not represent a significant delay and was administrative in nature.

Economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arc21 Joint Committee is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of their policies, aims and objectives, while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at their disposal.

My review of the Joint Committee's arrangements for securing value for money covered a wide range of areas including:

- Strategic priorities and financial strategies and policies;
- Financial reporting systems and sound financial internal controls;
- Procurement strategies and policies to deliver sustainable outcomes and value for money;
- Promoting a good governance environment including managing risks and systems of internal control;
- Asset management strategies and policies to safeguard assets, deliver objectives and generate value for money; and
- A framework in place to manage the work force to effectively support the achievement of strategic priorities.

On the basis of my review this year, I am satisfied the Joint Committee has proper arrangements in place to securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

Governance Statement

The Joint Committee is required to conduct a review at least once in a financial year of the effectiveness of its governance framework (including its system of internal control) and to then approve an Annual Governance Statement.

I am required to report if the Annual Governance Statement;

- does not reflect compliance with the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015;
- does not comply with proper practices specified by the Department of Communities; or
- is misleading or inconsistent with other information I am aware of from my audit.

My review did not highlight any inconsistencies.

Audit Fee

The audit fee is in line with the estimate included in the accounts.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colette Kane".

Colette Kane

Local Government Auditor