

APPENDIX A

To the Members of West Dunbartonshire Council, the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Corporate Services

As Manager of Audit of West Dunbartonshire Council, I am pleased to present my annual statement on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal financial control system of the Group Accounts prepared by the Council for the year ended 31 March 2009.

Respective responsibilities of management and internal auditors in relation to internal control

It is the responsibility of the Council's senior management to establish an appropriate and sound system of internal financial control and to monitor the continuing effectiveness of that system. It is the responsibility of the Manager of Audit to provide an annual overall assessment of the robustness of the internal financial control system.

Sound internal controls

The main objectives of the Council's internal control systems are:

- To ensure adherence to management policies and directives in order to achieve the organisation's objectives;
- To safeguard assets;
- To ensure the relevance, reliability and integrity of information, so ensuring as far as possible the completeness and accuracy of records; and
- To ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Any system of control can only ever provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that control weaknesses or irregularities do not exist or that there is no risk of material errors, losses, fraud, or breaches of laws or regulations. Accordingly, the Council is continually seeking to improve the effectiveness of its systems of internal control.

The work of internal audit

Internal Audit is an independent assurance function established by the Council for the review of the internal control system as a service to the organisation. It objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of internal control as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

The Internal Audit section operates in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom. The section undertakes an annual programme of work based on a risk assessment process which is revised on an ongoing basis to reflect evolving risks and changes within the Council.

All internal audit reports identifying system weaknesses and/or non-compliance with expected controls are brought to the attention of management and the Audit & Performance Review Committee together with appropriate recommendations and agreed action plans. It is management's responsibility to ensure that proper consideration is given to internal audit reports and that appropriate action is taken on audit recommendations. The internal auditor is required to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to determine whether action has been taken on internal audit recommendations or that management has understood and assumed the risk of not taking action.

Basis of Opinion

My evaluation of the control environment is informed by a number of sources:

- The audit work undertaken by internal audit during the year to 31 March 2009;
- The assessment of risk completed during reviews of the strategic audit plan;
- Reports issued by the Council's external auditors, Audit Scotland, and other review agencies and
- My knowledge of the Council's governance, risk management and performance monitoring arrangements.

Opinion

It is my opinion, based on the above, that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of West Dunbartonshire Council's internal control system in the year to 31 March 2009.

The Council has recently been the subject of a follow up review by Audit Scotland of their Best Value and Community Planning audit and an action plan will be prepared. Implementation of the recommendations made will be monitored by the Manager of Audit during 2009/10.

Signature

Title

Date