

APPENDIX B

Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2014 **from the Audit and Risk Manager**

To the Members of West Dunbartonshire Council, the Chief Executive and the Section 95 Officer (Head of Finance and Resources)

As Audit and Risk Manager 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 2014.

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 Audit and Risk Manager 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 ensure economic, efficient, effective and safe use of resources and 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 auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

The Council's Internal Audit Section operates in accordance with the *Public Sector Internal Audit Standards* (The Standards) which have been agreed to be adopted from the 1st April 2013 by the relevant public sector Internal Audit Standard setters. The Standards apply the Institute of Internal Auditors International Standards to the UK Public Sector.

The Internal Audit 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 and 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 2014, including risk based systems audits, investigations, follow-up reviews and one-off exercises;
- The assessment of risk completed during reviews of the annual audit plan;
- The assurance statements signed by the Executive Directors on the operation of the internal financial controls for the services for which they were responsible during the year to 31 March 2014;
- The assurance statement signed by the Chief Executive for the overall Council for the year ended 31 March 2014;
- 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 2014.

Signature: Colin McDougall

Title: Audit and Risk Manager

Date: 27 May 2014