

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**20 APRIL 2021**

**QUESTION NO. 1**

Mr Wellum to ask the Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee:

**Statement of Accounts**

As we draw closer to local elections on 6th May 2021 what impact do the Committee Chair and Leader of the Council consider the failure to timeously publish the statements of accounts has on accountability, democracy, transparency of council and Councillors on Reading residents?"

**REPLY** by Councillor Stevens (Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee):

Local authorities spend public money and it is clearly important that we give local people information about how that money is spent and the financial performance of the council. We do that in a variety of ways, including:

The annual budget report that is approved by Council each year  
The regular budget monitoring reports submitted to Policy Committee  
The year-end financial outturn report submitted to Policy committee  
The publication of the Statement of Accounts

The challenges we've faced with the Statement of Accounts are well documented and a matter of public record. Reading Borough Council takes this matter extremely seriously.

The finance team and our external auditors are working extremely hard to conclude the audit of the 18/19 accounts. Once that process is concluded we will be able to press on with the completion and publication of the 19/20 accounts. The Director of Finance has estimated that this will be done by the end of July. Further details are provided in Agenda Item 9.

I would also add that as well as the formal reporting listed above, in terms of transparency we have full and open discussions at our Audit & Governance Committee meetings and we also welcome members of the public to ask questions and provide full responses.

I cannot speak on behalf of the Leader of the Council, and questions to Cllr Brock should be rendered to the Policy Committee or to full Council.