

Chief Executive's Response

Chair

At 8pm on the 12th October 2022, KPMG released their 2017/18 Public Interest report, concluding their Value for Money process. The report literally came out of the blue without any prior indication of its intended release.

Regrettably, the timing coincided with the pre-election period for Spelthorne's most recent by-election, hence the delay in the report's release until immediately after the polls for the by-election closed on the 30th November. This was agreed with the auditors and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The audit report presented to this chamber tonight, has taken our auditors over four and a half years to produce.

Audit congestion and lengthy tailbacks are endemic in the sector with only 9% of local authority audits currently being completed within the 6 months statutory deadline.

This is by far the lowest percentage on record since the introduction of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 which saw the abolition of the Audit Commission and the transfer of all audit work to private sector companies.

However, by any measure the release of this report, virtually half a decade after the audit year in question, is in itself a remarkably poor turnaround, posing significant concerns in both the 'timely value' of such audits and their associated 'cost value'.

The Public Sector Audit Appointments company believes that such delayed audit opinions have a real public-facing impact, undermining the ability of local authorities to account effectively for their stewardship of public money to taxpayers.

Notwithstanding the contextual factors, this Extraordinary Full Council Meeting has been called to formally note and respond to the audit report that has been issued as a Public Interest Report.

The Council's draft response has been compiled and overseen by an informal cross-party Working Group comprising of The Leader and Deputy Leader as well as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee.