

Community Councils in Wales

Via email

Reference: Audit Notice 2025

Date issued:

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Dear Sir/Madam

Audit of Accounts 2025

FULL audits

This letter contains important information for the statutory external audit. It includes a notice of audit and an explanation of what you must now do. It is important that you read the contents carefully to ensure that you provide all required information to your auditor on time.

If you contact us asking for information that has already been provided or if we have to request this information again during the audit, the Council will incur additional audit fees.

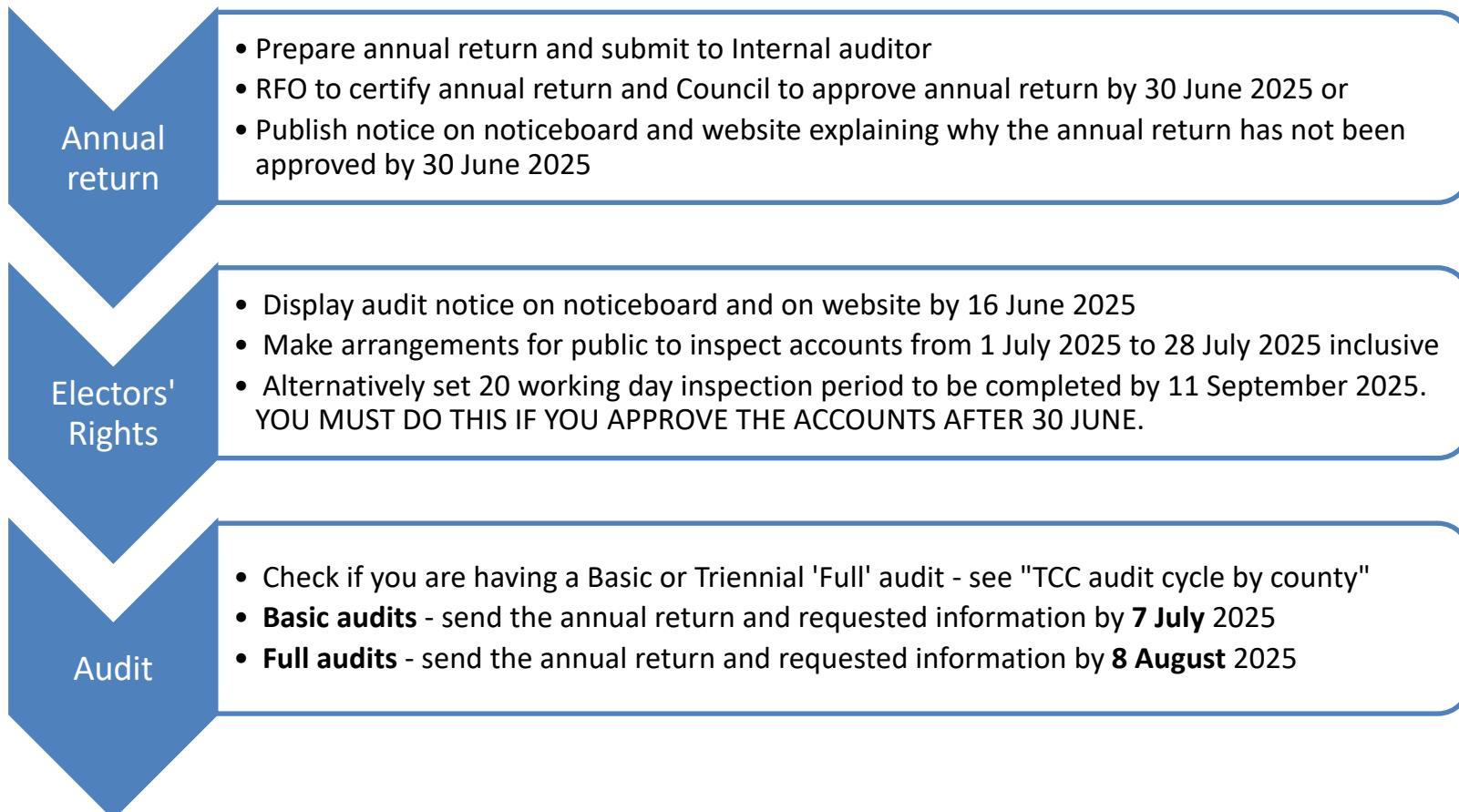
Annual return 2024-25

We enclose a copy of the 2024-25 Annual Return for you to complete and return to us.

Please note the change in the format of the Annual Return for this year.

You must complete, approve and send us the 2024-25 return, even if earlier years' audits have not yet been completed. We will close the earlier years alongside the 2024-25 audit.

What should you do now – Important dates



Information can be found as follows:

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Audit timetable

It is the Council's responsibility to make arrangements for the timely preparation and approval of accounts each year. The timetable is set out in the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

The proforma annual return has been provided in sufficient time to enable you to meet the 30 June deadline set by the Regulations. You do not need to wait until 30 June before preparing and approving the annual return. This means that other than in exceptional circumstances, you should be able provide us with the approved annual return and the required information for audit by the dates set out in this document. Late submission of accounts causes a significant administrative burden on the audit team and therefore, the cost of any additional work required will be passed on to the Council.

Delayed audits

Should you need to notify us that you will not meet the deadlines set out here, all correspondence should be by email addressed to communitycouncilaudits@audit.wales. Please do not send any emails to individual members of staff at Audit Wales.

We **will not agree** to any delayed inspection periods. If you do not approve the accounts by 30 June as per the Regulations, you may change the dates of the public inspection period set out in the audit notice. BUT it is your responsibility to make sure that you comply with the requirements of the Regulations. We will ask for evidence that you have done so but we will not agree alternative dates with you.

Basic or Full audit this year

This year we have issued separate notices for Basic and Full audits. This audit notice is for councils subject to a Full audit.

If you are the clerk to more than one council you will need to check the Audit cycle document to determine which councils are subject to Basic audits and which are subject to Full audits.

Provision of information

This audit notice and the attachments set out in detail all of the information that you are required to provide for audit. It is **your responsibility** to ensure that the information you provide is complete and accurate. Please read the Audit Information guidance carefully.

Each year we receive incomplete submissions, some of which state that if we need more information, we should request it.

For the purpose of certainty, our information request is set out in this audit notice and attachments.

If we do not receive the information specified in these documents we may, without further notice, conclude the audit with either:

- a qualified audit opinion on the basis of limitation in scope of the audit due to non-provision of information or
- a disclaimer of opinion.

In some cases, our audit work identifies issues that require additional information that is not specified in this audit notice and attachments. This is a normal part of the audit and you must provide any such additional information requested. We will set a date for a response, usually allowing two weeks. If the information is not provided, we may close the audit with a limitation in scope qualification once the two week period has elapsed.

Completion of the audit without our receiving the full information requested is at our sole discretion. Before closing the audit we may undertake additional work, the cost of which will be added to the audit fee.

Correspondence with Audit Wales

We charge the cost of dealing with all correspondence to the relevant individual councils.

All correspondence should be sent to communitycouncilaudits@audit.wales. Please do not send any emails to individual members of staff at Audit Wales.

Please do not telephone or email me personally with any queries regarding the audit. There is no need to copy me in on all items of correspondence related to the audit or to notify me when you will be on leave. If we need further information we will contact you.

Please do not email or telephone with questions on the submission process. Everything you need is included in this document and/or the attachments to the covering email. We will not deal with requests for information or clarification of information that is already included in this document or the other attachments. We will simply refer you back to these documents.

If you need specific assistance with the accounts, please contact One Voice Wales.

Advice on council activities

Audit Wales does not provide advice on any matters related to council activities.

All councils should contact One Voice Wales for advice on matters that will result in the council incurring expenditure or generating income.

Changes in clerks

If you are no longer the clerk to the body, please inform us immediately. You can write to us at communitycouncilaudits@audit.wales.

Audit fees

Audit fees are charged in accordance with the Audit Wales [Fee Scheme](#). The fees charged are based on time spent conducting the audit. This includes time spent in dealing with telephone calls and correspondence related to the audit whether this is initiated by Audit Wales staff or the council itself.

A general note on audit fees is attached to the covering email for this Audit Notice.

Independence

We are not aware of any conflicts of interest between the auditor and the Council, its members or staff. We will notify you if we become aware of potential conflicts. You should notify us if you are aware of any such conflicts of interest.

Complaints

If you have any complaints please contact us at the address above. Alternatively, you can email complaints@audit.wales.

Further details on our complaints arrangements can be found [here](#).

Yours sincerely

Deryck Evans

Deryck Evans

Manager

For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales

Annex 1: Completing and approving the Annual Return

Tips for completing the Annual Return

You should complete the annual return in full as soon as possible and ensure that your internal auditor has completed their work before the annual return is approved. The Practitioners' Guide (Governance and Accountability for local councils in Wales) will help you to complete the annual return.

The RFO must then certify the annual return by 30 June and the body must approve the annual return also by 30 June. The Council cannot delegate this approval to a committee. You should ensure that the minutes for the meeting clearly record that the Council has approved the annual return.

30 June is the latest date by which you can approve the annual return as per the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014. You should try and complete and approve the annual return earlier if you can.

If you are unable to complete the annual return before this date, there is provision in the Regulations for this. You will need to publish the appropriate notice as set out below.

You will also need to ensure that you comply with the requirements of the Regulations when advertising the audit. If you are able to complete the public inspection process before 12 September, you should do so. However, it is your responsibility to make sure the audit notice is amended and that the Council complies with the Regulations. We are unable to provide any further support in these circumstances.

If you cannot complete the 20 day inspection period before 12 September 2024, you must contact Audit Wales to agree a new timetable.

Please make sure that the Annual Return is fully completed i.e. all highlighted boxes are completed, the Council's name is written in the box on the Accounting Statement and the approval section has been signed and dated.

Check **all** arithmetic. We find that somewhere around 200 annual returns are arithmetically incorrect every year. In some cases, this is due to minor rounding differences. However, in other cases, the entries in the accounts are simply wrong. This may be due to typos, transposition errors (writing 39 instead of 93 for example) or by recording the wrong number from your working papers. We will issue our audit opinion on the basis of the accounts that are submitted for audit.

If we are able to determine why there is an error we may issue an unqualified opinion, drawing attention to the error in the 'Other matters' section of the report.

Where there are material discrepancies, we will issue qualified audit opinions. Please note that it can take a significant amount of time to resolve errors in the accounts. The additional costs will be charged to the Council through the audit fee.

You may wish to amend the 2024-25 accounts reported as comparative amounts in the 2024-25 accounting statement. This may be because of errors identified during the 2024-25 audit or other issues you have subsequently identified. Where prior year accounts are amended, please write 'Restated' at the top of last year's column in the Accounting Statement. You will also need to give us an explanation of the changes – even if we reported them to you in 2024-25.

Please make sure that you do not adjust receipts and payments for unpresented cheques at 31 March. These payments are properly included in the 2024-25 accounts. They are not creditors. The cash and bank balance reported in the Accounting Statement should equal the reconciled cashbook balance.

Proforma notices for late accounts

Councils may wish to use the following notices where they are unable to approve the annual return by 30 June 2025 **Text in purple should be amended or deleted as appropriate.**

Notices must be published in a conspicuous place in the community e.g. a notice board and on the council's website by 30 June 2025.

Example notice for late certification and approval of accounts to be published
30 June 2025

Certification and approval of annual accounts for 2024-25

Regulation 15(1) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended) requires that Responsible Financial Officer of [name of Council] sign and date the statement of accounts, and certify that [it properly presents [name of Council]'s receipts and payments for the year] or [it presents fairly the financial position of [name of Council] at the end of the year and the Council's income and expenditure for the year]. The Regulations required that this be completed by 30 June 2025.

Due to [insert brief explanation], the Responsible Financial Officer has not signed and certified the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025. The statement of accounts will be prepared and the Responsible Financial Officer will sign and certify the statement of accounts by [insert date if possible].

OR

[The Responsible Financial Officer signed and certified the accounts on [date].

Regulation 15(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended) requires that following the certification by the Responsible Financial Officer referred to above, the Council must approve the accounts. The Regulations require that this be completed by 30 June 2025.

[The Council has not yet approved the accounts due to [insert brief explanation].

Annex 2: Appointment of date for the exercise of electors' rights to ask questions and make objections at audit

The Auditor General has appointed **Monday 15 September 2025** as the date from which electors can exercise their rights under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

In order to allow electors sufficient time to contact us with any questions or objections, we will not be able to issue our audit opinion until after 15 September 2025. We anticipate issuing audit opinions from 18 September onwards. However, we will complete our audit work before this date if we can.

The Council **must** approve the accounts **before** the commencement of the inspection period. If this does not occur, we will issue a qualified audit opinion. We may also require the Council to restart the process.

If the dates provided in Annex 3 are not suitable, you **MAY** make alternative arrangements provided that the inspection period is completed by 11 September 2025 at the latest. We **will not** enter into correspondence regarding alternative dates. It is the Council's responsibility to make appropriate arrangements. We have provided dates to assist councils.

Should you use alternate dates, you **MUST** provide evidence that you properly advertised the audit and made proper arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights.

Annex 3: Notice of audit

The Council's obligations

Section 30 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 gives electors the right to inspect the Council's accounts before asking questions of or making objections to the accounts to the Auditor General.

The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations sets out in detail how the Council is to facilitate the exercise of these rights.

This is an area where we receive many complaints about community and town councils. Dealing with these complaints adds to the cost of the audit. Therefore, we recommend that councils follow the timetable set out below.

Timetable for public inspection of accounts

This is an area where we receive many complaints about community and town councils. Dealing with these complaints adds to the cost of the audit. Therefore, we recommend that councils follow the timetable set out below:

- by **16 June 2025**, publish the **enclosed audit notice** on a noticeboard in the area **AND** on the Council's website for a minimum of 14 calendar days; and
- after the 14 calendar days referred to above, make appropriate arrangements for the **public to inspect** the accounts and supporting documents **for a total of 20 working days from 01 July to 28 July 2025**.

Councils can publish the audit notice before the annual return is approved by the Council. However, the annual return **MUST BE APPROVED BEFORE** the 20 day inspection period starts.

The Regulations require that the accounts be available for inspection on reasonable notice during the inspection period. If the council's arrangements exclude any working days (Mondays to Fridays excluding bank holidays), then the inspection period must be extended appropriately. The dates set out above allow for councils to who are subject to the new audit approach to make their records available for public inspection before providing the same documents for audit.

If you wish to apply alternative dates for the advert and inspection, you can set alternative dates for the inspection period as long as the 20 day inspection period is completed by 14 September 2025 at the latest. However, it is your responsibility to make sure that the arrangements you make comply with the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014. Audit Wales will not discuss alternative dates with councils.

Audit notice

Notice of appointment of the date for the exercise of electors' rights

[Name of council]

Financial year ending 31 March 2025

1. Date of announcement _____
2. Each year the annual accounts are audited by the Auditor General for Wales. Prior to this date, any interested person has the opportunity to inspect and make copies of the accounts and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers and receipts etc relating to them for 20 working days on reasonable notice. For the year ended 31 March 2025, these documents will be available on reasonable notice on application to:

between the hours of _____ and _____ on Monday to Friday

commencing on 01 July 2025

and ending on 28 July 2025

3. From 15 September 2025, until the audit has been completed, Local Government Electors and their representatives also have:
 - the right to question the Auditor General about the accounts.
 - the right to attend before the Auditor General and make objections to the accounts or any item in them. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the Auditor General. A copy of the written notice must also be given to the council.

The Auditor General can be contacted via: Community Council Audits, Audit Wales, 1 Capital Quarter, Tyndall Street, Cardiff, CF10 4BZ or by email at communitycouncilaudits@audit.wales.

4. The audit is being conducted under the provisions of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Auditor General for Wales' Code of Audit Practice.

Electors' rights under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004

The basic position

By law, any interested person has the right to inspect the council's accounts. If you are entitled and registered to vote in local council elections, then you (or your representative) also have the right to ask the Auditor General questions about them or challenge an item of account contained within them.

The right to inspect the accounts

When a local government body has finalised its accounts for the previous financial year, it must advertise that they are available for people to look at. Having given reasonable notice of your intentions, you then have 20 working days to look through the accounts and supporting documents. You will be able to make copies of the accounts and most of the relevant documents from the body. You will probably have to pay a copying charge.

The right to ask the auditor questions about the accounts

You can only ask the Auditor General questions about the accounts. The Auditor General does not have to answer questions about the body's policies, finances, procedures or anything else not related to the accounts. Your question must be about the accounts that are subject to audit. The Auditor General does not have to say whether he thinks something the council has done, or an item in its accounts, is lawful or reasonable.

The right to object to the accounts

If you think that the body has spent money that they should not have, or that someone has caused a loss to the body deliberately or by behaving irresponsibly, you can object to the Auditor General by sending a formal 'notice of objection', which **must be in writing** to the address below. You may request that the Auditor General applies to the courts for a declaration that such items of account are unlawful. You must tell the Auditor General why you are objecting. The Auditor General must reach a decision on your objection. If you are not happy with that decision, you can appeal to the courts. You must also send a copy of your notice to the council itself.

You may also object if you think that there is something in the accounts that the Auditor General should discuss with the council or tell the public about in a 'public interest report'. Again, you must give your reasons in writing to the Auditor General at the address below. In this case, the Auditor General must decide whether to take any action. The Auditor General will normally, but does not have to, give reasons for his

decision and you cannot appeal to the courts. You may not use this 'right to object' to make a personal complaint or claim against the body.

If you wish to make a personal complaint or claim, you should take these complaints to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, local Law Centre, or your solicitor. You may also be able to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales if you believe that a Member of the body has broken the Code of Conduct for Members. The Ombudsman can be contacted at: 1 Old Field Rd, Pencoed, Bridgend CF35 5LJ, (tel: 0300 790 0203).

What else you can do

Instead of objecting, you can give the Auditor General information that is relevant to their responsibilities. For example, you can simply tell the Auditor General if you think that something is wrong with the accounts or about waste and inefficiency in the way the council runs its services. You do not have to follow any set time limits or procedures. The Auditor General does not have to give you a detailed report of the outcome of his audit.

A final word

Local government bodies, and therefore local taxpayers, must meet the costs of dealing with questions and objections. When the Auditor General decides whether to take your objection further, one of a series of factors he must take into account includes the costs that will be involved. He will only continue with the objection if it is in the public interest to do so. If you appeal to the courts, you might have to pay for the action yourself.

If you wish to contact the Auditor General, please write to: Community Council Audits, Audit Wales, 1 Capital Quarter, Tyndall Street, Cardiff, CF10 4BZ.

Annex 4: Submission of information for audit

Submission dates for audit packs

Type of audit	Submission date (send to Audit Wales by)
Basic audits	07 July 2025
Triennial 'Full' audits	07 August 2025

Timely submission of the information requested will help us to manage our overall workload. Please submit your documents earlier if you are able to.

Statutory basis for the information request

The Auditor General has specified that for the purposes of undertaking the audit of the 2024-25 accounts, **all councils in Wales must provide** the information set out in this notice of audit. In requesting this information, the Auditor General exercises his rights of access to information as set out in section 52 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

If information is not provided in the first instance, additional audit fees **will be** charged to the council.

Basic or Triennial 'Full' audit

You **must** identify whether or not your council is subject to a basic or triennial 'full' audit this year. Please refer to the TCC_audit_cycle_by_county document attached.

All councils are listed by county. It is **your** responsibility to identify which form of audit your council is subject to.

Information that must be submitted for all audits

Please refer to the attached document Basic or Full Audit Information Requirements 2025.

This information is required regardless of the size of the Council or the sums of money raised in the precept each year. Under the law, smaller councils are not exempt from the audit requirements.

How to submit your audit packs to Audit Wales

Please do not send your documents to any address other than that specified below. Several councils insist on sending their documents to our former office that we vacated in February 2023. Any documents sent to Cathedral Road WILL NOT be delivered to us. You will be responsible for any lost documents sent to Cathedral Road.

By post or delivery by hand

If posting your audit packs, you **must only** send them to our Cardiff office. The address is listed below. Please **do not post or deliver** documents to our Penllergaer or Llandudno Junction offices. Please ensure that your documents are packaged securely.

Our address is:

Community Council Audits

Audit Wales

1 Capital Quarter

Tyndall Street

Cardiff, CF10 4BZ

On-site parking is not available. Our reception is adjacent to the Kin+Ilk coffee shop.

Please **do not** attend either the Penllergaer or Llandudno Junction offices.

By email

You may submit the Annual Return and supporting papers by email to communitycouncilaudits@audit.wales. Email should however only be used for Basic audits. For Triennial Full audits we need to use a more secure data transfer method (see below).

In order to help us to identify councils, please start the subject line of the email with the Council's name and indicate the contents e.g Aberfylarf CC Annual return 2024-25. Including your council name is important as we deal with over 730 individual audits. Using our format ensures that your council is easily identifiable. Please do not simply include 'Audit', 'Annual Return' or similar in the subject line. This makes it very difficult to search for your individual submissions.

DO NOT submit documents to any other Audit Wales email address unless you are explicitly asked to do so.

By secure data transfer via Objective Connect

We use Objective Connect to securely transfer data. Objective Connect allows you to transfer large files (up to 10Gb) securely and confidentially.

If you wish to transfer data securely, please contact us at
communitycouncilaudits@audit.wales.

Please include in the subject line of your email 'Objective Connect Request' followed by the name of your council. Using this template format helps us to identify that you need Objective Connect set up and which council it refers to.

Please **do not** send requests to any other Audit Wales email address. These **may not** be dealt with. Your Council will be charged additional time for us to forward the documents to the correct email address.

We will set up a portal on request and the portal will be available for 2 weeks. However, please note that **once the portal closes, we do not have access to the data** uploaded. This is for data security reasons.

Over the last 2 years, several councils have uploaded data but we have not downloaded it to our systems. We have investigated these and in many of these cases, councils uploaded data on the last day that the portal was open and we did not have time to download it.

Therefore, if you use Objective Connect please upload data as soon as the portal opens. This means that you should only request access when you are ready to upload files. Please do not wait until the last minute to do so. If you upload data at the last minute, we may have to ask you to do it again.

It will also be helpful if you upload all information at once rather than in stages over several days.

Remote access to electronic ledgers

In some cases, we may be able to access your ledger remotely. Please contact us if you wish us to do this. We will need to establish whether it is possible to do so and will make arrangements with individual councils. We will need full instructions on how to use your system as well as access top the system.

Additional information requests during the audit

In most cases, the information set out above will be sufficient for us to complete our audit.

However, when undertaking our audit work, we may identify further explanations or information required to allow us to complete the audit. This information or

explanations may not be specified in this audit notice or the accompanying attachments.

This is a normal part of the audit process and is subject to the same access rights under section 52 of the 2004 Act as information specified in the audit notice.

We will notify you of any further explanations or information required, during the course of the audit.

How NOT to submit your audit packs

Several councils continue to send us data on memory sticks or links to Google drive folders, DropBox folders etc.

For security reasons, we CANNOT access any of these. If you send us information in this format, we will need to contact you to ask you to resend it in one of the ways set out above. We will charge for the additional time spent doing so.

Please DO NOT send us memory sticks. This year we will return them to you and ask you to send us data in the format requested.

Annex 5: Publication of audited accounts

The Council must publish its audited accounts by 30 September 2025. These must be published on the Council's website alongside the Annual Governance Statement **and** the Auditor General's audit opinion and report – even if the opinion is qualified.

We will endeavour to send your audited annual returns by 30 September. However, if you have not heard from us by 28 September, you should publish the notice below:

Example notice to be published where the audit has not been completed by 30 September 2025

Publication of audited accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

Regulation 15(5) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended) requires that by 30 September 2025, [name of Council] publish its accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 together with any certificate, opinion, or report issued, given or made by the Auditor General.

The accounting statements, in the form of an annual return, have been published on the Council's website. [The Council has not yet submitted the accounts to the Auditor General for audit.] [However, the Auditor General has not yet issued his audit opinion and report and therefore the accounts are published before the conclusion of the audit.] The annual return will be published along with the Auditor General's report and opinion when the audit is completed.