



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Catherine Frances
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**Department for Levelling Up, Housing
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2 Marsham Street
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To: all Section 151 Officers in England
Cc: all Chief Executives in England

18 January 2022

Dear colleague,

Further to my letter of 22 November 2021, which noted the government's concern at the increasing delays to the completion of local audits, I am writing to you and the relevant audit firms today to provide an update on action the government is taking to help tackle audit delays.

As I outlined in my previous letter, the timely completion of local audit is a vital transparency method for the taxpayer and for sustaining public confidence in local democracy more broadly. For the timeliness of local audit to improve from the current situation, a collaborative approach to address the issues is required from across the whole system.

That is why my Department has worked with key partners across the local audit system to agree a new package of measures to help get the timeliness of local audit back on track. I can announce that we have now published full details of these measures online to signal publicly our commitment to the local audit market: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/measures-to-improve-local-audit-delays>

I am pleased that this document represents actions for all elements of the system, but some of the key measures committed to that may be of most interest include:

- providing councils with £45m additional funding over the course of the next Spending Review period to support with the costs of strengthening their financial reporting and increased auditing requirements;
- strengthening training and qualifications options for local auditors and audit committee members;
- reviewing whether certain accounting and audit requirements could be reduced on a temporary basis, where these are of lesser risk to councils; and
- extending the 21/22 audit deadline to 30 November 2022, and then 30 September until 2027/28.

I wanted to thank you again for the crucial role you play in ensuring the transparency and accountability of local government for local taxpayers. We hope that the measures we have announced will help support improved timeliness within the local audit market. We will continue to engage with local authorities and audit firms to understand the impact of the new measures and work together as we continue to implement the recommendations from the Redmond Review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine' followed by a stylized flourish.

CATHERINE FRANCES