



Dame Sarah Healey DCB CVO
Permanent Secretary

**Ministry of Housing, Communities
and Local Government**

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Sir Geoffrey Clinton-Brown MP,
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

7 July 2025

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

Measures to clear the local audit backlog in England

In March 2025, I wrote to update you on the measures that the department had implemented to clear the significant backlog of unaudited local authority accounts in England. A key aspect of these was setting a series of statutory backstop dates by which local bodies, unless exempt, are required to publish audited accounts. I am writing to you today to update you on the outcomes of the most recent backstop date of 28 February 2025.

28 February 2025 backstop

Local bodies, unless exempt, were required to publish their audited accounts for the financial year 2023/24 by 28 February 2025. By the backstop, 87% of bodies had published their accounts for 2023/24. Subsequently, this figure grew to 92% as of 20 May 2025. Of these bodies, just under 50% of bodies published a disclaimed opinion due to the backstop, whilst 41% published unmodified (clean) opinions. 13 bodies were exempt from the publication requirements.

Furthermore, I can confirm that the department has today [published a list](#) of bodies that failed to meet the publication requirements at this backstop. The list reflects whether bodies published their draft accounts, annual governance statement and narrative statements by 16 January 2025 (the latest date on which the 30-working-day inspection could commence for it to conclude by the backstop); whether the audit opinion was delivered by the backstop; the date on which it was delivered; and whether bodies failing to meet the backstop subsequently published their audited accounts by 20 May 2025.

Officials contacted all bodies and their auditors included on the list and will continue to engage with them to ensure that outstanding audited accounts for all outstanding financial years are published as soon as practicable.

Financial support for bodies affected by the measures

The department recently announced up to [£49 million in funding](#) to help councils clear their backlogs and cover additional costs of restoring audit assurance. The release of funds to councils will be contingent on publication of audited accounts and audit fees being paid.

27 February backstop (for financial year 2024/25)

The deadline for publication of audited accounts for the financial year 2024/25 is 27 February 2026. In line with amendments made to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, bodies are required to publish their draft accounts by 30 June 2025. The department will monitor compliance with this deadline with a view to ensuring improvements to the overall system of compliance and timeliness.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Healey', is centered below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.