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Scotland Excel

2024/25 Annual Audit Report to the Executive Sub-
Committee and the Controller of Audit

December 2025

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Key messages

Financial statements audit

Under International Standards on Auditing (UK) and the Code of Audit Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25, we are required to report whether, in our opinion:

- The financial statements give a true and fair view of Scotland Excel's financial position and income and expenditure for the period; and
- Scotland Excel's financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2024/25 (the 2024/25 Code), the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003;
- The audited parts of the Remuneration Report have been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014;
- The information given in the Management Commentary is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and
- The information given in the Annual Governance Statement is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

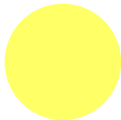
Audit opinion	<p>The annual accounts were approved by the Executive Sub-Committee on 19 September 2025.</p> <p>Our audit work is complete and we report an unqualified audit opinion within our independent auditor's report.</p>
Audit approach	<p>Our audit approach has been based on gaining a thorough understanding of Scotland Excel's control environment and is risk based. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An evaluation of Scotland Excel's internal control environment, including the IT systems and controls; and• Substantive testing on significant transactions and material account balances, including the procedures outlined in this report in relation to our key audit risks. <p>We have amended our audit plan to rebut the significant risk of fraud in non-pay expenditure due to the fact that there is little incentive to manipulate expenditure recognition and opportunities to manipulate expenditure recognition are limited.</p>
Key audit findings	<p>Scotland Excel had reasonable administrative processes in place to prepare the annual accounts. We received the working papers to support the annual accounts in a timely manner.</p> <p>We obtained adequate evidence in relation to the significant audit risks identified in our audit plan.</p> <p>The accounting policies used to prepare the financial statements are considered appropriate. We are satisfied with the appropriateness of the accounting estimates and judgements used in the preparation of the financial statements. All material disclosures required by relevant legislation and applicable accounting standards have been made appropriately.</p>

<p>Audit adjustments</p>	<p>Four audit adjustments have been identified and made through the course of the audit. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overstatement of holiday pay accrual £6,676 (nil impact on usable reserves) • Overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects £295,315 due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharge between core and project (nil impact on usable reserves) • Overstatement of supplies and services and understatement of support cost £66,004 due to incorrect classification of legal fee (nil impact on usable reserves) • Overstatement of government grants income £1,970,000, overstatement of supplies and services £257,960, and understatement of other payables £1,712,040 due to incorrect determination of principle versus agent status (1,712,040 impact on usable reserves) <p>No unadjusted misstatements were identified within the financial statements.</p> <p>We also identified some minor disclosure and presentational adjustments during our audit, which have been reflected in the final set of financial statements.</p> <p>One prior period adjustment has been identified and made through the course of the audit. This was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects £587,070 due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharge between core and project (nil impact on usable reserves) <p>Two prior period adjustments were identified by management and adjusted for within the draft set of financial statements provided to audit. These relate to understatement of accrued rebate income of £255,000 and understatement of the pension liability of £450,000 and associated notional in-year costs of £27,000.</p> <p>Details of the adjusted misstatements and disclosure changes are included at Appendix 2.</p>
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Internal controls	<p>The purpose of the audit is for us to express an opinion on the financial statements. The audit included consideration of internal controls relevant to the preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control.</p> <p>Our audit is, therefore, not designed to identify all control weaknesses.</p> <p>No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were noted.</p>
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Wider scope of public audit and best value

In accordance with the Code of Audit Practice and Code of Audit Practice Supplementary guidance – wider scope audit, less complex bodies and Best Value, we have concluded that Scotland Excel meets the criteria to be treated as less complex for wider scope and best value. Our work was restricted to an evaluation of financial sustainability and the arrangements Scotland Excel has for securing Best Value.

<p>Financial Sustainability</p> <p>Financial sustainability looks forward to the medium and longer term to consider whether Scotland Excel is planning effectively to continue to deliver its services and the way in which they should be delivered.</p>	<p>Auditor judgement</p> <p>Risks exist to the achievement of operational objectives.</p> 
	<p>Scotland Excel's 2025/26 budget demonstrates a cautious but stable financial position in the short term. By freezing member council requisitions, it has protected authorities from additional financial strain during a challenging period for local government. At the same time, Scotland Excel continues to diversify its income streams, with non-requisition income now covering 41% of operating costs for 2025/26.</p> <p>The current funding model was approved at the June 2018 Joint Committee, which saw Core operations funded from both requisitions and income generated from a range of other sources such as income from new build housing, consultancy service, and income provision from the Scotland Excel Academy. This move to a more commercial funding model has increased the overall level of financial risk to Scotland Excel, which requires to be appropriately managed.</p>

	<p>The largest cost driver for Scotland Excel remains employee costs, which are forecast at £5,855,000 in 2025/26. Temporary relief has been provided by reduced employer pension contributions (6.5% from 19.3% previously) but this is set to end with the rate rising to 17.5% in 2026/27, when Scotland Excel will face renewed pressure on its employee costs, especially if pay awards continue to run above inflation assumptions. This means staff cost represents the single greatest sustainability risk in the medium term.</p> <p>Scotland Excel's ability to generate income through rebates has grown significantly and is a core element of financial sustainability. With 45 frameworks projected to generate £1,813,000 in 2025/26, rebates are increasingly important to balancing the budget. However, reliance on rebates income also introduces volatility, since it depends on local authority usage of frameworks and market conditions. Careful monitoring will be needed to ensure these forecasts materialise and that future frameworks continue to deliver strong returns.</p> <p>Reserves are projected to remain stable however future financial uncertainty could have a volatile impact on the future reserves position. The projected year-end balance for 2025/26 of £578,000 (8.7% of operating income) is above the Treasurer's recommended 5% minimum balance. This balance includes sums earmarked for committee-approved spend that will take place in 2026/27.</p> <p>Looking forward, the indicative budgets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 highlight structural sustainability challenges. Both years are projected to show operating deficits, largely due to the planned increase in pension contribution to 17.5% and the increase in national insurance costs. Without either additional funding or significant efficiency gains, Scotland Excel could face pressure to either raise requisition income or further expand its commercial income base. A new income strategy is being developed to mitigate this risk.</p>
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Best Value

Scotland Excel has a specific responsibility to make arrangements to secure Best Value. Best Value is defined as continuous improvement in the performance of the body's functions.

Auditor judgement

Risks to the achievement of objectives are managed



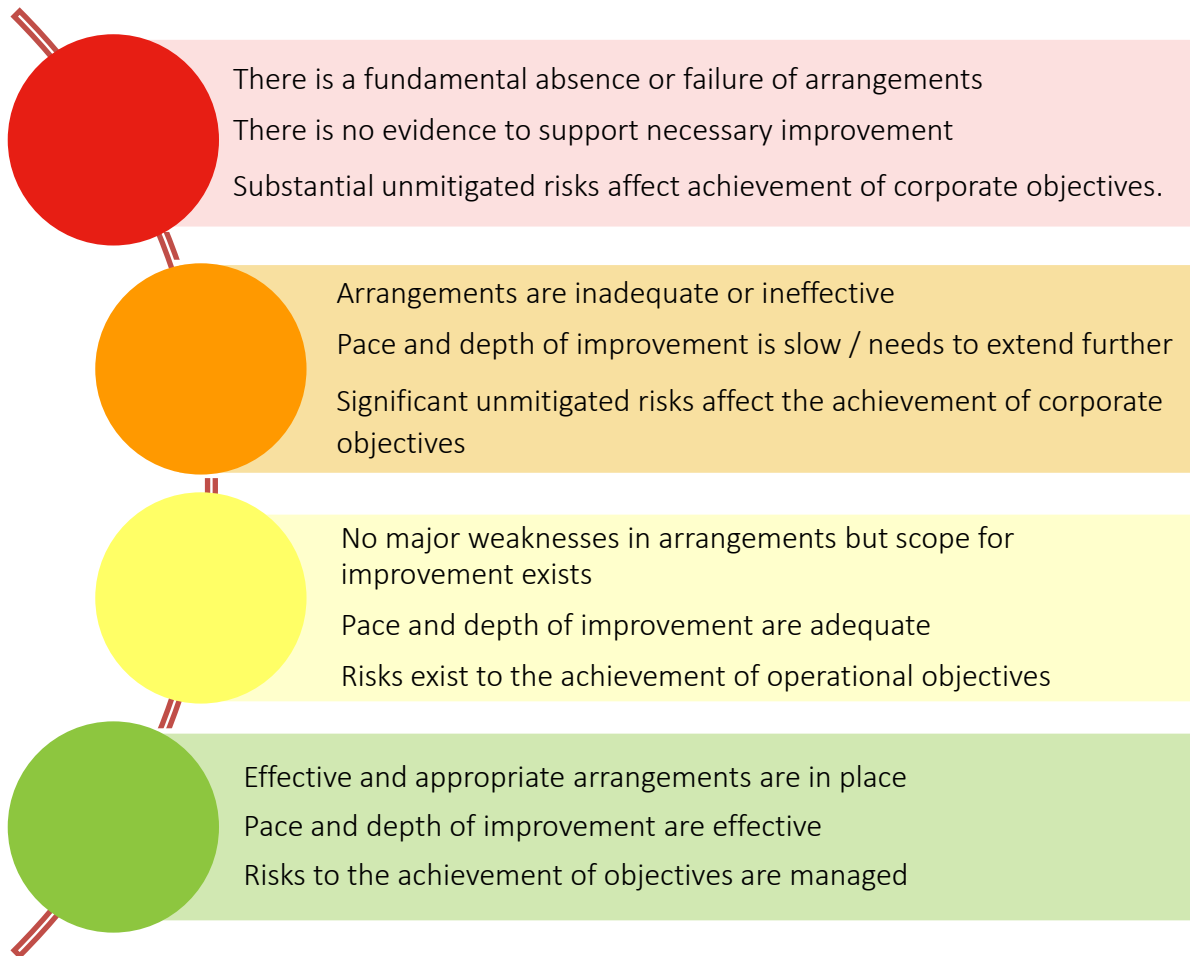
The Annual Governance Statement states that there is a statutory duty on Scotland Excel to make arrangements to secure Best Value.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Scotland Excel's elected members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions. The Governance Framework described the systems and processes by which Scotland Excel operate in to secure best value.

Members and officers of Scotland Excel are committed to the concept of sound governance and the effective delivery of services which encompasses best value. A self-assessment tool is used with no concerns raised.

Definitions

We use the following gradings to provide an overall assessment of the arrangements in place as they relate to the wider scope areas and reporting our findings on Best Value. The text provides a guide to the key criteria we use in the assessment, although not all of the criteria may exist in every case.



Introduction

Scope of audit

The annual external audit comprises the audit of the financial statements, the wider-scope audit and Best Value audit responsibilities set out in Audit Scotland's Code of Audit Practice. [Code of Audit Practice 2021 | Audit Scotland](#)

We outlined the scope of our audit in our External Audit Plan, which we presented to Executive Sub-Committee at the outset of our audit.

Responsibilities

Scotland Excel is responsible for preparing annual accounts, including financial statements, which show a true and fair view of the results for the year and position at the year end, and for implementing appropriate internal control systems. The weaknesses or risks identified in this report are only those that have come to our attention during our normal audit work and may not be all that exist. Communication in this report of matters arising from the audit or of risks or weaknesses does not absolve management from its responsibility to address the issues raised and to maintain an adequate system of control.

We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on, the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

We would like to thank all management and staff for their co-operation and assistance during our audit.

Auditor independence

International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISAs (UK)) require us to communicate on a timely basis all facts and matters that may have a bearing on our independence.

We confirm that we complied with the Financial Reporting Board's (FRC) Ethical Standard. In our professional judgement, we remained independent, and our objectivity has not been compromised in any way.

We set out in Appendix 1 our assessment and confirmation of independence.

Adding value

All of our clients quite rightly demand of us a positive contribution to meeting their ever-changing business needs. We add value by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas of improvement and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In

this way we aim to promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making and more effective use of public money.

Any comments you may have on the service we provide would be greatly appreciated. Comments can be reported directly to any member of your audit team or to Audit Scotland.

Openness and transparency

This report will be published on Audit Scotland's website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk.

Financial statements audit

Our audit opinion

Opinion	Basis for opinion	Conclusions
Financial statements	<p>We conduct our audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing.</p> <p>Our findings / conclusions to inform our opinion are set out in this section of our annual audit report.</p>	<p>The draft financial statements, management commentary, remuneration report and corporate governance statement were considered by the Joint Committee and approved on 20 June 2025.</p> <p>We have issued an unqualified opinion in our independent auditor's report.</p>
Going concern basis of accounting	<p>When assessing whether the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, the anticipated provision of services is more relevant to the assessment than the continued existence of a particular public body.</p> <p>We assess whether there are plans to discontinue or privatise Scotland Excel's functions.</p> <p>Our wider scope audit work considers the financial sustainability of Scotland Excel.</p>	<p>We reviewed the financial forecasts for 2025/26. Our understanding of the legislative framework and activities undertaken provides us with sufficient assurance that Scotland Excel will have continued provision of service for at least 12 months from the signing date. Our audit opinion is therefore unqualified in this respect.</p>

Opinion	Basis for opinion	Conclusions
<p>Opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audited parts of the Remuneration Report Management Commentary Annual Governance Statement 	<p>We plan and perform audit procedures to gain assurance that the audited parts of the Remuneration Report, Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement are prepared in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance.</p>	<p>We have concluded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the audited parts of the Remuneration Report have been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014. the information given in the management commentary is consistent with the financial statements and has been properly prepared in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. the information given in the Annual Governance Statement is consistent with the financial statements, has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)

Opinion	Basis for opinion	Conclusions
Matters reported by exception	<p>We are required to report on whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate accounting records have not been kept; or the financial statements and the audited parts of the Remuneration Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit. 	We have no matters to report.

An overview of the scope of our audit

The scope of our audit was detailed in our External Audit Plan, which was presented to the Executive Sub-Committee in March 2025. The plan explained that we follow a risk-based approach to audit planning that reflects our overall assessment of the relevant risks that apply to Scotland Excel. This ensures that our audit focuses on the areas of highest risk (the significant risk areas). Planning is a continuous process, and our audit plan is subject to review during the course of the audit to take account of developments that arise. Upon receiving the draft accounts, we have amended our audit plan to rebut the significant risk of fraud in non-pay expenditure due to the fact that there is little incentive to manipulate expenditure recognition and opportunities to manipulate expenditure recognition are very limited.

In our audit, we test and examine information using sampling and other audit techniques, to the extent we consider necessary to provide a reasonable basis for us to draw conclusions. This includes:

- An evaluation of Scotland Excel's internal control environment, including the IT systems and controls; and
- Substantive testing on significant transactions and material account balances, including procedures outlined in this report in relation to our key audit risks.

Quality indicators

We have applied a suite of quality indicators to assess the reliability of Scotland Excel's financial reporting and response to the audit.

Metric	Grading (Mature / developing / significant improvement required)	Commentary
Quality and timeliness of draft financial statements	Mature	<p>We received the unaudited financial statements of a good standard in line with our audit timetable.</p> <p>The unaudited financial statements were delivered on time with minor accuracy of casting and cross-references. We have identified minor presentational issues that management have agreed to update.</p>
Quality of working papers provided and adherence to timetable	Mature	<p>We received the working papers of a good standard in line with our audit timetable. Therefore, the audit was able to start on time as planned.</p> <p>Audit requests and inquiries were turned around on a timely basis.</p>
Timing and quality of key accounting judgements	Mature	<p>We did not identify any issues with the timing and quality of key accounting judgements.</p>
Access to finance team and other key personnel	Mature	<p>We received full access to the finance team and other key personnel. All audit queries and requests were responded to in a timely manner.</p> <p>The finance team and other key personnel were available as agreed. A meeting with management's expert</p>

Metric	Grading (Mature / developing / significant improvement required)	Commentary
		(actuary) was arranged in advance and their engagement was helpful to the audit.
<p>Quality and timeliness of the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> audited parts of the Remuneration Report Management Commentary Annual Governance Statement <p>As well as the quality and timeliness of supporting working papers for those statements.</p>	Mature	We did not identify any issues with quality and timeliness of the audited part of the Remuneration Report, Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement.
Volume and magnitude of identified errors	Developing	We identified four current year audit adjustments, one prior year audit adjustment, and no unadjusted misstatements in year.

Significant risk areas and key audit matters

Significant risks are defined by auditing standards as risks that, in the judgement of the auditor, require special audit consideration. In identifying risks, we consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood. Significant risks are those risks that have a higher risk of material misstatement. Audit procedures are designed to mitigate these risks.

As required by the Code of Audit Practice and the planning guidance issued by Audit Scotland, we considered the significant risks for the audit that had the greatest effect on our audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the audit team (the 'Key Audit Matters'), as detailed in the tables below.

Our audit procedures relating to these matters were designed in the context of our audit of the annual report and accounts as a whole, and not to express an opinion on individual accounts or disclosures.

Our opinion on the annual report and accounts is not modified with respect to any of the risks described below.

The table below summarises each significant risk. Detail behind each risk and the work undertaken is set out on the following pages.

Risk area	Financial statement / Assertion level risk	Fraud risk	Planned approach to controls	Risk of material misstatement	Outcome of work
Management override of controls	Financial statement	Yes	Assess design & implementation	Very High	Our work has not identified any significant or fraudulent issues in respect of this risk. We have however raised one control recommendation in relation to journal authorisations.

Risk area	Financial statement / Assertion level risk	Fraud risk	Planned approach to controls	Risk of material misstatement	Outcome of work
Fraud in revenue recognition - Rebutted	Assertion level	No	Assess design	Low	Audit adjustments have been identified in this area however we have not identified any instances of fraudulent activity in relation to this risk. Audit adjustments identified include overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharges.
Fraud in non-pay expenditure- Rebutted	Assertion level	No	Assess design	Low	Audit adjustments have been identified in this area however we have not identified any instances of fraudulent activity in relation to this risk. Audit adjustments identified include overstatement of supplies and services and understatement of support cost due to incorrect classification of legal fee and overstatement of government grants

Risk area	Financial statement / Assertion level risk	Fraud risk	Planned approach to controls	Risk of material misstatement	Outcome of work
					income, overstatement of supplies and services, and understatement of other payables due to incorrect determination of principle versus agent status.
Pension liability (key accounting estimate)	Assertion level	Yes	Assess design & implementation	High	A prior period adjustment was identified by management and adjusted for within the draft set of financial statements provided to audit. This relates to the understatement of unfunded pension liability of £450,000 and associated notional in-year costs of £27,000. There was no impact on usable reserves. No fraudulent issues were identified from work performed.
Implementation of IFRS 16 (key accounting estimate)	Assertion level	Yes	Assess design & implementation	High	No material or fraudulent issues were identified.

Significant risks at the financial statement level

These risks are considered to have a pervasive impact on the financial statements as a whole and potentially affect many assertions for classes of transaction, account balances and disclosures.

Risk area	Management override of controls
<p>Significant risk description</p>	<p>Auditing Standards require auditors to treat management override of controls as a significant risk on all audits. This is because management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud by manipulating accounting records and overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p> <p>Although the level of risk of management override of controls will vary from entity to entity, the risk is nevertheless present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud and thus a significant risk.</p> <p>Specific areas of potential risk include manual journals, management estimates and judgements and one-off transactions outside the ordinary course of the business.</p> <p>This was considered to be a significant risk and Key Audit Matter for the audit.</p> <p>Risk of material misstatement: Very High</p>
<p>How the scope of our audit responded to the significant risk</p>	<p>Key judgement</p> <p>There is the potential for management to use their judgement to influence the financial statements as well as the potential to override controls for specific transactions.</p> <p>Audit procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented our understanding of the journals posting process and evaluated the design effectiveness of management controls over journals. • Analysed the journals listing and determined the criteria for selecting high risk and/or unusual journals. • Tested high risk and/or unusual journals posted during the year and after the draft accounts stage back to supporting documentation for appropriateness, corroboration and to

Risk area	Management override of controls
	<p>ensure approval has been undertaken in line with Scotland Excel' journals policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gained an understanding of the key accounting estimates and critical judgements made by management. • Evaluated the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions.
Key observations	<p>We have not identified any indication of management override of controls in the year. We did not identify any areas of bias in key judgements made by management and judgements were consistent with prior years.</p> <p>We identified from our journals testing undertaken that large batch journals with over 50 lines require no system approval. We have therefore raised a control recommendation relation to the authorisation and review process of large journals. Details of the recommendation are outlined at Appendix 3.</p>

Significant risks at the assertion level for classes of transaction, account balances and disclosures

Key risk area	Fraud in revenue recognition - Rebutted
Risk description	<p>Material misstatement due to fraudulent financial reporting relating to revenue recognition is a presumed risk in ISA 240 (The Auditor's Responsibilities Relating to Fraud in an Audit of Financial Statements).</p> <p>The presumption is that Scotland Excel could adopt accounting policies or recognise income in such a way as to lead to a material misstatement in the reported financial position.</p> <p>Given the financial pressures facing the public sector as a whole, there is an inherent fraud risk associated with the recording of income around the year end.</p> <p>However, we do not deem this risk to be present in requisitions received from the constituent local authorities due to a lack of incentive and opportunity to manipulate transactions. We also rebut this risk in relation to other income streams including interest receivable as there is little opportunity to manipulate and it is not material to the accounts.</p>
How the scope of our audit responded to the risk	<p>Key judgements</p> <p>We have rebutted this risk as we have assessed there is low incentive or opportunity to manipulate revenue streams of Scotland Excel.</p>
Key observations	<p>We have identified audit adjustments as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current year overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects £295,315 due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharges(nil impact on usable reserves) • Prior year overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects £587,070 due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharges(nil impact on usable reserves)

Key risk area	Fraud in non-pay expenditure- Rebutted
Risk description	<p>We have also considered Practice Note 10, which comments that for certain public bodies, the risk of manipulating expenditure could exceed the risk of the manipulation of revenue. We have therefore also considered the risk of fraud in expenditure at Scotland Excel.</p> <p>Practice Note 10: audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (PN10) states: "As most public bodies are net spending bodies, then the risk of material misstatement due to fraud related to expenditure may be greater than the risk of material misstatements due to fraud related to revenue recognition".</p>
How the scope of our audit responded to the risk	<p>Key judgements</p> <p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA 240 and the nature of the expenditure streams at Scotland Excel, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from expenditure recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little incentive to manipulate expenditure recognition; and • Opportunities to manipulate expenditure recognition are very limited. <p>A large proportion of Scotland Excel's expenditure relates to employee costs, property costs, supplies and services and support costs. These expenditure streams and processes are largely automated. Controls have also been designed and implemented to mitigate fraud within these expenditure streams and therefore the risk of fraud in expenditure recognition is deemed low.</p>
Key observations	<p>We have identified audit adjustments as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overstatement of supplies and services and understatement of support cost £66,004 due to incorrect classification of legal fee (nil impact on usable reserves) • Overstatement of government grants income £1,970,000, overstatement of supplies and services £257,960, and

Key risk area	Fraud in non-pay expenditure- Rebutted
	understatement of other payables £1,712,040 due to incorrect determination of principle versus agent status (1,712,040 impact on usable reserves)

Key risk area	Pension liability (key accounting estimate)
Significant risk description	<p>An actuarial estimate of the net defined pension liability is calculated on an annual basis under IAS 19 'Employee Benefits', and on a triennial funding basis, by an independent firm of actuaries with specialist knowledge and experience. The triennial estimates are based on the most up to date membership data held by the pension fund and a roll forward approach is used in intervening years, as permitted by the Code. The calculations involve a number of key assumptions, such as discount rates and inflation and local factors such as mortality rates and expected pay rises. The estimates are highly sensitive to changes in these assumptions [and the calculation of any asset ceiling when determining the value of a pension asset (where relevant)]. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake audit procedures on the use of external experts (the actuary) and the methods, assumptions and source data underlying the estimates.</p> <p>This represents a key accounting estimate made by management within the financial statements due to the size of the values involved, the subjectivity of the measurement and the sensitive nature of the estimate to changes in key assumptions. We have therefore identified the valuation of the net pension liability as a significant risk.</p> <p>This was considered to be a significant risk and Key Audit Matter for the audit.</p> <p>Inherent risk of material misstatement:</p> <p>Valuation: High</p>

Key risk area	Pension liability (key accounting estimate)
<p>How the scope of our audit responded to the significant risk</p>	<p>Key judgements</p> <p>A significant level of estimation is required in order to determine the valuation of pension assets/liabilities. Small changes in the key assumptions (including discount rates, inflation and mortality rates) can have a material impact on the pension asset/liability.</p> <p>Audit procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated managements processes for the calculation of the estimate, the instructions issued to management's expert (the actuary) and the scope of their work; • Evaluated the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary; • Assessed the controls in place to ensure that the data provided to the actuary by Scotland Excel and their pension fund was accurate and complete; • Evaluated the methods, assumptions and source data used by the actuary in their valuations, with the support of an auditors' expert; • Evaluated whether any asset ceiling was appropriately considered when determining the value of any pension asset included in the financial statements; • Assessed the impact of any significant differences between the estimated gross asset valuations included in the financial statements and Scotland Excel's share of the investment valuations in the audited pension fund accounts'; and • Ensured pension valuation movements for the year and related disclosures have been correctly reflected in the financial statements.
<p>Key observations</p>	<p>A prior period adjustment was identified by management and adjusted for within the draft set of financial statements provided to audit. This relates to the understatement of unfunded pension liability of £450,000 and associated notional in-year costs of £27,000. There was no impact on usable reserves.</p>

Key risk area	Implementation of IFRS 16 (key accounting estimate)
<p>Significant risk description</p>	<p>CIPFA LASAAC has issued a formal decision to implement IFRS 16 starting from 1 April 2024. The impact of the new requirement is that arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases, a right of use asset and a lease liability, will be brought into the balance sheet at 1 April 2024, subject to recognition exemptions.</p> <p>IFRS 16 will be applied retrospectively but with the cumulative effect recognised at 1 April 2024. This means that right of use assets and lease liabilities will be calculated as if IFRS 16 had always applied but recognised in 2024/25.</p> <p>Inherent risk of material misstatement:</p> <p>Right of use asset (valuation): High</p> <p>Lease liability (valuation): High</p>
<p>How the scope of our audit responded to the significant risk</p>	<p>Key judgements</p> <p>Scotland Excel has a formal lease agreement with Renfrewshire Council. The calculations involve a number of key assumptions, such as lease term, discount rate, and variable lease payments determination.</p> <p>This represents a key accounting estimate made by management within the financial statements due to the size of the values involved, the subjectivity of the measurement and the sensitive nature of the estimate to changes in key assumptions. We have therefore identified the valuation of right of use asset and lease liability as a significant risk.</p> <p>Audit procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained an understanding of the changes during the year; • Considered management's assessment and accounting treatment of the property lease; • Confirmed that recognition and calculation of the lease liability and right of use has been performed in line with IFRS 16 requirements as adopted by applicable government guidance; • Reviewed related disclosures in the accounts.
<p>Key observations</p>	<p>We have not identified any material issues in relation to this risk.</p>

Materiality

Materiality is an expression of the relative significance of a matter in the context of the financial statements as a whole. A matter is material if its omission or misstatement would reasonably influence the decisions of an addressee of the auditor's report. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement and is affected by our assessment of the risk profile of Scotland Excel and the needs of users. We reviewed our assessment of materiality throughout the audit.

Whilst our audit procedures are designed to identify misstatements which are material to our audit opinion, we also report any uncorrected misstatements of lower value errors to the extent that our audit identifies these.

Our initial assessment of materiality was £ 157,000. On receipt of the 2024/25 unaudited financial statements, we reassessed materiality and kept it at the same level as our initial assessment. We consider that our updated assessment has remained appropriate throughout our audit.

	Materiality £
Overall materiality for the financial statements	157,000
Performance materiality (75% of materiality)	118,000
Trivial threshold	7,850

Materiality

Our assessment is made with reference to Scotland Excel's gross expenditure. We consider this to be the principal consideration for users of the financial statements when assessing financial performance.

Our assessment of materiality equates to approximately 2% of gross expenditure as disclosed in the 2023/24 audited annual accounts. On receipt of the 2024/25 unaudited financial statements, we reassessed materiality and kept it at the same level as our initial assessment as there was no significant change in results.

In performing our audit, we apply a lower level of materiality to the audit of the Remuneration Report disclosures.

For the Remuneration Report we consider any errors which result in a movement between the relevant bandings on the disclosure table to be material.

Performance materiality	<p>Performance materiality is the working level of materiality used throughout the audit. We use performance materiality to determine the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures carried out. We perform audit procedures on all transactions, or groups of transactions, and balances that exceed our performance materiality. This means that we perform a greater level of testing on the areas deemed to be at significant risk of material misstatement.</p> <p>Performance materiality is set at a value less than overall materiality for the financial statements as a whole to reduce to an appropriately low level the probability that the aggregate of the uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceed overall materiality.</p> <p>We have set performance materiality at 75% of overall materiality.</p>
Trivial misstatements	<p>Trivial misstatements are matters that are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any quantitative or qualitative criteria.</p> <p>We have set the trivial threshold as 5% of overall materiality.</p>

Audit differences

Audit differences, both adjusted and unadjusted, identified during the audit are detailed in Appendix 2.

Internal controls

As part of our work we considered internal controls relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such that we were able to design appropriate audit procedures. Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we report these at Appendix 3. These matters are limited to those which we have concluded are of sufficient importance to merit being reported.

Other communications

Other areas of focus

Area of focus	Audit findings and conclusion
Significant matters on which there was disagreement with management	There were no significant matters on which there was disagreement with management.
Significant management judgements which required additional audit work and / or where there was disagreement over the judgement and / or where the judgement is significant enough that we are required to report it to those charged with governance before they consider their approval of the accounts	There were no other significant management judgements which required additional audit work, where there was disagreement over the judgement or where the judgement is significant enough that requires reporting, in addition to those reflected in this report.
Prior year adjustments identified	<p>There were two prior year adjustments identified by management and adjusted for within the draft set of financial statements provided to audit. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restatement of comparative figure due to understatement of pension liability £450,000 (nil impact on usable reserves) and understatement of unfunded benefits paid of £27,000 (nil impact on usable reserves). • Restatement of comparative figure due to understatement of rebate income receivable of £255,348 (£255,348 impact on usable reserves) <p>There was one prior year adjustments identified by auditors. This was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects £587,070 due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharges (nil impact on usable reserves)

Area of focus	Audit findings and conclusion
<p>Concerns identified in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation by management with other accountants on accounting or auditing matters • Matters significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process • Adjustments / transactions identified as having been made to meet an agreed system position / target 	<p>No concerns were identified in relation to these areas.</p>

Accounting policies

The accounting policies used in preparing the financial statements are unchanged from the previous year with the exception of the adoption of IFRS16.

Our work included a review of the adequacy of disclosures in the financial statements and consideration of the appropriateness of the accounting policies adopted by Scotland Excel.

The accounting policies, which are disclosed in the financial statements, are in line with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Audit Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK (the 'CIPFA Code') 2024/25 and are considered appropriate.

Presentation and disclosures

There are no significant financial statements disclosures that we consider should be brought to your attention. All the disclosures required by relevant legislation and applicable accounting standards have been made appropriately.

Key judgements and estimates

As part of the planning stages of the audit we identified all accounting estimates made by management and determined which of those are key to the overall financial statements.

Consideration was given to material accounting estimates including accruals, leases and pension liabilities. Other than leases and pension liabilities we have not determined the accounting estimates to be significant. See the section above on "Significant risks at the assertion level for classes of transaction, account balances and disclosures" for detailed findings in relation to key accounting estimates.

We reviewed the key estimates and judgements that management made in respect to the identified key accounting estimates for indication of bias and assessed whether the

judgements used by management are reasonable. Overall, we concluded that those key accounting estimates were balanced and appropriate.

Fraud and suspected fraud

We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with management and to the Executive Sub-Committee. We have not been made aware of any incidents in the period nor have any incidents come to our attention as a result of our audit testing.

Our work as auditor is not intended to identify any instances of fraud of a non-material nature and should not be relied upon for this purpose.

Non-compliance with laws and regulations

As part of our standard audit testing, we have reviewed the laws and regulations impacting Scotland Excel. There are no indications from this work of any significant incidences of non-compliance or material breaches of laws and regulations.

Written representations

We will issue the final letter of representation to the Executive Sub-Committee to sign at the same time as the financial statements are approved.

Related parties

We are not aware of any related party transactions which have not been disclosed.

Confirmations from third parties

All requested third party confirmations have been received..

Wider scope of public audit and best value

Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. The wider-scope audit specified by the Code of Audit Practice broadens the audit of the accounts to include consideration of additional aspects or risks in areas of financial management; financial sustainability; vision, leadership and governance; and use of resources to improve outcomes.

Limited wider scope audit work

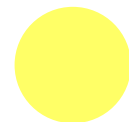
The Code of Audit Practice provides for the Accounts Commission to specify an alternative audit approach where an audited body might be considered less complex due to its size and its limited financial activity. We have concluded, based on an assessment of the nature and circumstances of Scotland Excel, that a limited wider scope audit is appropriate. As such our audit of wider scope areas is restricted to an evaluation of financial sustainability.

Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability looks forward to the medium and longer term to consider whether Scotland Excel is planning effectively to continue to deliver its services and the way in which they should be delivered.

Auditor judgement

Risks exist to the achievement of operational objectives



Our detailed findings on Scotland Excel's financial framework for achieving long term financial sustainability are set out below.

Medium Term Financial Plan

Scotland Excel's revenue budget for 2025/26 and indicative budget estimates for the subsequent two years (to 2027/28) are outlined below.

2025/26 to 2027/28 forecast financial position

	2025/26 (Proposed Budget)	2026/27 (Indicative Budget)	2027/28 (Indicative Budget)
	£	£	£
Total Core Operating Costs	6,951,000	7,294,000	7,418,000
Total Core Operating Income	(6,951,000)	(7,148,000)	(7,249,000)
Core Operating Deficit/(Surplus)	-	146,000	169,000

A balanced budget will be achieved in later years through development of a new income strategy, and Revenue Estimates will be updated in December 2026. Utilisation of useable reserves to fund any shortfall at year-end will be considered by the Committee over the normal course of budget planning and monitoring.

	2025/26 (Projected Outturn)	2026/27 (Indicative Budget)	2027/28 (Indicative Budget)
	£	£	£
Uncommitted Reserves			
Opening Balance at 1 April	943,000	578,000	498,000
Transfer to/(from) Reserves	(365,000)	(80,000)	-
Closing Balance at 31 March	578,000*	498,000	498,000
% of Operating Income	8.7%	6.9%	6.9%

*partly committed for Committee-approved projects in 2026/27.

Key assumptions in the 2025/26 budget and indicative financial plans include;

- an estimated budget provision of 3% in relation to a pay award for 2025/26. An estimated 2.5% increase has also been added to the Employee Costs element of the indicative figures shown for 2026/27 and 2027/28;
- no standard inflationary adjustment has been made to non-salary expenditure lines;
- adjustments to existing budgets have been made to specific expenditure lines to reflect operational demand in relation to:

- Employee Costs adjustments as follows:
 - 3% pay inflation as noted above;
 - estimated impact of changes to Employers' National Insurance contributions;
 - impact of the revised staffing structure in place within Scotland Excel;
 - staffing turnover assumption of 5%;
 - reduced level of employers' superannuation contributions in 2025/26 as previously advised by Strathclyde Pension Fund (SPF);
 - inclusion of staffing costs related to projects previously approved and funded from the reduction in employers' superannuation contributions;
 - consolidation of costs associated with administration of the National Care Homes Contract (NCHC); and
 - consolidation of permanent staffing involved in the delivery of approved funding streams including New Build, Academy and Small Value Projects, which were previously funded via Projects.
- Property Costs – no inflationary element has been applied however, budget has been increased for one year only, to reflect anticipated costs in relation to changes to the Scotland Excel office space within Renfrewshire House.
- Transport Costs – no inflationary element applied.
- Transfer Payments – the Apprenticeship Levy directly relates to employee costs and has been increased accordingly.
- Supplies and Services – budget has been amended to reflect additional legal costs previously shared between Core and Project budgets and, the further legal support approved by the Executive Sub-Committee, funded initially from the reduction in employer pension contributions.
- Support Costs – no inflationary element has been applied.
- Income estimates include the following assumptions and adjustments to existing budgets:
 - Council Requisitions – Council Requisitions for 2025/26 have been maintained at 2023/24 levels with a 0% increase.
 - Temporary Reserve Use – The temporary use of reserves reflects the anticipated impact of recent changes to Employers' National Insurance rates and continued funding of Committee approved projects financed through employers' pension contribution changes.

- Associate Income – The income target reflects increasing numbers of Associate members joining Scotland Excel and the ongoing delivery of the Continuous Improvement Programme for Procurement (CIPP) for Housing Associations.
- Income from Projects – This figure now includes income required to cover permanent delivery posts within funding streams now included in the Core operating budget from Flexible Procurement Services, Consultancy Services, New Build, and Learning and Development (Academy) activities.
- Rebates – Income from Rebates during 2025/26 has been amended to reflect current forecasts in relation to the number of Scotland Excel frameworks.

Scotland Excel's financial plans are subject to ongoing review and development. The application of reserves to support service delivery offers a potential short-term solution for existing funding gaps and would only be considered by the Committee after exploring further opportunities around income generation.

Source: Joint Committee minutes of meeting 6 December 2024 Draft Revenue Estimates 2025/26 Revenue Budget monitoring report presented to the Executive sub-committee 22 August 2025

Best value

Appointed auditors have a duty to be satisfied that bodies have made proper arrangements to secure best value. We undertake this duty in a way that is proportionate to the size and type of body. We give due regard to:

- How Scotland Excel demonstrates that it is meeting its Best Value responsibilities
- How our work on financial sustainability meets the Best Value responsibilities

The Annual Governance Statement states that there is a statutory duty on the Executive Sub-Committee to make arrangements to secure Best Value.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Scotland Excel's elected members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions. The Governance Framework described the systems and processes by which Scotland Excel operate in to secure best value.

Members and officers of Scotland Excel are committed to the concept of sound governance and the effective delivery of services which encompasses best value. A self-assessment tool is used with no concerns raised.

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Appendix 1: Responsibilities of Scotland Excel and Auditors

Scotland Excel responsibilities

Scotland Excel is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. The Treasurer has been designated as that officer. The Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of Scotland Excel's annual accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

Area	Scotland Excel responsibilities
Corporate governance	<p>Scotland Excel is responsible for establishing arrangements to ensure the proper conduct of its affairs including the legality of activities and transactions, and for monitoring the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements. Those charged with governance should be involved in monitoring these arrangements.</p>
Financial statements and related reports	<p>Scotland Excel has responsibility for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the financial position of Scotland Excel and its expenditure and income, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and relevant legislation; • maintaining accounting records and working papers that have been prepared to an acceptable professional standard and support the balances and transactions in its financial statements and related disclosures; and • preparing and publishing, along with the financial statements, an annual governance statement, governance compliance statement, management commentary (or equivalent) and a remuneration report that is consistent with the disclosures made in the financial statements and prepared in accordance with prescribed requirements. Management commentaries should be fair, balanced and understandable.

Area	Scotland Excel responsibilities
	<p>Management is responsible, with the oversight of those charged with governance, for communicating relevant information to users about Scotland Excel and its financial performance, including providing adequate disclosures in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. The relevant information should be communicated clearly and concisely.</p> <p>Scotland Excel is responsible for developing and implementing effective systems of internal control as well as financial, operational and compliance controls. These systems should support the achievement of its objectives and safeguard and secure value for money from the public funds at its disposal. Scotland Excel is also responsible for establishing effective and appropriate internal audit and risk-management functions.</p>
Standards of conduct for prevention and detection of fraud and error	<p>Scotland Excel is responsible for establishing arrangements to prevent and detect fraud, error and irregularities, bribery and corruption and also to ensure that its affairs are managed in accordance with proper standards of conduct.</p>
Financial position	<p>Scotland Excel is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to ensure its financial position is soundly based having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such financial monitoring and reporting arrangements as may be specified; • Compliance with statutory financial requirements and achievement of financial targets; • Balances and reserves, including strategies about levels and their future use; • Plans to deal with uncertainty in the medium and long term; and • The impact of planned future policies and foreseeable developments on the financial position.
Best value	<p>Scotland Excel has a specific responsibility to make arrangements to secure Best Value. Best Value is defined as continuous improvement in the</p>

Area	Scotland Excel responsibilities
	<p>performance of the body's functions. In securing Best Value, the local government body is required to maintain an appropriate balance among:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of its performance of its functions• The costs to the body of that performance• The cost to persons of any service provided by it for them on a wholly or partly rechargeable basis. <p>In maintaining the balance, Scotland Excel shall have regards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficiency• Effectiveness• Economy• The need to meet the equal opportunity requirements. <p>Scotland Excel should discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.</p>

Auditor responsibilities

Code of Audit Practice

The Code of Audit Practice (the Code) describes the high-level, principles-based purpose and scope of public audit in Scotland.

The Code outlines the responsibilities of external auditors and it is a condition of our appointment that we follow it.

Our responsibilities

Auditor responsibilities are derived from the Code, statute, International Standards on Auditing (UK) and the Ethical Standard for auditors, other professional requirements and best practice, and guidance from Audit Scotland.

We are responsible for the audit of the accounts and the wider-scope responsibilities explained below. We act independently in carrying out our role and in exercising professional judgement. We report to the Executive Sub-Committee and others, including Audit Scotland, on the results of our audit work.

Weaknesses or risks, including fraud and other irregularities, identified by auditors, are only those which come to our attention during our normal audit work in accordance with the Code and may not be all that exist.

Wider scope audit work

Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector.

The wider scope audit specified by the Code broadens the audit of the accounts to include additional aspects or risks in areas of financial management; financial sustainability; vision, leadership and governance; and use of resources to improve outcomes.

The Code of Audit Practice provides for the Accounts Commission to specify an alternative audit approach where an audited body might be considered less complex due to its size and its limited financial activity. We have concluded, based on an assessment of the nature and circumstances of Scotland Excel, that a limited wider scope audit is appropriate. As such our audit of wider scope areas is restricted to an evaluation of financial sustainability.

Financial sustainability



Financial sustainability means being able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Auditor considerations

Auditors consider the extent to which audited bodies show regard to financial sustainability. They look ahead to the medium term (two to five years) and longer term (over five years) to consider whether the body is planning effectively so it can continue to deliver services.

Best Value

Appointed auditors have a duty to be satisfied that bodies have made proper arrangements to secure best value. We undertake this duty in a way that is proportionate to the size and type of body. We give due regard to:

- How Scotland Excel demonstrates that it is meeting its Best Value responsibilities
- How our work on the wider-scope areas meets the Best Value responsibilities

Audit quality

The Auditor General and the Accounts Commission require assurance on the quality of public audit in Scotland through comprehensive audit quality arrangements that apply to all audit work and providers. These arrangements recognise the importance of audit quality to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission and provide regular reporting on audit quality and performance.

Audit Scotland maintains and delivers an [Audit Quality Framework](#).

The most recent audit quality report can be found at [Quality of public audit in Scotland: Annual report 2025](#)

Independence and ethics

The Ethical Standards and ISA (UK) 260 require us to report full and fair disclosure of matters relating to our independence. In accordance with our profession's ethical requirements and further to our external audit plan issued confirming audit arrangements we confirm that there are no further facts or matters that impact on our integrity, objectivity and independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw attention to. We consider an objective, reasonable and informed third party would take the same view.

We confirm that Azets Audit Services and the engagement team complied with the FRC's Ethical Standard. We confirm that all threats to our independence have been properly addressed through appropriate safeguards and that we are independent and able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Non-audit services: There are no non-audit services provided to Scotland Excel.

Contingent fees: No contingent fee arrangements are in place for any services provided.

Gifts and hospitality: We have not identified any gifts or hospitality provided to, or received from, any member of Scotland Excel, senior management or staff.

Relationships: We have no other relationships with Scotland Excel, its directors, senior managers and affiliates, and we are not aware of any former partners or staff being employed, or holding discussions in anticipation of employment, as a director, or in a senior management role covering financial, accounting or control related areas.

Audit fees

The total fees charged to Scotland Excel for the provision of services in 2024/25 were as follows. Prior year charges are also shown for comparative purposes:

	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Auditor remuneration (expected fee level)	23,450	22,500
Auditor remuneration- in response to the audit matters reflected in the plan	1,770	2,250
IFRS 16	2,920	-
Pooled costs	590	820
Sectoral cap adjustment	(16,360)	(15,780)
Total audit fee	12,370	9,790

The audit fees charged reconcile to the fees disclosed in the financial statements.

Appendix 2: Audit adjustments

We are required to report all non-trivial misstatements to those charged with governance, whether or not the financial statements have been adjusted by management

Adjusted misstatements

Two prior period adjustments were identified by management and adjusted for within the draft set of financial statements provided to audit. These relate to understatement of accrued rebate income of £255,000 (£255,000 impact on usable reserves) and understatement of the pension liability of £450,000 (nil impact on usable reserves) and understatement of in-year notional pension costs of £27,000 (nil impact on usable reserves).

We identified adjustment misstatements above our trivial reporting threshold during our audit. Details of the item corrected following discussions with management is as below.

No	Detail	CIES	Balance Sheet	Impact on usable reserves	Impact on unusable reserves
		Dr / (Cr) £	Dr / (Cr) £	Dr / (Cr) £	Dr / (Cr) £
1.	Overstatement of holiday pay accrual	6,676	(6,676)		6,676
2.	Overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects £295,315 due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharges	295,315 (295,315)			
3.	Restatement: Overstatement of supplies and services and income from projects £587,070 due to omission of required eliminations related to internal recharges	587,070 (587,070)			
4.	Overstatement of supplies and services and understatement of support cost £66,004 due to incorrect classification of legal fee	66,004 (66,004)			

No	Detail	CIES	Balance Sheet	Impact on usable reserves	Impact on unusable reserves
5.	Overstatement of government grants income £1,970,000, overstatement of supplies and services £257,960, and understatement of other payables £1,712,040 due to incorrect determination of principle versus agent status	1,712,040	(1,712,040)	1,712,040	

	As at 31 March 2025
Total usable reserves per the unaudited annual accounts	5,557,973
Net impact on usable reserves increase/ (decrease)	(1,712,040)
Total usable reserves per the audited annual accounts	3,845,933
Total unusable reserves per the unaudited annual accounts	181,459
Net impact on unusable reserves increase/ (decrease)	(6,676)
Total unusable reserves per the audited annual accounts	174,783

Unadjusted misstatements

We identified no unadjusted misstatements during our audit.

Misclassification and disclosure changes

Our work included a review of the adequacy of disclosures in the financial statements and consideration of the appropriateness of the accounting policies and estimation techniques adopted by Scotland Excel.

We identified a small number of minor presentational issues in Scotland Excel's accounts, and these have all been amended by management. We found the disclosed accounting policies, significant accounting estimates and the overall disclosures and presentation to be appropriate.

Prior year unadjusted misstatements

There were no prior year unadjusted misstatements reported in the prior year audit.

Appendix 3: Action plan

Our action plan details the weaknesses and opportunities for improvement that we have identified during our 2024/25 audit. The matters reported are limited to issues we have identified during the course of our audit which we feel are of sufficient importance to merit reporting to you under the auditing standards.

The recommendations are categorised into three risk ratings:

Key:

- 1. Significant deficiency**
- 2. Other deficiency**
- 3. Other observation**

1. IT general controls	Other observation
Observation	Our specialist Technology Risk team reviewed the design and implementation of IT general controls in the key systems impacting preparation of the financial statements and identified a few areas for improvement in relation password, active directory and undertaken testing of incident management planning. (As this is a public report and for reasons of IT/control sensitivity, we have provided specific details to Scotland Excel separately).
Implication	There is a risk of system issues adversely impacting the control environment and/or financial statements.
Recommendation	We recommend that the specific IT points identified are addressed.
Management response	<p>A detailed management response has been completed. The recommendation will be implemented during 2025/26</p> <p>Responsible officer: Phil Feeney and Anne Marie Flavell</p> <p>Implementation date: FY25/26</p>

2. Unapproved posted journal	Other observation
Observation	<p>We identified from our journals testing undertaken that large batch journals with over 50 lines require no system approval and therefore can be posted and approved by individuals who hold relevant access. This is due to a system issue where there are too many line items for approval within the system.</p> <p>Management have mitigating controls in place to review period end budgetary controls where any significant variances against budget are investigated and followed up.</p>
Implication	<p>As these specific journals do not required approval, this could mean that someone could post inappropriate or fraudulent journals without review or authorisation.</p> <p>As part of our testing of management override of controls we have not identified any instances of inappropriate or fraudulent journal postings during the financial year.</p>
Recommendation	<p>Management should strengthen controls over large batch journals by introducing an independent approval requirement (e.g., manual secondary review) before posting.</p>
Management response	<p>There are very few journals over 50 lines processed by Scotland Excel as a matter of course due to the nature of their journal entries. There are, however, some batch journals processed by the Council on behalf of the Board, such as payroll accruals and income remittances. There are mitigating procedures in place during budget monitoring each period to identify any anomaly postings. Therefore, this issue is not considered a material risk in terms of likelihood, impact or frequency for Scotland Excel.</p> <p>Responsible officer: Christine McCourt, Head of Finance and Procurement</p> <p>Implementation date: n/a</p>

Appendix 4: Follow up of prior year recommendations

As part of our audit work we have followed up on control weaknesses and recommendations either raised in last year's Annual Audit Report or carried forward from prior years.

1.	Rebates income (Recommendations raised in 2023/24)
Recommendation	<p>Finding: One of Scotland Excel's income streams is from rebates relating to different procurement frameworks in place. During our sample testing of those rebates, we identified that there is lack of consistency on how they are calculated at year end. Some use the previous years' quarter as a starting point, others use current year data. There is also little evidence these calculations are compared to the actuals after year end to assess the methodology effectiveness.</p> <p>Risk: Lack of consistency in methodology applied can lead to misstatements in the accounts.</p> <p>Recommendation: We recommend a consistent application of methodology when arriving at rebates income.</p>
Auditor follow up	<p>A prior period restatement was required in the 2024/25 financial statements as a result of rebate income accruals being materially different to actuals. Given the restatement that was required in the 2024/25 financial statements we consider this recommendation remains open as the prior year recommendation has not been resolved by management in the current financial year.</p>
Status (Ongoing)	<p>Management Response:</p> <p>Scotland Excel has documented and implemented a process for the management of rebate estimation which includes timeline, tasks and outlines benefits, dependencies and actions required before the launch in 2024.</p> <p>This documented approach also incorporates a sensitivity factor built in of 10% provision on the total forecast rebate to take into account unknown elements and mitigate any under accrual.</p>

A large decorative graphic on the left side of the page. It consists of a solid blue triangle pointing right, followed by a series of overlapping triangles in light grey, a single green triangle, and a single blue triangle, all pointing right. The background is a light grey gradient.

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