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Foreword

Local authorities adopted International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in 2010/11. Adoption of IFRS, along with the statutory framework, has ensured local government financial reporting complies with the highest possible global financial reporting standards.

Since that time new standards have come into force, and for many authorities this has meant a substantial increase in the amount of information reported. More recently, local authorities in England have delivered on early close.

Yet despite the quality and timeliness of local government financial reporting, we know that there is work to do to better translate the story of the financial sustainability of individual authorities and to build trust with local stakeholders by giving clear, simple and relevant information.

In this publication we begin the journey of rebuilding that trust, to strike a better balance between compliance with standards and providing clearer, simpler and more transparent information, focusing on things that matter most in a local authority context.

This document provides practical suggestions on how the annual statement of accounts can be 'streamlined'. The aim of streamlining is not simply to reduce the page count but equally to:

- focus on who the principal users of the accounts are and what information they need
- improve clarity by removing unnecessary levels of detail
- focus on the key messages to be communicated to enable users of the accounts to better understand the authority's financial position and performance.

Authorities that have already taken steps to streamline have found that clearer and shorter accounts can be prepared to a high quality with less resource. To enable this, some review of year-end processes may be needed, and additional guidance around process is included in this document.

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CIPFA is committed to the streamlining journey and this publication is a welcome first step.

Sarah Howard

President, CIPFA