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Our ref MB/mf/118121

22 September 2021

Dear Sir,

Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020

During the course of our audit for the year ended 31 December 2020 we have reviewed the accounting system and procedures operated by your council. We have also reviewed the operations of the council and how they conform to the Local Councils Act, 1993, the Financial Regulations issued in terms of this Act, and the supplementary Financial Procedures. We set out in this report the more important points that arose as a result of our review.

1 Previous management letter

1.1 Income

We again identified discrepancies in LES reports (refer to note 2.6).

1.2 Expenditure

The council, yet again failed to recognise rent expense under IFRS 16 (refer to note 3.15).

1.3 Tendering procedures

We have again encountered shortcomings in tendering procedures (refer to notes 3.6, 3.8 and 3.10).

1.4 Payroll

We again identified irregularities in personal emoluments (refer to notes 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.10).

1.5 Receivables

We again identified an instance where the receivable balance is not agreeing to the debtor confirmation (refer to note 6.1).

We again identified discrepancies in accrued income (refer to note 6.7).

REGISTRY

24 SEP 2021

Certified Public Accountants

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NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE

1.6 Cash and cash equivalents

We again identified irregularities in cash and cash equivalents (refer to notes 7.1, 7.3, 7.6 and 7.8).

1.7 Trade and other payables

We again identified discrepancies between the direct confirmation from a supplier and the creditors' list (refer to note 8.5).

1.8 Financial statements

We did not encounter contingent liabilities not disclosed properly.

We again identified shortcomings in the presentation of financial statements (refer to note 9.1).

1.9 Council meetings and website uploads

The council did not upload all the required reports on the electronic site on time (refer to note 11.1).

2 Income
Government allocation

2.1 During our audit fieldwork we noted that the council did not account for the WIFI and MITA deduction amounting to €478 from the Government allocation to correctly reflect the gross income received from central Government in accordance with instructions received from the NAO. We have proposed an audit adjustment to reclassify this amount.

2.2 It is important that central Government income agrees to the financial allocation document as per section 55 of the Local Councils Act, 1993. Any amounts deducted at source should be grossed up such that central Government income is reported in full.

General income

2.3 During our audit, we came across instances where the council did not deposit its general income on a regular basis. Examples are:

Receipt number	Details	Receipt date	Deposit date	€
5643	Permits	19.02.2020	10.03.2020	10.00
5764	Permits	13.05.2020	25.05.2020	20.00
5799	Permits	18.06.2020	17.06.2020	10.00

Custodian receipts

2.4 The same shortcoming was noted during the course of our audit work on the council's custodial receipts of Lands Department and LES receipts:

Description	Receipt number	Receipt Date	Deposit date	€
[REDACTED]	913571	07.02.2020	10.03.2020	20.96
[REDACTED]	929740	14.07.2020	01.09.2020	49.22

[REDACTED]	936274	06.08.2020	01.09.2020	27.95
[REDACTED]	963922	11.11.2020	22.01.2021	40.18
[REDACTED]	4498485	27.03.2020	03.04.2020	23.29
[REDACTED]	4518077	15.05.2020	12.06.2020	23.29
[REDACTED]	4539811	26.06.2020	13.07.2020	23.29
[REDACTED]	4556396	20.07.2020	01.09.2020	23.29
[REDACTED]	4638902	28.10.2020	09.11.2020	50.00

- 2.5 Apart from the security implications of leaving cash and cheques on the premises unnecessarily, this contravenes the relevant regulations. We recommend that the council implements procedures so that all receipts are deposited at least twice weekly.

Income from LES administration fee

- 2.6 We obtained Loqus reports 483 and reconciled to income from LES administration fees and established that the council's income from LES administration fees for 2020 is understated by €222.87. We did not propose an audit adjustment due to the immateriality of the amount.
- 2.7 We recommend that the council generates the Loqus report frequently and reconciles amounts to fees claimed for collection of fines. Any discrepancies should be reconciled with Loqus.

Revenue classification

- 2.8 During the course of our audit we noted that the council accounted for permits revenue amounting to €31,415 as Income raised by Local Council Bye-Laws instead of general income. We also noted that amounts received from LC care project amounting to €8,000 and restoration grant amounting to €8,831.62 were incorrectly classified as general income instead of other Government income. Furthermore, the council accounted for Government allocation for 'Tourism Zones and Adjustment fund' amounting to €4,013 as Government income instead of other Government income. We have proposed audit adjustments to reclassify the amounts to their proper classification.
- 2.9 We recommend that income is allocated to the appropriate accounts so that the income of the council is properly reported.
- 2.10 During the course of our audit we noted that organic waste collection revenue amounting to €15,567.74 was being netted off against expenses instead of being shown under other Government income. We have proposed an audit adjustment to rectify this.
- 2.11 We recommend that income is allocated under the proper revenue accounts and not netted off against expense accounts.

3 Expenditure

Procurement procedures

- 3.1 Our testing on cheque payments revealed the below irregularities for the following listed purchases.

Supplier	Details	€	Note
[REDACTED]	Detailed survey	708.00	(a,c)
[REDACTED] Ltd	Civil Works at Tal-Warda Garden , Qrendi	4,480.46	(a,c)
[REDACTED] Ltd	Cat Traps/Cages	173.11	(a,c)
[REDACTED]	Supply of benches	1,977.58	(a,c)
[REDACTED]	Shuttle Service between Mqabba & Qrendi for 11-20/11/2020	600.00	(a,b)

(a) The council did not raise a purchase order.

(b) The council failed to obtain any quotation.

(c) The council only obtained one quotation.

3.2 In accordance with the Procurement Guidelines, 2017 issued by the Department for Local Government, the council should raise purchase orders for all purchases above €50. Furthermore the council should obtain at least three signed quotations for purchases exceeding €50 up to €5,000.

3.3 We would also like to remind the council that in accordance with the Procurement Guidelines 2017, councils are specifically required to make a public call for quotations for expenditure in the range of €5,000 to €10,000 and issue a call for tenders for expenditures above €10,000. We also draw your attention to section e.01 of the Local Councils (Financial) Procedures, 1996 which states that a similar purchase within four months is to be considered as one single purchase.

Reimbursement

3.4 The council is reimbursing €30 per month to an employee who provides repairs and maintenance services around the locality, to cover fuel costs incurred.

3.5 This contradicts the Local Council Procedures affirming that fuel expenses should be reimbursed on a mileage basis once being approved by the council in meetings.

Tendering procedures

3.6 Whilst performing our tests for the tendering procedures we noted that during the year the council made a payment of €12,000 to one of its suppliers which was not supported by a tender. Upon enquiry, the council informed us that this was a direct order for which an approval was not obtained from the Department for Local Government, yet the council still went on with the project.

3.7 We recommend that the council ensures that all requests for direct orders are duly approved by the Department for Local Government. Furthermore, the services should only commence once the approval from the Department is obtained.

3.8 We noted that in 2020 the council adjudicated the following tender:

Tender number	Description	Supplier
QLC-EPF 49/200	Tender for the embellishment of playing field at Gnien Dama Cecilia Pick (Gnien tal-warda) at Qrendi.	Road maintenance and services Ltd

Up to the date of the audit, the council did not sign the above agreement.

3.9 It is essential for the council to make sure that all contracts which are entered into are signed by all the necessary parties thus ensuring that the contract is binding for both parties to the agreement. It also ensures that each party is aware of its rights and obligations under the agreement.

3.10 During our tendering audit procedures we noted that the council failed to obtain a performance guarantee for the following tenders during the year under review:

Tender number	Description	Supplier
QLC-EPF 49/200	Tender for the embellishment of playing field at Gnien Dama Cecilia Pick (Gnien tal-warda) at Qrendi.	[REDACTED]
QLC-LC 49/19	Tender for the professional services of a legal consultant to the Qrendi local council.	[REDACTED]
QLC- CBRW 49/20	Tender for collection of bulky refuse and WEEE from the locality of Qrendi using low emission transport	[REDACTED]

3.11 Procurement Policy note 22 states that the council should obtain a performance guarantee of 4% for purchases with a value between €10,000 to €500,000 and a 10% guarantee for purchase above €500,000. Also the General Conditions for Service Contracts V.2.0 states that the performance bond should be submitted to the council within 15 days of receipt of the contract

Asset insurance

3.12 During our audit we identified the below discrepancies between the asset insurance cover and net book value of assets as per prior year audited financial statements:

Asset	Sum insured €	NBV in books of account €
Office and electric contents including furniture	19,600	-
Office furniture and fittings	-	4,451
Office equipment	-	672
Total	19,600	5,123

3.13 It is evident that some of the fixed assets are over/ under insured. May we advise the council to perform at least an annual review of its insurance policy in order to ensure that the council's insurance coverage is in line with current legislation.

3.14 Directive 3/2017 and Legal Notice 269 of 2017 state that the council must ensure that administrative offices, including all the furniture and office machinery are insured by a 'buildings and content' insurance. The insurance shall cover fire, theft and damage due to natural events. Circular 33/2016 also states that the insurance policy should be based on the net book value of assets included in the last audited financial statements. However, in view of the fact that a significant number of assets have a nil net book value, we recommend that the insurance at least covers the replacement value for assets.

Rent Expense

- 3.15 Whilst performing audit procedures we noted that the council recorded a rent expense amounting to €3,674 in the books of accounts. We noted that the council did not account this amount in accordance IFRS 16 'Leases'. The council also failed to provide us with an assessment of leases in line with this standard. However, given that the effect on the financial statements was not deemed to be material, no adjustments were proposed from our end.
- 3.16 We recommend that the council reviews all lease contracts in place and considers the impact of IFRS 16 'Leases' on the council's financial statements and adjust if the need arises.

4 Wages and salaries

Mayor's honorarium and councillor's allowances

- 4.1 Whilst reviewing the councillors' honoraria accounts, we noted that the council has treated the mayor's allowance as part of the mayor's honoraria. We have therefore proposed an audit reclassification to correct the misallocation.
- 4.2 We recommend that expenditure for the mayor's allowance and mayor's honoraria are distinguished from one another. This is in accordance with IAS 24 *Related Party Disclosure* which requires separate disclosure of the remuneration of key personnel.
- 4.3 Whilst reconciling the FSS tax declared in FS5 forms to that declared in the FS7 form of the council, we came across the following difference:

Description	Declared in FS5s €	Declared in FS7 €	Difference €
Gross Emoluments full-time	80,636.26	80,634.76	1.50
Gross Emoluments part-time	12,582.49	12,754.83	(172.34)
FSS part-time	1,888.00	1,914.00	(26.00)
Total	95,106.75	95,303.59	(196.84)

- 4.4 It is important that FSS forms are filled in properly to ensure that all amounts paid are correctly declared to the Commissioner for Revenue.
- 4.5 We have noted that the performance bonus relating to the year 2020 was not accounted for as an accrual and therefore we have proposed an adjustment to record the liability of €4,783.02.
- 4.6 We recommend that the council records expenditure when it is incurred such that expenses and liabilities are recorded in the correct financial year.
- 4.7 It was noted that the salary of the librarian was recorded in the books of account under the administrative expenses rather than employee emoluments. We have passed an audit reclassification of €2,052.25 to re-classify this balance.
- 4.8 In addition, the FS5 for the month of April 2020 was also recorded in the books of account as administrative expenses rather than employee emoluments. We have passed an audit reclassification of €1,793.92 to re-classify this balance.

- 4.9 We would like to remind to the council that correct classification is an integral part of the accounting system.
- 4.10 Moreover, a reclassification was passed in order to re-classify and adjust balances recorded in the accounts relating to wages and salaries into their appropriate accounts in a way that each nominal account total reconciles to the FSS documents submitted to the Commissioner for Revenue (CFR).
- 4.11 It is being recommended that expenditure for different personnel is reported separately. This is in accordance with IAS 24 *Related Party Disclosure* which requires separate disclosure of the remuneration of key personnel

5 Fixed assets

Classification of financial statements with fixed assets register

- 5.1 We identified differences between the net book value of certain asset categories in the fixed assets register and the net book value in financial statements. These are summarised below:

Asset category	NBV in unaudited financial statements	NBV in Fixed assets register	Difference
	€	€	€
Office equipment	369	296	73
	369	296	73

Fixed asset register

- 5.2 We noted that the council keeps a fixed asset register on Excel workbooks and not on the council's accounting software. Therefore, the depreciation is being calculated as well using Excel.
- 5.3 When reviewing the fixed asset register, we also noted that certain details like invoice numbers, location and suppliers' details are missing. For example:

Asset category	Asset code	Description	Net book value €
Construction	124	Resurfacing Works	33,182.63
Fixture and fittings	47	Office chairs	171.97
Urban improvements	189	Benches	778.97

- 5.4 We recommend that every possible effort should be made to complete the fixed asset register to include at least all of the following:

- Description of asset
- Date of purchase
- Supplier details
- Invoice number
- Asset tag code (where applicable)
- Cost
- Depreciation rate
- Location of the asset
- Grants received

5.5 An updated fixed asset register enables the council to exercise proper control over the council's property, plant and equipment. It provides a suitable inventory/checklist which may be used to determine whether assets previously purchased are still in existence or in use. We therefore recommend that the council's fixed asset register is updated henceforth with all relevant details.

Tagging of fixed assets

5.6 We also noted that the council's assets are not tagged (where applicable). This is in breach of the Local Councils (Financial) Procedures, 1996.

5.7 We recommend that the council tags its fixed assets, where applicable, as soon as possible. This would enable individual assets to be identified and their physical existence verified with the plant register.

Fixed asset additions

5.8 The council incurred amounts of €108,310.50 in relation to building costs of the new Local Council Premises. The above amounts has been expensed within tender for construction expense account. We have proposed an audit adjustment to capitalise this amount.

5.9 We recommend that the council assesses and establishes which of the expenses shall be capitalised in accordance with IAS 16 *Property, Plant and Equipment* and which should be expensed. IAS 16 specifies that items of property plant and equipment should initially be recorded as cost. Cost includes all necessary costs incurred to bring the asset to the working condition for its intended use. The total cost would include site preparation, delivery, handling and installation. This exercise will avoid the understatement of assets in the council's books.

6 Trade and other receivables





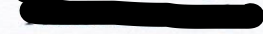


Confirmation of trade receivables

6.1 We have obtained a statement from Wasteserv Malta Ltd showing a balance of €9,601.66 due to the council. However, the council's books of account indicate a balance of €16,779.60. No adjustment was proposed since no reconciliation was provided from the council.

6.2 We recommend that, as with all debtors, regular reconciliations of amounts due are prepared to promptly highlight any differences. In view of the significance of the amounts involved we have to modify our audit report.

Long outstanding balances

6.3 Whilst reviewing receivables we noted the following overdue balances:

	€
	67.40
	46.58
	60.00
	30.00
	236.00
	2,423.72
	<u>2,863.70</u>

- 6.4 The council should regularly review overdue receivables for recoverability and, if so, chase these debtors by sending them reminders for the long overdue amounts. If recoverability of these debtors remains doubtful, the council should also consider making a provision for doubtful debts in the books of account after obtaining council approval in meeting.

Pre-regional LES debtors

- 6.5 During our review of pre-regional LES debtors, we noted that the tribunal pending payments in report 622 amounted to €80,112.66 which contrasts with the amount of €80,602.00 shown in the accounting records. We did not propose an audit adjustment to account for these LES debtors because it has no effect on the financial statements since LES debtors are carried at nil value following a provision for doubtful debts for the same amount.
- 6.6 The findings above cast doubts on the integrity of the data being generated from the Loqus IT system. Therefore, we recommend the council takes the matter up with Loqus to determine what this difference relates to.

Accrued income.

- 6.7 During our audit fieldwork we noted that an amount of €1,118.64 relating to organic waste collection for October was not accrued for. An audit adjustment was proposed to include this amount as accrued income for the year
- 6.8 We recommend that the council correctly accounts for accrued income.

7 Bank and cash

LC Other Entities Account

- 7.1 During the audit fieldwork it was noted that the council did not open a new bank account which is to be used for the deposits of funds and subsequent transfers of the amounts due to entities such as LESA and the Lands Department. Instead, the council continued to adopt the old system of depositing funds directly to the entities' bank accounts.
- 7.2 Even though the council receives limited transactions, we still recommend the council to open this account as instructed by Directive 05/2020.

Bank reconciliations

- 7.3 Whilst going through the bank statement after year end, we noted that cheque 4052, which was unreconciled as per the bank reconciliation provided at year end, was not cashed in the first weeks of 2021. The cheque amounted to €3,763.36. No adjustments were passed since no explanation was forthcoming.
- 7.4 Since the above cheques are long outstanding, we recommend that the amounts should be reversed from the bank balance and included with creditors or expenses so as to ensure that the bank balance in the accounts reflects the correct balance.
- 7.5 We recommend that the council pays more attention when preparing the bank reconciliations and ensures that all cheques which are issued are either encashed by the supplier or are included in the bank reconciliation, with any discrepancies reconciled immediately.

- 7.6 We were presented with bank reconciliations for bank accounts held by the council. The reconciliations for BOV account number 40012171589 did not agree by €56.32.
- 7.7 We recommend that the council completes the reconciliation and ensures that the end of year bank statements' figures agree to or reconcile to the bank balances in the trial balance and in the financial statements.
- 7.8 Furthermore we noted that the BOV savings accounts no 40022113663 and 40021950827 are subject to a 15% final withholding tax.
- 7.9 We recommend that the council instructs the bank not to withhold tax on interest since councils are exempt from income tax.

Petty cash reconciliation

- 7.10 During the cash count performed on 19 July 2021, we counted the cash balance and reconciled it back to 31 December 2020. A difference arose while comparing to the amount recorded in the books of account and the physical count thus revealing €16.99 less than the books.
- 7.11 Upon enquiry, the executive secretary was unable to provide us with a reasonable assurance for the discrepancy in cash.
- 7.12 We reiterate our recommendation that the council investigates any differences in its petty cash balance and passes appropriate adjustments in the books of account to agree to actual cash in hand. We also advise the council to reconcile petty cash on a monthly basis.

8 Trade and other payables

Payables' reconciliation

- 8.1 According to the council's creditors' list as at 31 December 2020, payables amount to €44,581.19. The balance disclosed in the trial balance as payables amount to €45,512.13, that is a difference of €930.94. The council explained to us that the difference arose due to a software error and that the amount in the books was correct. No list agreeing to trial balance was provided.
- 8.2 We recommend that the council reconciles the list to the trial balance on a regular basis, and any discrepancies are analysed to ensure correct accounting treatment.

Suppliers' statements

- 8.3 During the course of our audit we noted that the council did not obtain statements as at or near year-end from all suppliers to confirm the year-end balances and to ensure the completeness of the books of account. Circulars issued from time to time by the Department for Local Government specifically emphasise that the council should acquire monthly statements from all its suppliers.
- 8.4 We recommend that the council obtains monthly statements from all suppliers in order to ensure proper recording of creditors in the council's ledgers. This will highlight any discrepancies between amounts recorded in the ledger and amounts in suppliers' statements.

Confirmation of trade payables

- 8.5 We have obtained a statement from Wasteserv Malta Ltd showing a balance of €1,999.11 due to the council. However, the council's books of account indicate a balance of €1,527.60. The council did not provide any reconciliation for the difference.
- 8.6 It is of utmost importance that council reconciles creditors' balances on a regular basis, thus identifying and investigating any differences as soon as possible.

Long outstanding creditors.

- 8.7 The council's creditor list includes the following balances which have been outstanding for more than one year:

	€
[REDACTED]	900.00
[REDACTED]	236.00
[REDACTED]	2,619.12
[REDACTED]	21,000.47
	<u>24,755.59</u>

- 8.8 The council's other creditors also include the following balances which have been outstanding for more than one year:

Debit balance in creditors' list

- 8.9 The council's creditors' list includes an amount of €1,582.60 debit balance in the creditors' list. We have proposed an audit reclassification to reclassify the amount above to other debtors.

	€
[REDACTED]	55.00
[REDACTED]	1,527.60
	<u>1,582.60</u>

- 8.10 We reiterate our recommendation to separately disclose debit balances in the financial statements rather than set off against trade creditors. Furthermore the council should investigate why this creditor account is in debit.

Unrecorded liabilities

- 8.11 Whilst reviewing subsequent year end payments, it came to our attention that the council has omitted a balance with Arms Ltd amounting to €923 relating to water and electricity expenses incurred during the year under review, which were invoiced in the subsequent year. To this end, we have proposed an audit adjustment amounting to €923 to record the above amount against accruals. The council has amended the financial statements to include our audit adjustments.
- 8.12 We recommend that the council records expenditure when it is incurred such that expenses and liabilities are recorded in the correct financial year.

9 Financial statements
Presentation of financial statements

- 9.1 We would like to point out that in accordance with the Department's communications and instructions, councils shall prepare their financial statements in

conformity with International Financial Reporting Standards. The council's financial statements diverge from this requirement in the instances noted below:

- i. In the Statement of changes in equity the loss for the year 2020 does not agree to the profit as per Income Statement.
 - ii. In the Statement of cash flows net movement in cash and cash equivalents for 2019 does not cast.
- 9.2 We recommend that the council gives more attention to the preparation of the financial statements.

10 Council meetings

Schedules of payments

- 10.1 During audit fieldwork we noted various cheque numbers which were omitted from the schedules of payments. Further testing revealed that the omitted cheques were cancelled and/or erroneously not listed on the schedules. Examples include cheque numbers 4141, 4142, 4144, 4177, 4207, 4238, 4266, 4267, 4270, 4303, 4330, 4352, 4353, 4360, 4361, 4362, 4373.
- 10.2 In accordance with P1.11 of the Local Councils (Financial) Procedures, 1996 the executive secretary must prepare complete and accurate schedules of payments containing information in sequential order and present them for council's approval. We recommend that if a cheque payment is cancelled this should be approved and properly indicated on the schedule of payments. The cancelled cheques should be retained as evidence of their cancellation.
- 10.3 We also noted that some schedules of payments did not include bank transfer reference details and instead, the council only indicated that the payment was sent through a bank transfer.
- 10.4 Furthermore, the council, did not include details of the nominal account to which the expenses were allocated. We also noted that purchase orders were being entered into schedule of payments and then cancelled out on a later date. In some instances, invoices which were paid by the same cheque number were entered in a separate schedule of payments according to the invoice date rather than entered together according to the payment date.

11 Electronic website

- 11.1 During our audit fieldwork, we noted the following shortcomings in relation to the electronic site:
- i. Up to the date of the audit fieldwork the quarterly financial reports for periods January to September 2020 were not uploaded on website.
 - ii. Up to the date of the fieldwork, the business plan for the years 2020-2022 and the annual administrative report for the year 2019 were not uploaded to the website.
 - iii. The documents listed below were not uploaded on the website within the stipulated timeframe:
 - a. the quarterly financial report for the period to December 2020;
 - b. the annual budget 2020;
 - c. The financial statements for the year 2019;

- d. the management letter for 2019; and
- e. the reply to the management letter for the year 2019.

11.2 This contravenes the Local Councils (Financial) Procedures, 1996 which mandate specific timelines for these reports and minutes. We recommend the council uploads all documents in pdf within the required time. Furthermore, the council should indicate as signed all documents uploaded as confirmation that the uploaded documents have been approved and are the correct ones.

Uploading of management letter and other documents

- 11.3 During our audit fieldwork, we noted that the council has uploaded the 2019 Management Letter and reply in full in accordance with Circular 21 of 2019.
- 11.4 We would also like to remind the council of the recent General Data Protection Regulations as indicated to councils in SPI 7/2018. Councils should be mindful that there are restrictions on transmitting/ publishing information regarding personal data. Therefore, certain documents should be carefully scrutinised to ensure that they do not contravene GDPR prior to uploading on the website. This is also highlighted in Circular 7 of 2019 which states that names of third parties not directly connected with the operations of the council should not be published.
- 11.5 We therefore recommend that the council contacts the Department for clarification of this contradiction.

Conclusion

We would like to point out that the matters dealt with in this report came to our notice during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are primarily designed for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the financial statements of the council. In consequence our work did not encompass a detailed review of all aspects of the system and cannot be relied upon necessarily to disclose defalcation or other irregularities or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might develop.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Stephania Grixti and his staff for their co-operation and assistance during the course of the audit.

Yours faithfully,

