

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24







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1. Members of the Authority

The Authority is made up of 20 Members who are appointed in proportion to the number of local government electors in each authority area.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Slough Borough Council
Colin Dudley (To May 2023)	Robert Stedmond (From June 2023)
Tina McKenzie-Boyle	Ishrat Shah (From June 2023)
Tricia Brown	Dexter Smith (To May 2023)
Peter Frewer (from June 2023)	Sandra Malik (To May 2023)
	Haqeeq Dar
Reading Borough Council	The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Jo Lovelock (To May 2023)	David Cannon (To May 2023)
Wendy Griffith (from June 2023)	Christine Bateson (To May 2023)
Dave McElroy	Simon Werner
Paul Gittings	Helen Taylor (From June 2023)
	Joshua Reynolds (From June 2023)
West Berkshire District Council	Wokingham Borough Council
Jeff Brooks	Morag Malvern
Tony Linden (To May 2023)	Mike Smith
Dennis Benneyworth	Pauline Helliard-Symons
Owen Jeffery (From June 2023)	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
Biya Oloko (To May 2023)	
Billy Drummond (From June 2023)	

2. Officers of the Authority

Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive – Wayne Bowcock

Monitoring Officer - Graham Britten

Head of Finance and Procurement and Chief Finance Officer - Conor Byrne

3. Auditors

Grant Thornton UK LLP



4. Narrative Statement

4.1 The Authority

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is responsible for the provision of prevention, protection, and response services across the County. Cover is provided from 16 fire stations from Langley in the East to Lambourn in the West, serving a diverse cultural population of approximately 950,000, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Our highly-trained fire crews respond to incidents ranging from road and rail accidents to fuel and chemical spills, aviation and waterway accidents, collapsed buildings, large animal rescues and, of course, fires.

4.2 Strategic Commitments

The Authority has a set of Commitments that explain how we intend to achieve our purpose:

- **Prevention.** We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention education activities, ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- **Protection.** We will support those with responsibility for premises to understand their duties in ensuring the safety of all people using buildings covered by the Building Safety Act 2022 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, whilst ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- **Response.** We will ensure that our people are trained and resources are located to provide the most effective response and to have a positive impact on incidents in our communities.
- **Resilience.** We will ensure our resilience and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.
- **Sustainability.** We will ensure that we provide a financially sustainable and environmentally friendly service to our communities.
- **People.** We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.



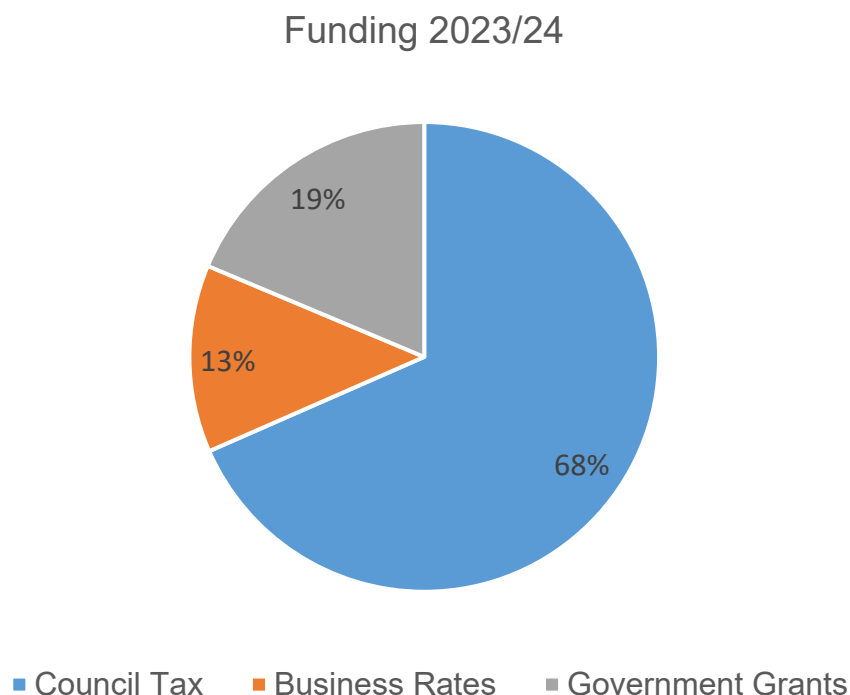
4.3 Operating Model

During 2023/24, the Authority employed a lean operating model which comprised a whole-time duty system establishment of 324 staff and an on-call duty system establishment of 65 staff. Maintaining sufficient minimum numbers of qualified firefighters during the year was challenging and required effective management of staff availability and the extensive use of pre-arranged overtime.

To relieve some of the pressure on the operating model, a buffer of up to ten additional firefighters will be introduced in 2024/25. In addition, the implementation of Priority 6 of the Corporate Risk Management Plan (to use on-call staff to crew the 14th appliance, where wholtime staff are not available). This, in turn, should lead to a reduction in overtime costs.

4.4 Funding

The 2023/24 Budget was set at £41.975 million. Funding came from three sources as shown below.





4.5 Revenue Spending

The 2023/24 Revenue Budget was set at £41.975m with income exceeding expenditure by £573,000 to replenish the Budget Contingency Reserve.

The revenue outturn for 2023/24 shows a surplus of £113,000. The main variances are explained below.

Employee Costs - Direct station salary costs were below budget due to reduced expenditure at on-call stations although this was partly offset by other employee costs, particularly training costs.

Repairs and Maintenance. Increased expenditure in this area relates to major repairs to the firehouse as well as key improvements to the working environment.

Rates. The Authority continued to challenge business rate charges on its stations during the year and was successful in several appeals leading to refunds.

Utilities – the cost of utilities has come down and this is reflected in a reduction in expenditure compared to budget.

Communication – the WAN (Wide Area Network) project, aimed at increasing the efficiency of the MS 365 environment, has been delayed which resulted in a short-term reduction in revenue costs. In addition, the charge for Firelink radios by the Home Office was lower than budgeted.

Interest receivable – Increases in interest rates resulted in additional investment income of £275,000 compared to the budget.

Revenue Funding of Capital - Delays in obtaining planning permission for the rebuild of the Training Centre resulted in reduced revenue funding of capital compared to the budget. The underspend of £335,000 has been used to fund an increase to the Authority's voluntary revenue provision to ensure that overall revenue resources devoted to funding capital expenditure remained in line with the budget.

Government Grants/Precepts. As part of budget setting, unitary authorities within Berkshire have to estimate income in relation to business rates relief payments. The actual amount due to the Authority is calculated at the end of the financial year and is £56,000 less than budget.

Revenue budgets and expenditure for 2023/24 are shown in the table below.



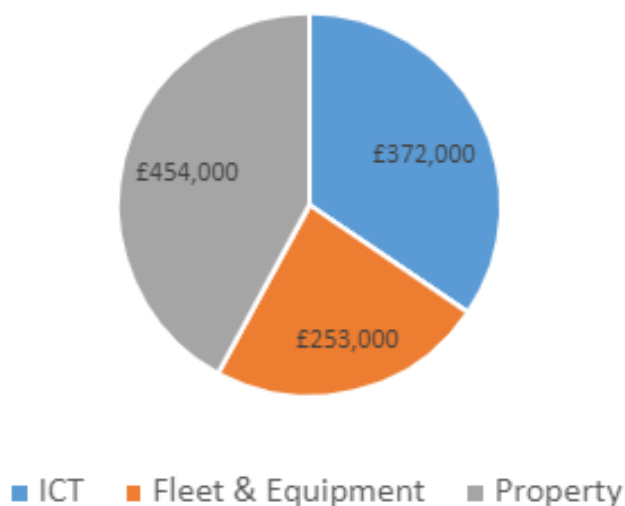
	Budget £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000
EMPLOYEES			
STATIONS	18,847	18,666	(181)
NON-STATIONS	12,563	12,629	66
TRAINING	539	661	122
OTHER	279	281	2
	32,228	32,237	9
PREMISES			
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	990	1,343	353
RATES	888	761	(127)
CLEANING	276	303	27
UTILITIES	880	821	(59)
	3,034	3,228	194
SUPPLIES			
INSURANCE	418	427	9
EQUIPMENT	569	603	34
IS EQUIPMENT & LICENCES	1,126	1,143	17
CLOTHING/PPE	367	386	19
COMMUNICATIONS	786	669	(117)
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH	263	230	(33)
PRINT/STATIONERY/PUBLICATIONS/SUBSCRIPTIONS	144	133	(11)
COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY SUPPLIES	133	86	(47)
SUPPLIES OTHER	212	226	14
	4,018	3,903	(115)
CONTRACTS			
CONTRIBUTION TO TVFCS & COLLABORATION	977	998	21
LEGAL	40	39	(1)
CONTRACTS OTHER (incl Professional Services)	1,201	1,219	18
	2,218	2,256	38
TRANSPORT			
VEHICLE RUNNING COSTS	821	823	2
TRAVEL	203	201	(2)
	1,024	1,024	0
PENSIONS			
PENSIONS	455	445	(10)
	455	445	(10)
INCOME			
GRANTS	(2,196)	(2,209)	(13)
RENTAL INCOME	(249)	(249)	0
TVFCS RECHARGE INCOME	(394)	(394)	0
INCOME OTHER	(784)	(781)	3
	(3,623)	(3,633)	(10)
NET COST OF SERVICES	39,354	39,460	106
DEBT CHARGES INTEREST	333	333	0
INVESTMENT INTEREST	(511)	(786)	(275)
REVENUE FUNDING OF CAPITAL	1,379	1,044	(335)
APPROPRIATION TO/(FROM) RESERVES	799	799	0
FINANCING COSTS	684	1,019	335
REVERSAL OF ACCRUED HOLIDAY PAY	(63)	(63)	0
NET EXPENDITURE	41,975	41,806	(169)
GOV GRANTS/PRECEPTS	(41,975)	(41,919)	56
(SURPLUS)/DEFICIT BEFORE USE OF RESERVES	0	(113)	(113)



4.6 Capital Programme

Capital expenditure in 2023/24 was £1.079 million.

Capital Expenditure 2023/24



Buildings

Major refurbishment of Slough fire station and rebuilding of the Training Centre at Whitley Wood Fire commenced in 2023/24 in line with the Authority's long-term capital plans.

IT

As well as the ongoing general hardware replacement programme, upgrades to the Control room were undertaken during 2023/24.

Vehicles and equipment

The Authority continues to make progress against its environmental sustainability objectives, with various hybrid and electric vehicles being added to the fleet.



4.7 Borrowing

All of the Fire Authority's loans are with the Public Works Loan Board and are used to fund capital expenditure. Total debt remained constant at £8.922 million during 2023/24.

4.8 Pension Fund

The negative net values of the Firefighter Pension Schemes reflect the unfunded liability facing the Authority (other fire authorities face similar liabilities). The Authority is not required to make any financial provision for these future commitments and there is no effect on Council Tax.

The Local Government Pension Scheme, for non-uniformed employees, is accounted for as a funded defined benefits scheme.

Overall, the total liabilities of the Authority's pension schemes have increased by 2% compared to a year ago. The net liabilities for the firefighter schemes have increased by 3% compared to a year ago, while the deficit on the Local Government Pension Scheme has decreased by 37%. The improved position for the Local Government Scheme is due to asset returns being higher than the discount rate assumed at the previous accounting date.

4.9 Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

The Authority publishes extensive performance and financial information on its website including transparency data on all spending over £500, a register of contracts and the pay of senior managers. This allows the public to see how well the Authority is performing and provides evidence of value for money. Members of the public can also request data from the Authority under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Authority has entered into several collaborative agreements with other Fire and Rescue services. Thames Valley Fire Control Service is a collaboration between the three Fire and Rescue Services in the Thames Valley to provide a joint control room to take emergency calls. This arrangement not only increases resilience but also saves the Authority significant sums of money over the life of the agreement. Similarly, the fleet maintenance partnership with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service continues to deliver benefits for both Services.

The Authority is a member of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Ltd (FRIC). The company commenced trading in November 2015. The Authority's risk protection arrangements are provided through the pooled funds of the company, backed up by reinsurance for large losses. The aims of the Company are twofold: to reduce risk to



the Member Authorities by adopting best practice, e.g. in relation to driving standards, and also to reduce the cost of risk protection arrangements over the longer-term. Since its establishment, FRIC has accumulated surpluses of over £3.1 million. In 2023/24 the FRIC Board decided to distribute £200,000 of reserves to Members.

4.10 HMICFRS

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) confirmed in its report issued in January 2023 that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is performing to a high standard, receiving three 'good' judgements across the three areas (effectiveness, efficiency and people) inspected.

Commenting on RBFRS's efficiency, the Report states, "We are pleased to see that the Service has identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public or generate further savings. The Service met its previous efficiency plan and saved £2.4m by 2022."

Given the economic volatility over the past year, it is pleasing that the report also notes that, "The service has good financial management arrangements in place and a range of assurance measures to keep control of its spending. Scenario planning is used effectively so that strategic plans are robust."

The next inspection will take place during 2024/25.

4.11 Reserves

The effect of unbudgeted pay awards and other inflationary cost pressures resulted in a budget deficit of £733,000 for 2022/23 which was funded from the Budget Contingency Reserve. The 2023/24 Budget included provision to replenish this Reserve by £573,000, to secure the Authority's financial standing in the medium term. In addition, the small Revenue Account surplus of £113,000 in 2023/24 has been added to Budget Contingency Reserve.

Total earmarked reserves totalled £7.7 million at 31 March 2024, an increase of £912,000.

4.12 Going Concern Review

The concept of going concern assumes that an authority's functions and services will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The provisions in the Code in respect of going concern reporting requirements reflect the economic and



statutory environment in which authorities operate. These provisions confirm that authorities cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription. If an authority were in financial difficulty, alternative arrangements might be made by central Government either for the continuation of the services it provides or for assistance with the recovery of a deficit over more than one financial year. As a result of this, it would not therefore be appropriate for the Authority's financial statements to be provided on anything other than a going concern basis of accounting.

The Authority is required to set a balanced budget, and the budget setting process in future financial years will face a number of uncertainties due to the impact of Government funding, pay and price inflation and wider cost pressures. Since 2010, as part of its efforts to reduce the size of the national budget deficit, the Government has made significant reductions to its funding for fire and rescue services. The Authority's ability to offset reductions to Government funding and mitigate the impact of the cost pressures described has also been constrained by the imposition of Council tax referendum limits, which have previously restricted the ability to influence and increase funding streams. For 2022/23 and 2023/24 the Government gave the Authority the flexibility to increase its band D precept by £5 without the need to hold a referendum. This increase in funding addressed immediate pressures and set an increased income baseline for future years.

To manage the expenditure side of the budget, the Authority continues to monitor key supply chains and chooses the most appropriate routes to market for its procurements to ensure value for money. The Authority completes regular financial checks on its suppliers to ensure their ability to provide the required goods or services.

The cashflow position of the Authority is monitored daily, focusing on maintaining the availability of cash on a short-term / immediate basis. This is to ensure that the Authority can proactively manage any unforeseen events and maintain payments to staff and suppliers to protect services.

The Authority delivers services which are essential to the communities it serves and those essential services will continue to be delivered. However, given the uncertain economic and political backdrop, the Authority continues to model various scenarios as part of its budget setting process as well as assessing the wider impact to ensure the budget balances over the medium-term without recourse to reserves.

The Authority thereby concludes that it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis and that the Authority's functions and services will continue in operational existence for the next 12 months, from the date of the audit report. This is based on the Authority's ability to set a balanced budget and the cashflow forecasting position.



4.13 Looking to the Future

At the time of setting the 2024/25 Budget the Authority did not face any immediate funding issues due to Government support in the form of additional grants and a funding guarantee. However, the 2024/25 Budget assumes a pay award of 3.75% for all staff so any settlements above this amount will put pressure on the budget.

Looking further ahead, the funding position for 2025/26 and beyond is uncertain due to the imminent general election and the impact that this could have on Government support for the sector. Despite this, the Authority is confident that over the period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan it will deliver its Corporate Risk Management Plan, its Strategic Asset Investment Plan and its Efficiency and Productivity Plan, which for 2024/25 includes efficiencies totalling £565,000.

4.14 The Accounts

The Accounting Statements which follow form the Authority's Statutory Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The accounts are drawn up in accordance with the accounting policies that are set out in detail in section 8.2.

A description of the core financial statements is given below:

- Movement in Reserves Statement

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority, analysed into usable reserves (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and unusable reserves. The Movement in Reserves Statement shows how the movements in year of the Authority's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax for the year.

The net increase/decrease line shows the statutory General Fund balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and the Movement in Reserves Statement.



- Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value at the Balance Sheet date of assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves is usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example capital receipts may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt). The second category of reserves is those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve) where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets were sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

- Cash Flow Statement

This statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Authority. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Authority's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Authority.

Conor Byrne - Head of Finance and Procurement



5. Statement of Responsibilities

The Fire Authority is required:

- to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to ensure that one of its officers (for the Fire Authority, that officer is the Head of Finance and Procurement) has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs;
- to manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets;
- to approve the Statement of Accounts.

The Responsibilities of the Head of Finance and Procurement:

The Head of Finance and Procurement is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's Statement of 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").

In preparing this statement of accounts, the Head of Finance and Procurement has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- complied with the local authority code.

The Head of Finance and Procurement has also:

- kept proper accounting records which are up to date;
- taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Certificate of Head of Finance and Procurement

I certify that the statement of accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority for the financial year 2023/24 and was prepared in accordance with the accounting policies in section 8.2.

Conor Byrne

Head of Finance and Procurement

30 January 2025



6. Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Disclaimer of opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (the 'Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2024, which comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies and the firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Fund Account and the Net Assets Statement and notes to the financial statements. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24.

We do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements of the Authority. Because of the significance of the matters described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 ('the Regulations') require the Authority to publish audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 by 28 February 2025 ('the backstop date'). The backstop date has been put in law with the purpose of clearing the backlog of historical financial statements.

As a result of the limitations imposed by the previous backstop date, 13 December 2024, we were unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence that the corresponding figures included in the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 were free from material misstatement.

We were therefore unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence over the corresponding figures or whether there was any consequential effect on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024 for the same reason.

As a result of the limitations imposed by the backstop date, we have been unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence over the Authority's opening balances reported in the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Consequently, we have been unable to satisfy ourselves over the in-year movements in the net pension liability and property, plant and equipment and this has resulted in uncertainty over the closing balance of property, plant and equipment of £64,542,000 as at 31 March 2024. Similarly, we have not been able to obtain assurance over the Authority's closing reserves balance of £207,994,000 as at 31 March 2024, also due to the uncertainty over their opening amount.

In addition, we were unable to confirm the accuracy of the valuation calculations for property, plant and equipment or obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to conclude whether the basis of the valuations, at 31 March 2024, were reasonable.



This was due to the assumptions used in the calculation of the valuation regarding the size of the properties not being accurately supported by information held by the Authority.

We have concluded that the possible effects of these matters on the financial statements could be both material and pervasive. We have therefore issued a disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements. This enables the Authority to comply with the requirement of the Regulations to publish the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 by the 28 February 2025 backstop date.

Other information we are required to report on by exception under the Code of Audit Practice

Because of the significance of the matters described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have been unable to consider whether the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with 'delivering good governance in Local Government Framework 2016 Edition' published by CIPFA and SOLACE or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit. We are not required to consider whether the Annual Governance Statement addresses all risks and controls or that risks are satisfactorily addressed by internal controls.

Opinion on other matters required by the Code of Audit Practice

The Head of Finance and Procurement Services is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts, other than the Authority's financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Because of the significance of the matters described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have been unable to form an opinion, whether based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit of the financial statements and our knowledge of the Authority gained through our work in relation to the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, whether the other information published together with the financial statements in the Statement of Accounts for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Under the Code of Audit Practice, we are required to report to you if:

we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or

we make a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or

we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or;

we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or



we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matters.

Responsibilities of the Authority and the Head of Finance and Procurement Services

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Authority is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this authority, that officer is the Head of Finance and Procurement Services. The Head of Finance and Procurement Services is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Head of Finance and Procurement Services determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Head of Finance and Procurement Services is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless they have been informed by the relevant national body of the intention to dissolve the Authority without the transfer of its services to another public sector entity.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report. However, because of the matters described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on those financial statements.

We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that material misstatements in the financial statements may not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with the ISAs (UK).

The audit was defective in its ability to detect irregularities, including fraud, on the basis that we were unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence due to the matters described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report.



Report on other legal and regulatory requirements – the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Matter on which we are required to report by exception – the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Under the Code of Audit Practice, we are required to report to you if, in our opinion, we have not been able to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matter.

Responsibilities of the Authority

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Auditor's responsibilities for the review of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to be satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

We undertake our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2024. This guidance sets out the arrangements that fall within the scope of 'proper arrangements'. When reporting on these arrangements, the Code of Audit Practice requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under three specified reporting criteria:

- Financial sustainability: how the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance: how the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

We document our understanding of the arrangements the Authority has in place for each of these three specified reporting criteria, gathering sufficient evidence to support our risk assessment and commentary in our Auditor's Annual Report. In undertaking our work, we consider whether there is evidence to suggest that there are significant weaknesses in arrangements.



Report on other legal and regulatory requirements – Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the year ended 31 March 2024 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice until, the National Audit Office has concluded their work in respect WGA for the year ended 31 March 2024. We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 85 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Grace Hawkins, Key Audit Partner

for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Local Auditor

Bristol

14 February 2025



7. Core Financial Statements

7.1 Movement in Reserves Statement

Movement in 2023/24

	Notes	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves	Total Authority Reserves
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance as at 1 April 2023		2,267	6,803	6,138	0	15,208	(216,896)	(201,688)
Movement in Reserves during 2023/24								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	7.2	(4,256)	0	0	0	(4,256)	(2,050)	(6,306)
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	8.3	5,168	0	110	0	5,278	(5,278)	0
Net Increase / (Decrease) before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves		912	0	110	0	1,022	(7,328)	(6,306)
Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves	8.4	(912)	912	0	0	0	0	0
Increase / (Decrease) in the year		0	912	110	0	1,022	(7,328)	(6,306)
Balance as at 31 March 2024		2,267	7,715	6,248	0	16,230	(224,224)	(207,994)



Movement in 2022/23

	Notes	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves	Total Authority Reserves
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance as at 1 April 2022		2,267	8,599	0	10,866	(363,443)	(352,577)
Movement in Reserves during 2022/23							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	7.2	(8,408)	0	0	(8,408)	159,297	150,889
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	8.3	6,612	0	6,138	12,750	(12,750)	0
Net Increase / (Decrease) before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves		(1,796)	0	6,138	4,342	146,547	150,889
Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves	8.4	1,796	(1,796)	0	0	0	0
Increase / (Decrease) in the year		(0)	(1,796)	6,138	4,342	146,547	150,889
Balance as at 31 March 2023		2,267	6,803	6,138	15,208	(216,896)	(201,688)



7.2 Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

2022/23					2023/24		
Gross Expenditure £000	Gross Income £000	Net Expenditure £000		Notes	Gross Expenditure £000	Gross Income £000	Net Expenditure £000
37,800	0	37,800	Employees		32,480	0	32,480
3,606	0	3,606	Premises		5,406	0	5,406
4,254	0	4,254	Supplies		4,220	0	4,220
883	0	883	Contracts		1,261	0	1,261
1,012	0	1,012	Transport		1,027	0	1,027
0	(4,872)	(4,872)	Income		0	(4,943)	(4,943)
47,555	(4,872)	42,683	Net Cost of Services	8.1	44,394	(4,943)	39,451
		(30)	Other operating expenditure	8.7			(138)
		10,834	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	8.8			12,595
		(45,079)	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	8.9			(47,652)
		8,408	(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services	8.6			4,256
		(2,885)	(Surplus) or deficit on revaluation of Property, Plant and Equipment assets	8.31 i			2,055
		(156,412)	Actuarial (gains) / losses on pension assets / liabilities	8.31 iii			(5)
		(159,297)	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				2,050
		(150,889)	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				6,306



7.3 Balance Sheet

2022/23 £000		Notes	2023/24 £000
67,635	Property, Plant & Equipment	8.16	64,542
1,100	Investment Property	8.17	995
146	Intangible Assets	8.18	84
294	Long Term Investments	8.21	364
69,175	Long Term Assets		65,985
6,408	Short Term Investments	8.21	4,222
69	Inventories	8.23	51
8,518	Short Term Debtors	8.24	6,694
4,967	Cash and Cash Equivalents	8.25	10,662
19,962	Current Assets		21,629
(6,218)	Short Term Creditors	8.26	(5,891)
(267)	Short Term Provisions - holiday pay	8.31 v	(331)
(648)	Short Term Provisions	8.27	(513)
(7,133)	Current Liabilities		(6,735)
(8,922)	Long Term Borrowing	8.21	(8,922)
(274,770)	Pension Liability	8.29 iii	(279,951)
(283,692)	Long Term Liabilities		(288,873)
(201,688)	Net Assets (Liabilities)		(207,994)
15,208	Usable Reserves	8.30	16,230
(216,896)	Unusable Reserves	8.31	(224,224)
(201,688)	Total Reserves		(207,994)

These financial statements replace the unaudited financial statements and were authorised for issue on 30 January 2025.



7.4 Cash Flow Statement

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
(8,408)	Net deficit on the provision of services	(4,256)
16,305	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	9,067
(6,124)	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	(182)
1,773	Net cashflows from operating activities	4,629
918	Investing activities	1,066
(2,000)	Financing activities	0
691	Net increase or decrease in cash and cash equivalents	5,695
4,276	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	4,967
4,967	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	10,662



8. Notes to Core Financial Statements

8.1 Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The objective of the Expenditure and Funding Analysis is to demonstrate to council taxpayers how the funding available to the Authority (i.e. government grants, council tax and business rates) for the year has been used in providing services in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Authority in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Authority's reporting areas in the cost of services. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Net expenditure chargeable to the General Fund also includes the total costs of running Thames Valley Fire Control Service and the total revenue from cost sharing to the participating Authorities, as opposed to the Authority's share of the running cost which is shown in the Revenue Spending in Section 4.5.



2022/23				2023/24		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £000		Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £000
32,662	5,138	37,800	Employees	34,231	(1,751)	32,480
2,429	1,177	3,606	Premises	3,228	2,178	5,406
4,254	0	4,254	Supplies	4,220	0	4,220
883	0	883	Contracts	1,261	0	1,261
1,012	0	1,012	Transport	1,026	1	1,027
461	(461)	0	Pensions	445	(445)	0
(4,882)	10	(4,872)	Income	(4,950)	7	(4,943)
36,819	5,864	42,683	Net Cost of Services	39,461	(10)	39,451
(35,023)	748	(34,275)	Other Income and Expenditure	(40,373)	5,178	(35,195)
1,796	6,612	8,408	(Surplus) or Deficit	(912)	5,168	4,256
(10,866)			Opening General Fund Balance including Earmarked Reserves	(9,070)		
1,796			Less/Plus (Surplus) / Deficit on General Fund in Year	(912)		
(9,070)			Closing General Fund Balance including Earmarked Reserves at 31 March	(9,982)		



8.2 Accounting Policies

i. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2024. The Authority is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts, in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices under Section 21 of the 2003 Act primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) and statutory guidance issued under Section 12 of the 2003 Act.

The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.

ii. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations of the contract.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.
- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue in financing and investment income and expenditure for the income that might not be collected.



The only exceptions to the above are that:

- Salaries and wages are paid in arrears, and amounts charged correspond to the income tax year.
- Amounts charged on monthly procurement card statements run from March to February rather than April to March in the Accounts.

The effects of these policies are not considered to be material, as they are applied consistently each year.

iii. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents for the Authority equate to monies held in the Authority's current account and linked savings account. Monies held in these accounts can be withdrawn without notice and are used for the day-to-day running of the Authority.

The Authority also holds monies in fixed term deposits and notice accounts. These deposits are treated as short-term investments as the Authority does not use these balances on a day-to-day basis.

iv. Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors

Prior-period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior-period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or where the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Authority's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

v. Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding assets during the year:



- depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service;
- revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off;
- amortisation of intangible assets attributable to the service.

The Authority is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisations. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue (minimum revenue provision) towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Authority in accordance with statutory guidance. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisations are therefore replaced by a contribution from the General Fund Balance by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

vi. Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits (e.g. cars) for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Authority. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave, e.g. time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year-end which employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement to the accumulated absences account so that holiday benefits are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits and are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service or, where applicable, to a corporate service segment at the earlier of when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Authority recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in



Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

Post-Employment Benefits

Pension costs have been provided for in accordance with relevant Government regulations and in accordance with IAS 19 Employee Benefits.

IAS 19 is based on the principle that an organisation should account for retirement benefits when it is committed to give them, even if the actual giving will be many years into the future. Inclusion of the attributable share of the fund assets and liabilities does not mean that legal title or obligation has passed from the trustees to the employer. Instead it represents the employer's commitment to increase contributions to make up any shortfall in attributable net assets, or its ability to benefit (via reduced contributions) from a surplus in the scheme.

The Authority participates in five pension schemes, which provide members with defined benefits relating to pay and service.

- **Uniformed Firefighters**

There are four firefighter pension schemes: 1992 Pension Scheme, 2006 Pension Scheme, 2015 Pension Scheme and the Modified Pension Scheme. All are unfunded defined benefit schemes.

Central Government requires fire authorities to keep a separate Pensions Account from which pensions will be paid. On the income side, employer and employee contributions are paid into the account. Transfer values for firefighters that transfer into and out of the scheme are also posted to the account. If the account is in deficit at the end of the financial year, the Government will provide a top-up grant to bring the account into balance.

The pension costs have been assessed in accordance with the advice of a professionally qualified actuary. The latest formal valuation used data as at 31 December 2023.

- **The Local Government Pension Scheme**

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme.

The liabilities of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc.,



and projections of earnings for current employees. Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices.

The assets of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value.

The latest formal valuation was as at 31 March 2022.

Measurement of the Net Liabilities of the Pension Schemes

The change in the net pension liability is analysed into the following components:

1. Service cost comprising:
 - current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked;
 - past service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.
 - Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) – this is the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time.
2. Remeasurements comprising:
 - the return on plan assets – excluding amounts in net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) - charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure;
 - actuarial gains and losses - changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
 - contributions paid to the pension fund - cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

Cost of Retirement Benefits in Relation to the General Fund

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension funds or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for



the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits earned by employees.

Discretionary Benefits

The Authority also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

vii. Events after the Balance Sheet date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the balance sheet date and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

- those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events;
- those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of event would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

viii. Financial Instruments

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value and are carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments over the life of the instrument to the amount at which it was originally recognised.

For most of the borrowings that the Authority has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest); and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.



Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cashflow characteristics. There are three main classes of financial assets measured at:

- Amortised cost
- Fair value through profit or loss (FVPL), and
- Fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)

The Authority's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows. Financial assets are therefore classified as amortised cost.

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument.

Where assets are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the contract will not be made, the asset is written down and a charge made to the relevant service (for receivables specific to that service) or the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The impairment loss is measured as the difference between the carrying amount and the present value of the revised future cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of an asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where fair value cannot be measured reliably, the instrument is carried at cost (less any impairment losses).

ix. Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants and third party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Authority when there is reasonable assurance that:



- the Authority will comply with the conditions attached to the payments, and
- the grants or contributions will be received.

Amounts recognised as due to the Authority are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset in the form of the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as either creditors (revenue grants) or capital receipts in advance (capital grants). When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific grant income and expenditure (non-ringfenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where capital grants are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

x. Intangible Assets

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Authority as a result of past events (eg software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Authority.

Internally generated assets are capitalised where it is demonstrable that the project is technically feasible and is intended to be completed (with adequate resources being available) and the Authority will be able to generate future economic benefits or deliver service potential by being able to sell or use the asset. Expenditure is capitalised where it can be measured reliably as attributable to the asset and is restricted to that incurred during the development phase (research expenditure cannot be capitalised).

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Authority can be determined by reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Authority meets this criterion and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line(s) in



the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired – any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

xi. Interests in Companies and Other Entities

The Authority is a member of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC) but does not exercise direct control over the company, given that there are 13 other member authorities.

xii. Inventories

Inventories are reflected in the Balance Sheet at average historical cost. This is not consistent with IAS 2, which requires inventories to be valued at the lower of cost or net realisable value. However, it is felt that the treatment as set out in IAS2 is not appropriate for the specific items being held. Certain immaterial inventories are treated as current expenditure and charged directly to revenue.

xiii. Investment Property

Investment properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation. The definition is not met if the property is used in any way to facilitate the delivery of services or is held for sale.

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, which is the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. As a non-financial asset, investment properties are measured at highest and best use. Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions at the year-end. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income line and result in a gain for the General Fund Balance. However, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in



Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

xiv. Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification.

Arrangements that do not have the legal status of a lease but convey a right to use an asset in return for payment are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets.

The Authority as Lessee

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefiting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment. Charges are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a rent-free period at the commencement of the lease).

The Authority as Lessor

Where the Authority grants an operating lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease). Initial direct costs incurred in negotiating and arranging the lease are added to the carrying amount of the relevant asset and charged as an expense over the lease term on the same basis as rental income.

xv. Property, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the supply of services, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as Property, Plant and Equipment.

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits



or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

The Authority's de-minimis level for capital expenditure is £7,000, apart from vehicles which are always treated as a capital purchase and bulk purchases of equipment where the overall expenditure is significant.

Measurement

An asset is initially measured at cost, comprising:

- the purchase price;
- any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management; and
- the initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

The cost of an asset acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its fair value, unless the acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the Authority). In the latter case, where an asset is acquired via an exchange, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying amount of the assets given up by the Authority.

Assets are then carried on the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:

- non-property assets and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost
- all other assets – fair value

Where there is no market-based evidence of fair value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost (DRC) is used as an estimate of current value. A full revaluation of all freehold properties excluding those classified as investment properties was completed on this basis as at 31 March 2023.

Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for as follows:



- where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains);
- where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account.

Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year-end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for as follows:

- where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains); and
- where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all Property, Plant and Equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives. Exceptions are made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction).

Deprecation is calculated on the following bases:



- Buildings – straight-line allocation over the useful life of the property as estimated by the valuer;
- Vehicles – reducing balance over the life of the asset:
- Donated assets – straight line over the remaining useful life; and
- Plant & Equipment – straight-line over the life of the asset.

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current value depreciation charged on assets and the depreciation that would have been chargeable based on their historical cost being transferred each year from the Revaluation Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Component accounting

Components of Property, Plant & Equipment are not shown separately on the Assets Register if the value of the component is less than £100,000. Furthermore, components with a value of at least £100,000 are only shown separately on the Assets Register where the value of the component is at least 20 per cent of the value of the remainder of the asset and where there is a material effect on depreciation.

Disposals and Assets Held for Sale

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previous losses recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

If assets no longer meet the criteria to be classified as Assets Held for Sale, they are reclassified back to non-current assets and valued at the lower of their carrying amount before they were classified as held for sale; adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had they not been classified as held for sale, and their recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell.

Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as Assets Held for Sale.

When an asset is disposed of or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income



and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts received for disposals in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. The balance of receipts is required to be credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve and can then only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the Authority's underlying need to borrow. Receipts are appropriated to the Reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of property, plant and equipment is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

xvi. Fair Value Measurement of non-financial assets

The Authority measures some of its non-financial assets such as surplus assets and investment properties and some of its provisions at fair value at each reporting date. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurement assumes that the transaction to sell the asset or transfer the liability takes place either:

- a) in the principal market for the asset or liability, or
- b) in the absence of a principal market, in the most advantageous market for the asset or liability.

The Authority measures the fair value of an asset or liability using the assumptions that the market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability, assuming that market participants act in their economic best interest.

When measuring fair value of a non-financial asset, the Authority takes into account a market participant's ability to generate economic benefits by using the asset in its highest and best use or by selling it to another market participant that would use the asset in its highest and best use.

The Authority uses valuation techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available, maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

Inputs to the valuation techniques in respect of assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the Authority's financial statements are categorised within the fair value hierarchy, as follows:



- Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the Authority can access at the measurement date;
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly; and
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

xvii. Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets

Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place on or before the Balance Sheet date:

- that gives the Authority a present obligation;
- that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential; and
- where a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation.

If it is not clear whether an event has taken place on or before the Balance Sheet date, it is deemed to give rise to a present obligation if, taking account of all available evidence, it is more likely than not that a present obligation exists at the Balance Sheet date. The present obligation can be legal or constructive.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the Authority becomes aware of the obligation, and are measured at the best estimate at the Balance Sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year – where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the Authority settles the obligation.

Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible obligation, the existence of which will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.



Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

Contingent Assets

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a probable asset, the existence of which will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority. Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits or service potential.

xviii. Reserves

The Authority sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by transferring amounts out of the General Fund Balance. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then transferred back into the General Fund Balance so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments, retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Authority – these reserves are explained in the relevant notes.

xix. Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset is charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Where the Authority has decided to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or by borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves Statement from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account reverses out the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the level of council tax.

xx. VAT

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from HMRC. VAT receivable is excluded from income.



xxi. Joint Operation

Joint operations are arrangements where the parties that have joint control of the arrangement have rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities relating to the arrangement. The activities undertaken by the authority in conjunction with other joint operators involve the use of the assets and resources of those joint operators. In relation to its interest in a joint operation, the authority as a joint operator recognises:

- its assets, including its share of any assets held jointly
- its liabilities, including its share of any liabilities incurred jointly
- its revenue from the sale of its share of the output arising from the joint operation
- its share of the revenue from the sale of the output by the joint operation
- its expenses, including its share of any expenses incurred jointly.



8.3 Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations

This note details the adjustments that are required by statutory regulations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

	General Fund Balance	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Movement in Unusable Reserves
2023/24	£000	£000	£000	£000
Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement				
Charges for depreciation and impairment and valuation losses of non-current assets	2,103			(2,103)
Movements in the fair value of Investment Properties	105			(105)
Amortisation of intangible assets	74			(74)
Amounts of non current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	7	(35)		28
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement				
Statutory Provision for the repayment of debt - (MRP & VRP)	(1,019)			1,019
Revenue contribution to finance capital	(1,044)			1,044
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:				
Transfer of proceeds from sale of assets to Capital Receipts Reserve	(139)	139		0
Release from Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve		6		(6)

Continued overleaf.



Continued from previous page	General Fund Balance	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Movement in Unusable Reserves
2023/24	£000	£000	£000	£000
Receipt of Capital Grant	(35)		35	
Release of Capital Grant received			(35)	35
Adjustments primarily involving the Pension Reserve:				
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the CIES	16,788			(16,788)
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(6,036)			6,036
Gain in relation to government grant payable to the Pension Fund on the Authority's behalf	(5,565)			5,565
Adjustments primarily involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:				
Amount by which CT and NNDR income credited to the CIES is different from statutory requirements	(134)			134
Adjustments primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account:				
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	63			(63)
Total Adjustments	5,168	110	0	(5,278)



2022/23	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Movement in Unusable Reserves £000
Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement			
Charges for depreciation and impairment and valuation losses of non-current assets	1,103		(1,103)
Movements in the fair value of Investment Properties	(55)		55
Amortisation of intangible assets	74		(74)
Adjustment to carrying value of Assets for Resale			0
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	6,101		(6,101)
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement			
Statutory Provision for the repayment of debt - (MRP & VRP)	(701)		701
Revenue contribution to finance capital	(1,670)		1,670
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:			
Transfer of proceeds from sale of assets to Capital Receipts Reserve	(6,131)	6,131	
Transfer of proceeds from sale of assets to CIES			
Release from Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve		7	(7)
Adjustments primarily involving the Pension Reserve:			
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the CIES	21,261		(21,261)
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(5,731)		5,731
Provision for employer's contributions	(5)		5
Gain in relation to government grant payable to the Pension Fund on the Authority's behalf	(6,331)		6,331
Adjustments primarily involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:			
Amount by which CT and NNDR income credited to the CIES is different from statutory requirements	(1,281)		1,281
Adjustments primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account:			
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(22)		22
Total Adjustments	6,612	6,138	(12,750)



8.4 Earmarked Reserves

This note sets out the amounts set aside from the General Fund in earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans and the amounts posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund expenditure in 2023/24.

	Balance at 1 April 2023 £000	Net transfers In / (Out) £000	Balance at 31 March 2024 £000	Purpose
Budget Carry Forward Reserve	596	196	792	To roll forward specific budget lines where commitments have been made but expenditure has not yet been incurred by the close of the financial year
Detectors Reserve	62	9	71	To provide on-going support to the Fire Prevention Programme
TVFCS Renewals Fund	617	(32)	585	To replace IT assets
Grants Received in Advance	899	65	964	The unspent balance of grants
COVID-19	12	(12)	0	Funding received to help meet additional costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic
Vacancy Reserve	65		65	To offset fluctuations in employee numbers
Budget Contingency Reserve	456	686	1,142	To offset future cuts in Government funding. Replenished this year after being used in 22.23
Transition Fund	901		901	To support new ways of working
Development Fund	3,195		3,195	To fund capital projects
Total	6,803	912	7,715	



Comparative movement in 2022/23

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £000	Net transfers In / (Out) £000	Balance at 31 March 2023 £000	Purpose
Budget Carry Forward Reserve	536	60	596	To roll forward specific budget lines where commitments have been made but expenditure has not yet been incurred by the close of the financial year
Detectors Reserve	62		62	To provide on-going support to the Fire Prevention Programme
TVFCS Renewals Fund	637	(20)	617	To replace IT assets
Grants Received in Advance	980	(81)	899	The unspent balance of grants
COVID-19	79	(67)	12	Funding received to help meet additional costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic
Section 31 Grants to offset business rate relief	955	(955)	0	To offset COVID-19 related deficits on the collection fund
Vacancy Reserve	65		65	To offset fluctuations in employee numbers
Budget Contingency Reserve	1,189	(733)	456	To offset future cuts in Government funding
Transition Fund	901		901	To support new ways of working
Development Fund	3,195		3,195	To fund capital projects
Total	8,599	(1,796)	6,803	



8.5 Note to the Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This note provides a reconciliation of the main adjustments to Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balance to arrive at the amounts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The relevant transfers between reserves are explained in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis 2023/24

Adjustments to General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statements amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for Pension Adjustments	Other Differences	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Employees		(1,752)	1	(1,751)
Premises	2,178			2,178
Supplies				0
Contracts				0
Transport			1	1
Pensions		(445)		(445)
Income			7	7
Net Cost of Services	2,178	(2,197)	9	(10)
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	(2,132)	7,384	(74)	5,178
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	46	5,187	(65)	5,168



Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis 2022/23

Adjustments to General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statements amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for Pension Adjustments	Other Differences	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Employees		5,138		5,138
Premises	1,177			1,177
Supplies				0
Contracts				0
Transport				0
Pensions		(461)		(461)
Income			10	10
Net Cost of Services	1,177	4,677	10	5,864
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	(2,456)	4,516	(1,312)	748
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(1,279)	9,193	(1,302)	6,612



Adjustment for Capital Purposes

Adjustments for capital purposes – this column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the service line, and for:

Other operating expenditure – adjusts for capital disposals with transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those assets.

Financing and investment income and expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing i.e. Minimum Revenue Provision and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.

Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure – capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. Revenue grants are adjusted from those receivable in the year to those receivable without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied through the year. The Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied in the year.

Net Change for Pension Adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

For services - this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.

For Financing and investment income and expenditure - the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

Other Differences

Other differences between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

For Financing and investment income and expenditure - the other differences column recognises adjustments to the General Fund for the timing differences for premiums and discounts.

The charge under Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure – represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for council tax and NNDR that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under



generally accepted accounting practices in the Code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future surpluses or deficits on the Collection Fund.

Segmental Income

The internal monitoring structure of the Authority is based on the nature of the costs incurred rather than reflecting any internal service segment structures. The above disclosure has therefore been deemed not necessary as this information can be seen on the face of the Expenditure and Funding Analysis note.

8.6 Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

The Authority's expenditure and income is analysed as follows:

2022/23 Restated *		2023/24
£000		£000
	Expenditure:	
48,648	Employee benefit expenses	45,429
8,578	Other services expenses	9,736
1,176	Depreciation, Amortisation and Impairment	2,178
371	Interest payments	333
(30)	Loss (Gain) on the disposal of assets & investments	(138)
58,743	Total Expenditure	57,538
	Income:	
(2,798)	Fees, charges and other service income	(2,601)
(2,138)	Specific Grants	(2,243)
(320)	Interest and investment income	(786)
(32,908)	Income from council tax and non-domestic rates	(36,159)
(12,171)	General Government grants and other funding contributions	(11,493)
(50,335)	Total Income	(53,282)
8,408	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,256

* Reclassification of the 2022/23 figures has been done to disaggregate the 'Fees, charges and other service income', by adding a new line 'Specific Grants'.



8.7 Other Operating Expenditure

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
(30)	(Profit) / loss on the disposal of assets	(138)
(30)	Total	(138)

8.8 Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
371	Interest payable and similar charges	333
10,847	Pensions interest cost and expected return on pensions assets	12,949
(320)	Interest receivable and similar income	(786)
(64)	Income and expenditure in relation to investment properties and changes in their fair value	99
10,834	Total	12,595

8.9 Taxation and Non Specific Grant Incomes

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
(26,498)	Council Tax Income	(28,796)
(6,410)	Non Domestic Rates Income	(7,363)
(5,893)	General Government Grants	(5,870)
0	Capital Grant	(35)
(65)	75% Compensation for Collection Fund losses	0
118	S31 Compensation for Expansion of Business Rate Relief	(23)
(6,331)	Gain in relation to Government grant and other contributions payable to the Pension Fund on the Authority's behalf	(5,565)
(45,079)	Total	(47,652)



8.10 Grant Income

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
	Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income:	
1,582	NNDR grants	2,006
1,582	Total	2,006
	Credited to Service:	
1,663	Fire Pensions Grant	1,663
7	New Risks - MTA Grant	7
295	Firelink Grant	221
27	New Dimensions Grant	27
8	Transparency Grant	8
2	Water Rescue Grant	0
0	Building Safety Regulator Grant	97
121	Protection Uplift Programme Grant	121
15	Redmond Review - Local Audit Fees Grant	14
0	Energy Efficiency Grant	40
0	Operational Vehicle Grant	35
0	Fire Special Grant	4
0	Pension Compensation Grant	6
2,138	Total	2,243

8.11 Material Items of Income and Expense

There were no material items of income or expenditure in 2023/24. During 2022/23 the Dee Road site was sold, generating capital receipts of £6,100,000.

8.12 Members Allowances

The Authority paid the following amounts to Members of the Fire Authority during the year.

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
101	Allowances	104
1	Expenses	1
102	Total	105



8.13 Officers' Remuneration

Officers whose remuneration was £50,000 or more fall into the following ranges:

2022/23 Number of employees	Remuneration band	2023/24 Number of employees
29	50,000 - 54,999	33
16	55,000 - 59,999	20
4	60,000 - 64,999	14
8	65,000 - 69,999	1
5	70,000 - 74,999	9
6	75,000 - 79,999	4
5	80,000 - 84,999	2
2	85,000 - 89,999	3
1	90,000 - 94,999	1
76	Total	87

The table above excludes the Chief Fire Officer, Directors and Head of Finance and Procurement whose remuneration is shown in the table below.

Remuneration refers to all amounts paid to, and receivable by, an employee (excluding pension contributions) and includes sums due by way of expenses allowances, and the estimated money value of any other benefits received by an employee otherwise than in cash.

Senior employees are shown by job title in the tables below. The term senior employee applies to the Chief Fire Officer, Directors and Head of Finance and Procurement.



Remuneration 2023/24 £	Salary including fees and allowances	Taxable Expenses	Benefit in Kind (car allowance)	Total remuneration excluding pension contributions	Employer pension contributions	Total remuneration including pension contributions
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive - Wayne Bowcock	186,679	144	1,837	188,660	53,764	242,424
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services	148,635	1,505		150,140	20,641	170,781
Deputy Chief Fire Officer / Director of Operations and Collaboration	161,078	224	3,596	164,898	46,390	211,288
Assistant Chief Fire Officer / Director of Service Delivery	116,025	1,543		117,568	17,172	134,739
Head of Finance and Procurement	91,667	185		91,852	13,567	105,419
Total	704,084	3,601	5,433	713,118	151,534	864,652

Remuneration 2022/23 £	Salary including fees and allowances	Taxable Expenses	Benefit in Kind (car allowance)	Total remuneration excluding pension contributions	Employer pension contributions	Total remuneration including pension contributions
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive - Wayne Bowcock	159,402	-	-	159,402	45,908	205,310
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services	129,567	-	-	129,567	17,275	146,842
Deputy Chief Fire Officer / Director of Operations and Collaboration	138,104	201	5,818	144,123	39,774	183,897
Assistant Chief Fire Officer / Director of Service Delivery	100,654	-	72	100,726	13,384	114,110
Head of Finance and Procurement	89,785	-	-	89,785	12,085	101,870
Total	617,512	201	5,890	623,603	128,426	752,029



8.14 Exit Packages and Termination Benefits

Exit Package Cost Band	Number of compulsory redundancies		Number of other departures		Total Number		Total Cost (£)	
	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24
£0 - £20,000	1	0	1	0	2	0	10,468	0
Total cost included in bandings and in the CIES	1	0	1	0	2	0	10,468	0

8.15 External Audit Costs

Fees relating to external audit and inspection are detailed below. The fees cover a financial statements audit, a value for money conclusion and a whole of government accounts audit, but does not include the ISA 515 fee, which is £5,000 for 2023/24, as this has not formally been agreed by the PSAA .

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
33	Fees payable with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor for the year.	101

8.16 Property, Plant and Equipment

i Movement on Balances

Movements in property, plant and equipment for 2023/24 are shown in the table below.



	Land & Building £000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £000	Assets under Construction £000	Total Property, Plant and Equipment £000
Cost or Valuation				
At 1 April 2023	64,472	13,969	182	78,623
Additions	0	612	454	1,066
Revaluation increases / (decreases) recognised in the revaluation reserve	(2,055)			(2,055)
Revaluation increases / (decreases) recognised in the surplus / deficit on the provision of services	(374)			(374)
Derecognition-disposals	0	(659)		(659)
Write-out of depreciation on revaluation	(838)			(838)
Other movements in cost or valuation	0	181	(181)	0
at 31 March 2024	61,205	14,103	455	75,763
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment				
At 1 April 2023	0	(10,988)	0	(10,988)
Depreciation Charge	(838)	(891)		(1,729)
Derecognition-disposals		658		658
Write-out of depreciation on revaluation	838			838
at 31 March 2024	0	(11,221)	0	(11,221)
Net Book Value				
at 31 March 2023	64,472	2,981	182	67,635
at 31 March 2024	61,205	2,882	455	64,542



Comparative movements in 2022/23

	Land & Building £000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £000	Assets under Construction £000	Total Property, Plant and Equipment £000
Cost or Valuation				
At 1 April 2022	69,642	14,138	221	84,001
Additions	678	716	181	1,575
Revaluation increases / (decreases) recognised in the revaluation reserve	2,884			2,884
Revaluation increases / (decreases) recognised in the surplus / deficit on the provision of services	872			872
Derecognition-disposals		(1,060)		(1,060)
Derecognition-Other				0
Write-out of depreciation on revaluation	(9,644)			(9,644)
Other movements in cost or valuation	40	175	(220)	(5)
at 31 March 2023	64,472	13,969	182	78,623
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment				
At 1 April 2022	(8,878)	(10,839)	0	(19,717)
Depreciation Charge	(766)	(1,209)		(1,975)
Derecognition-disposals		1,060		1,060
Write-out of depreciation on revaluation	9,644			9,644
at 31 March 2023	0	(10,988)	0	(10,988)
Net Book Value				
at 1 April 2022	60,764	3,299	221	64,284
at 31 March 2023	64,472	2,981	182	67,635



ii Depreciation

The following useful lives and depreciation rates have been used in the calculation of depreciation:

Buildings – straight line over the life of the buildings or components (25 - 60 years)

Equipment – straight line over the life of the asset (3 - 15 years)

Vehicles – reducing balance over the life of the asset (3 – 15 years)

Assets donated by the Government are depreciated straight line over the remaining useful life.

iii Capital Commitments Update

At 31 March 2024, the Authority had outstanding commitments of £271,000 related to premises building projects, £567,000 in relation to IT projects and £2,429,000 in relation to vehicle purchases.

iv Fixed Asset Valuation

The Authority's land and property were fully valued at 31 March 2023 and revalued on a desktop basis at 31 March 2024 by Wilks Head & Eve LLP Chartered Surveyors and Town Planners – a RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) Regulated Firm.

The valuations were in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom ('The CIPFA Code'), International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Valuation - Global Standards (effective 31 January 2022) and the RICS Valuation - Global Standards 2017: UK National Supplement – UK VPGA 4 Valuation of local authority assets for accounting purposes.

For specialised assets the Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) in accordance with UK VPGA 1.5 (and RICS UK guidance) has been applied. For depreciation purposes assets are recognised on a component basis.

8.17 Investment Properties

The following item of income and expenditure has been accounted for in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.



2022/23		2023/24
£000		£000
(10)	Rental income from investment property	(6)
(10)	Net (Gain) / Loss	(6)

The three investment properties were valued at 31 March 2024 by Mark S Aldis BSc (Hons) MRICS, IRRV (Hons) RICS Registered Valuer, of Wilks Head & Eve Chartered Surveyors and Town Planners.

Based on the assessment of market values the total value of the properties is £995,000.

There are no restrictions on the Authority's ability to realise the value inherent in one of its investment properties. However, should two of the properties be sold, the Authority will be required to share half of the proceeds with unitary authorities in Berkshire.

The Authority has no contractual obligation to purchase, construct, develop or maintain investment properties.

The following table summarises the movement in the fair value of the Authority's investment properties over the year:

2022/23		2023/24
£000		£000
1,045	Balance at start of the year	1,100
55	Revaluation	(105)
1,100	Balance at end of the year	995

Fair value Hierarchy

Details of the Authority's investment properties and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 31 March 2024 are shown below.



Fair Value as at 31 March 2023 (Level 2) £000	Recurring Fair Value Measurement using:	Fair Value as at 31 March 2024 (Level 2) £000
330	Land	298
770	Building	697
1,100	Total	995

Valuation Techniques used to Determine Level 2 Fair Value for Investment Properties

Significant Observable Inputs – Level 2

The fair value for the residential properties has been based on the market approach using current market conditions and recent sales prices and other relevant information for similar assets in the locality.

Market conditions are such that similar properties are actively purchased and sold and the level of observable inputs are significant, leading to the properties being categorised at Level 2 in the fair value hierarchy.

Highest and Best use of Investment Properties

In estimating the fair value of the Authority's investment properties, the highest and best use of the properties is their current use, taking into account the restrictions on the sale of two of the properties.

Valuation Techniques

There has been no change in the valuation techniques used during the year for investment properties.

Valuation Process for Investment Properties

The fair value of the Authority's investment properties is measured annually at each reporting date. All valuations are carried out using appointed valuers, in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The Authority's valuation experts work closely with finance officers reporting directly to the Head of Finance on a regular basis regarding all valuation matters.

8.18 Movement of Intangible Fixed Assets

Intangible Assets are recognised as non-financial fixed assets that do not have physical substance but are identifiable and are controlled by the entity through custody or legal rights. These represent the purchase of computer software and licences and other software systems and are amortised to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on the basis of the cost and estimated useful life.



2022/23		2023/24
£000		£000
124	Balance as start of the year:	146
96	Additions	12
(74)	Amortisation for the period	(74)
146	Net carrying amount at end of year	84

No assets were internally generated. All assets have finite useful lives and are amortised on a straight-line basis at 5 years (in the first year only half a year's depreciation is charged). Amortisation is included within Premises in Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

8.19 Assets held for Sale

The Authority did not have any assets for sale at 31 March 2024.

2022/23		2023/24
£000		£000
6,066	Balance at start of the year	0
0	Transfer from property, plant & equipment	0
(6,066)	Assets sold	0
0	Balance at end of the year	0

8.20 Capital Expenditure and Financing

The table below shows the effect of capital expenditure on the Authority's capital financing requirement.



	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	11,470	10,769
Capital investment:		
Property, Plant and Equipment (including Intangible Assets)	1,670	1,079
Sources of Finance:		
Capital Receipts	0	0
Capital Grant	0	(35)
Revenue Funding including MRP & VRP	(2,371)	(2,063)
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	10,769	9,750
Explanation of Movements in the Year		
Increase / (Decrease) in the underlying need to borrow	(701)	(1,019)
Increase / (Decrease) in Capital Financing Requirement	(701)	(1,019)

The Fire Authority's formally approved Capital Programme for future years is shown below, including carry forwards. However, it is normal practice for the future Capital Programme to be reviewed as part of the annual budget process.

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Property	5,331	3,223	2,986
Fleet, Equipment & Minor Works	2,579	1,501	1,190
ICT	1,093	741	562
Total	9,003	5,465	4,738

8.21 Financial Instruments

i Categories of Financial Instruments

The following categories of financial instrument are carried in the Balance Sheet.



	Non-Current		Current	
	22/23 £000	23/24 £000	22/23 £000	23/24 £000
Financial Assets				
Investments - Amortised Cost	294	364	6,408	4,222
Trade Debtors - Amortised Cost			12	119
Total Financial Assets	294	364	6,420	4,341
Financial Liabilities				
Borrowing - Amortised Cost	(8,922)	(8,922)	0	0
Trade Creditors - Amortised Cost			(1,603)	(1,298)
Total Financial Liabilities	(8,922)	(8,922)	(1,603)	(1,298)

ii Income, Expense, Gains and Losses

	2022/23			2023/24		
	Financial Liabilities measured at amortised cost £000	Financial Assets measured at amortised cost £000	Total £000	Financial Liabilities measured at amortised cost £000	Financial Assets measured at amortised cost £000	Total £000
Interest expenses	(371)		(371)	(333)		(333)
Total expense in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(371)		(371)	(333)		(333)
Interest income		320	320		786	786
Total income in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services		320	320		786	786
Net gain/(loss) for the year	(371)	320	(51)	(333)	786	453



iii Fair value of Assets and Liabilities carried at Amortised Cost

Financial liabilities and financial assets represented by loans and receivables are carried on the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of the cash flows that take place over the remaining life of the instruments, using the following assumptions: For loans from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), premature repayment rates from the PWLB have been applied to provide the fair value under PWLB debt redemption procedures (a Level 2 valuation using discounted cash flows);

- No early repayment or impairment is recognised;
- Where an instrument has a maturity of less than 12 months or is a trade or other receivable the fair value is taken to be the principal outstanding or the billed amount;
- The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount.

The fair values calculated are as follows:

	31 March 2023		31 March 2024	
	Carrying Amount £000	Fair Value £000	Carrying Amount £000	Fair Value £000
PWLB debt	(8,922)	(8,592)	(8,922)	(8,194)
Trade creditors	(1,603)	(1,603)	(1,298)	(1,298)
Total Financial Liabilities	(10,525)	(10,195)	(10,220)	(9,492)
Non-current Investments	294	294	364	364
Current Investments	6,408	6,408	4,222	4,222
Trade debtors	12	12	119	119
Total Financial Assets	6,714	6,714	4,705	4,705

The fair values for loans and receivables have been determined by reference to the PWLB redemption rules which provide a good approximation for the fair value of a financial instrument and include accrued interest. The comparator market rates prevailing have been taken from indicative investment rates at each Balance Sheet date. In practice, rates will be determined by the size of the transaction and the counterparty, but it is impractical to use these figures, and the difference is likely to be immaterial.



8.22 Nature and Extent of Risk Arising from Financial Instruments

The Authority's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks. The key risks are:

- Credit risk – the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Authority;
- Liquidity risk – the possibility that the Authority might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments;
- Re-financing risk – the possibility that the Authority might be requiring to renew a financial instrument on maturity at disadvantageous interest rates or terms.
- Market risk - the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Authority as a result of changes in such measures as interest rates movements.

i Overall Procedures for Managing Risk

The Authority's overall risk management procedures focus on the unpredictability of financial markets and implementing restrictions to minimise these risks. The procedures for risk management are set out through a legal framework in the Local Government Act 2003 and the associated regulations. These require the Authority to comply with the CIPFA Prudential Code, the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and investment guidance issued through the Act. Overall these procedures require the Authority to manage risk in the following ways:

- by formally adopting the requirements of the Code of Practice;
- by the adoption of a Treasury Policy Statement and treasury management clauses within its standing orders;
- by approving annually in advance prudential and treasury indicators for the following three years limiting:
 - The Authority's overall borrowing;
 - Its maximum and minimum exposures to fixed and variable rates;
 - Its maximum and minimum exposures regarding the maturity structure of its debt;
 - Its maximum annual exposure to investments maturing beyond a year.
- by approving an investment strategy for the forthcoming year setting out its criteria for both investing and selecting investment counterparties in compliance with Government guidance.

These are required to be reported and approved at or before the Authority's annual council tax setting budget or before the start of the year to which they relate. These items are reported with the annual treasury management strategy which outlines the detailed approach to managing risk in relation to the Authority's financial instrument exposure. Actual performance is also reported to Members.

The annual treasury management strategy which incorporates the prudential indicators was approved by the Fire Authority on 15 February 2023 and is available on the Authority website.



The key issues within the strategy were:

- The Authorised Limit for 2023/24 was set at £14,422 million. This is the maximum limit of external borrowings or other long-term liabilities.
- The Operational Boundary was expected to be £9.022 million. This is the expected level of debt and other long-term liabilities during the year.
- The maximum amounts of fixed and variable interest rate exposure were set at 100% and 50% based on the Authority's net debt.

The Authority maintains written principles for overall risk management, as well as written policies covering specific areas, such as interest rate risk, credit risk, and the investment of surplus cash through Treasury Management Practices (TMPs). These TMPs are a requirement of the Code of Practice and are reviewed periodically.

ii Credit risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Authority's customers.

- This risk is minimised through the Annual Investment Strategy, which requires that deposits are not made with financial institutions unless they meet identified minimum credit criteria, in accordance with Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's Credit Ratings Services. The Annual Investment Strategy also considers maximum amounts and time limits in respect of each financial institution. Deposits are not made with banks and financial institutions unless they meet the minimum requirements of the investment criteria outlined above. Additional selection criteria are also applied after these initial criteria are applied.

The full Investment Strategy for 2023/24 was approved by Full Authority on 15 February 2023 and is available on the Authority's website.

Customers for goods and services are assessed, taking into account their financial position, past experience and other factors.

The Authority's maximum exposure to credit risk in relation to its investments in banks and building societies of £4,586,000 cannot be assessed generally as the risk of any institution failing to make interest payments or repay the principal sum will be specific to each individual institution. Recent experience has shown that it is rare for such entities to be unable to meet their commitments. A risk of irrecoverability applies to all of the Authority's deposits, but there was no evidence at the 31 March 2024 that this was likely to crystallise.

The following analysis summarises the Authority's maximum exposure to credit risk on other financial assets, based on experience of default, adjusted to reflect current market conditions.



	Amount at 31 March 2024 £000	Historical experience of default %	Adjustment for market conditions at 31 March 2024 %	Estimated maximum exposure at 31 March 2024 £000	Estimated maximum exposure at 31 March 2023 £000
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a * c)	
Trade debtors (not including statutory debtors – Authority Tax/NNDR)	119	5%	5%	6	1

No breaches of the Authority's counterparty criteria occurred during the reporting period and the Authority does not expect any losses from non-performance by any of its counterparties in relation to deposits and bonds.

The allocation of the Authority's investments between institutions domiciled in foreign countries and in the UK was as follows:

	31 March 2024 £000	31 March 2024 %
UK	4,586	100.00%
Total	4,586	100.00%

The Authority does not generally allow credit for its trade debtors. The past due amount can be analysed by age as follows:

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
12	Less than three months	119
12	Total	119

During the reporting period the Authority held no collateral as security.



iii Liquidity risk

The Authority manages its liquidity position through the risk management procedures above (the setting and approval of prudential indicators and the approval of the treasury and investment strategy reports), as well as through a comprehensive cash flow management system, as required by the CIPFA Code of Practice. This seeks to ensure that cash is available when it is needed.

If unexpected movements happen, the Authority has ready access to borrowings from the money markets and the Public Works Loan Board. Money markets would be utilised to cover any day-to-day short term cash flow need and the PWLB provides access to longer term funding. The Authority is also required to provide a balanced budget through the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which ensures sufficient monies are raised to cover annual expenditure. There is therefore no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments.

The maturity analysis of financial assets is as follows:

31 March 2023		31 March 2024
£000		£000
6,408	Less than one year	4,222
0	Between one and two years	0
100	Between two and three years	0
194	More than three years	364
6,702	Total	4,586

All trade and other payables are due to be paid in less than one year and are not shown in the table above.



iv Refinancing and Maturity Risk

Whilst the cash flow procedures above are considered against the refinancing risk procedures, longer term risk to the Authority relates to managing the exposure to replacing financial instruments as they mature. This risk relates to both the maturing of longer term financial liabilities and longer term financial assets.

The approved treasury indicator limits for the maturity structure of debt and the limits placed on investments placed for greater than one year in duration are the key parameters used to address this risk. The Authority's approved treasury and investment strategies address the main risks and are addressed within approved parameters. These include:

- monitoring the maturity profile of financial liabilities and amending the profile through either new borrowing or the rescheduling of the existing debt; and
- monitoring the maturity profile of investments to ensure sufficient liquidity is available for the Authority's day-to-day cash flow needs, and the spread of longer term investments provide stability of maturities and returns in relation to the longer term cash flow needs.

The maturity analysis of financial liabilities is shown below:

	Actual 31 Mar 2023 £000	Actual 31 Mar 2024 £000
Less than one year	0	0
Between one and two years	0	394
Between two and five years	991	597
Between five and ten years	3,581	3,581
More than ten years	4,350	4,350
Total	8,922	8,922



v Interest rate risk

The Authority is exposed to risk in terms of its exposure to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments. Movements in interest rates have a complex impact on the Authority, depending on how variable and fixed interest rates move across differing financial instrument periods. For instance, a rise in variable and fixed interest rates would have the following effects:

- borrowings at variable rates – the interest expense charged to the Income and Expenditure Account will rise;
- borrowings at fixed rates – the fair value of the borrowing will fall (no impact on revenue balances);
- investments at variable rates – the interest income credited to the Income and Expenditure Account will rise;
- investments at fixed rates – the fair value of the assets will fall (no impact on revenue balances).

Borrowings are not carried at fair value, so nominal gains and losses on fixed rate borrowings would not impact on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services or Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure. However, changes in interest payable and receivable on variable rate borrowings and investments will be posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services and affect the General Fund Balance. Movements in the fair value of fixed rate investments that have a quoted market price will be reflected in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

The Authority has a number of strategies for managing interest rate risk. The Annual Treasury Management Strategy draws together the Authority's prudential and treasury indicators and its expected treasury operations, including an expectation of interest rate movements. From this strategy a treasury indicator is set which provides maximum limits for fixed and variable interest rate exposures. Markets and forecast interest rates are monitored during the year to adjust exposures appropriately. For instance, during periods of falling interest rates, and where economic circumstances make it favorable, fixed rate investments may be taken for longer periods to secure better long-term returns.

If interest rates had been 1% higher (with all other variables held constant) the financial effect would be:

	£000
(Increase) in interest receivable on variable rate investments	(56)
Impact on (Income) and Expenditure Account	(56)
Decrease in fair value of fixed rate borrowings liabilities (no impact on Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account)	693



The impact of a 1% fall in interest rates would be as above but with the movements being reversed.

vi Price risk

The Authority, excluding the pension fund, does not invest in equity shares or marketable bonds.

vii Foreign exchange risk

The Authority has no financial assets or liabilities denominated in foreign currencies. It therefore has no exposure to losses arising from movements in exchange rates.

8.23 Inventories

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
53	Balance outstanding at start of year	69
244	Purchases	171
(228)	Recognised as an expense in the year	(189)
69	Balance outstanding at year-end	51

8.24 Debtors and Prepayments

A breakdown of debtors and prepayments is given in the table below:

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
2,126	Central Government	749
4,842	Local Authorities	4,253
0	NHS Bodies	11
12	Other Entities and individuals	119
1,538	Prepayments	1,562
8,518	Total	6,694



8.25 Cash and Cash Equivalents

The balance of cash and cash equivalents is made up of the following elements:

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
4,967	Bank current accounts	10,662
4,967	Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	10,662

8.26 Creditors and Income in Advance

A breakdown of creditors and income in advance is given in the table below:

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
(1,193)	Central Government	(987)
(3,347)	Local Authorities	(3,545)
(6)	NHS Bodies	(8)
(1,603)	Other Entities and individuals	(1,298)
(69)	Income received in advance	(53)
(6,218)	Total	(5,891)

8.27 Provisions

The following table shows movements on the Authority's provisions.

	Business Rates Appeals £000	Pay Provision £000	TOTAL £000
Balance at 1 April 2023	(616)	(32)	(648)
Movement in year	103	32	135
Balance at 31 March 2024	(513)	0	(513)

A provision has been made for the Authority's share of outstanding Business Rates appeals. This is based on the latest list of outstanding rating list proposals provided by the Valuation Office Agency, taking into account factors such as the settled claims history, changes in



comparable hereditaments, market trends and other valuation issues, including the potential for certain proposals to be withdrawn. The provision is split between the six unitary councils of Berkshire, the Government and the Fire Authority. The Authority's share of the provision is 1% and amounts to £513,000.

8.28 Leases

i Authority as Lessee

Operating Leases

The Authority has lease arrangements in place for the provision of photocopying equipment, coffee and water dispensing equipment and lease rental of pool vehicles. PPE has been added for 2023/24.

The future minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
16	Not later than one year	274
22	Later than one year and not later than five years	592
38		866

ii Authority as Lessor

Finance Lease

The Authority has entered into a Lease with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley (TVP) for TVP to use part of the Theale Community Fire Station.

The arrangement began on 1st November 2021, for the use of 5.79% of the building for 125 years and constitutes a Finance lease. The annual rent is a peppercorn. The consideration for the Lease was £388,777 and was received in October 2022. The consideration can be repaid within 60 years of the commencement of the lease, subject to certain terms and conditions. The consideration is accounted for in the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve and is being released to Capital Receipts as 1/60th of the Premium per year.



Operating Leases

The Authority partially leases out some buildings for income generation purposes to provide accommodation and additional income is generated through the provision of access at some sites for the erection of telecommunication masts.

The future minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
213	Not later than one year	233
679	Later than one year and not later than five years	731
1,044	Later than five years	1,060
1,936		2,024

8.29 Pensions Costs

i Participation in Pension Schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Authority offers retirement benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Authority is required to disclose the accrued benefit in its accounts.

The Authority participates in five pension schemes:

The Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund is for non-uniformed employees and is administered by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead under the regulations governing the Local Government Pension Scheme. This is a funded scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into the fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets.

All of the firefighters' pension schemes are unfunded, meaning that no investment assets are built up to meet the pension liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pension payments as they eventually fall due.

ii Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

The costs of retirement benefits are recognised in the Net Cost of Services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge the Authority is required to make against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the movement in Reserves Statement.

The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:



Liabilities and Assets in Relation to Post-employment Benefits

	Local Government Pension Scheme		Fire-fighters Pension Scheme	
	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement				
Cost of Services:				
Service cost comprising:				
- current service cost	3,212	1,279	7,134	2,516
- past service cost			68	44
-administration costs	30	34		
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure				
Net interest expense	729	320	10,088	12,595
Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	3,971	1,633	17,290	15,155
Other Post Employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement				
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:				
- Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	458	(1,318)		
Other actuarial gains/(losses)				
- Actuarial gains and losses arising on the changes in demographic assumptions		(510)	0	4,140
- Actuarial gains and losses arising on the changes in financial assumptions	(29,301)	(1,194)	(157,853)	(2,117)
- Experience loss or gain on defined benefit obligation	4,932	123	25,352	870
Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(19,940)	(1,266)	(115,211)	18,048
Movement in Reserves Statement				
- Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(3,971)	(1,633)	(17,290)	(15,155)
	(3,971)	(1,633)	(17,290)	(15,155)
Actual Amount Charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:				
- employer's contributions payable to scheme	1,336	1,494		
- provision for employer's contributions	1	(1)	4	(4)
- Retirement benefits payable to pensioners			10,358	10,317
- net transfers			368	(205)
Government grant payable to the Pension Fund on behalf of the Authority			(6,331)	(5,565)
	1,337	1,493	4,399	4,543



Reconciliation of the present value of the schemes' liabilities is shown below.

	Local Government Pension Scheme		Fire-fighters Pension Scheme	
	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Opening balance at 1 April	59,380	39,363	393,314	267,373
Current Service Cost	3,212	1,279	7,134	2,516
Interest Cost	1,539	1,871	10,088	12,595
Contributions by Scheme Participants	499	522	1,802	1,863
- Actuarial (gains)/losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	0	(510)	0	4,140
- Actuarial (gains)/losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	(29,301)	(1,194)	(157,853)	(2,117)
- Experience loss or gain on defined benefit obligation	4,932	123	25,352	870
Past Service Cost			68	44
Benefits paid	(897)	(1,308)	(12,160)	(12,180)
- provision for employer's contributions	(1)	1	(4)	4
Net transfers			(368)	205
Closing balance at 31 March	39,363	40,147	267,373	275,313

Reconciliation of the fair value of the schemes' assets is shown below:

2022/23 £000	Local Government Pension Scheme	2023/24 £000
30,706	Opening fair value of scheme assets at 1 April	31,966
810	Interest income	1,551
(458)	- The return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	1,318
(30)	- Administration costs	(34)
1,336	Contributions from employers	1,494
499	Contributions from employees into the scheme	522
(897)	Benefits paid	(1,308)
31,966	Closing fair value of scheme assets at 31 March	35,509



iii Pension Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

	Local Government Pension Scheme		Fire-fighters Pension Schemes	
	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	39,363	40,147	267,373	275,313
Fair value of plan assets	(31,966)	(35,509)	0	0
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	7,397	4,638	267,373	275,313

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Authority has in the long run to pay retirement benefits. The total liability of £279.951 million has a substantial impact on the net worth of the Authority as recorded in the Balance Sheet, resulting in a negative overall balance of £207.993 million. However, statutory arrangements for funding the deficit mean that the financial position of the Authority remains healthy:

- the deficit on the Local Government Scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees, as assessed by the scheme actuary;
- finance is only required to be raised to cover firefighters' pensions when the pensions are actually paid.

iv Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

In respect of the Local Government Pension Scheme, contributions are set every three years as a result of the actuarial valuation of the Fund. The valuation was carried out on 31 March 2022 and set contributions for the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026. There are no minimum funding requirements but contributions are set to target a funding level of 100% using the actuarial valuation assumptions.

Government valuations of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme take place every four years. As Firefighters' Pension Schemes are unfunded there is no pot of assets to determine if sufficient contributions have been paid to meet the cost of rights accrued. Instead, the valuation is done by creating and tracking the value of a notional fund. Government policy is that any scheme deficit will be recovered from employers by adjusting employer contributions over a period of years.



The Authority anticipates paying £7.547 million in expected contributions to the schemes in 2024/2025.

v Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. These have been assessed by Barnett Waddingham, an independent firm of actuaries.

The main assumptions used in their calculations are shown in the table below:

	Local Government Pension Scheme		Firefighters Pension Scheme	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
Mortality Assumptions:				
Longevity at age 65 for current pensioners:				
- Men	21.1	20.8	20.6	20.6
- Women	23.9	23.6	22.9	23.2
Longevity at age 65 for future pensioners:				
- Men	22.3	22.0	21.9	21.9
- Women	25.3	25.0	24.4	24.6
Rate of RPI	3.20%	3.15%	3.30%	3.30%
Rate of CPI	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.90%	3.90%	3.90%	3.90%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%
Rate for discounting liabilities	2.60%	4.95%	4.80%	4.85%
Take-up of option to convert annual pension into retirement lump sum	50%	50%	100%	100%

The Firefighters' Pension Schemes have no assets to cover their liabilities. The Local Government Pension Scheme's assets consist of the following categories:



2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
483	Cash and Cash Equivalents	327
4,646	Credit	4,664
16,089	Public Equities	20,258
3,962	Private Equities	4,169
4,041	Property	3,232
4,407	Infrastructure	4,449
(1,662)	Longevity Insurance	(1,590)
31,966	Total Assets	35,509

There is no provision under the LGPS to split the total assets of the Fund to each participating body. Therefore, for the basis of this disclosure, the above assets as a whole are allocated to participating bodies on a consistent and reasonable basis.

8.30 Usable Reserves

Movements in the Authority's usable reserves are detailed in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

8.31 Unusable Reserves

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
32,406	Revaluation Reserve	29,944
25,673	Capital Adjustment Account	25,924
(274,770)	Pension Reserve	(279,951)
(320)	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(186)
(267)	Accumulated Absences Account	(331)
382	Deferred Capital Receipts Account	376
(216,896)	Total Unusable Reserves	(224,224)



i Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Authority arising from increases in the value of its Property, Plant and Equipment. The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation, or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

The reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2007, the date that the reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the Capital Adjustment Account.

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
33,820	Balance as at 1 April	32,406
2,885	Upward / (downward) revaluation of assets not charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(2,055)
(3,947)	Amount written off to the capital adjustment account on disposal	0
(352)	Difference between fair value depreciation and historic cost depreciation	(407)
32,406	Balance as at 31 March	29,944

ii Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provision. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Authority as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement.

The account contains accumulated gains and losses on investment properties that have yet to be consumed by the Authority.

The account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains.

Note 8.3 provides details of the source of all the transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve.



2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
26,226	Balance at 1 April	25,673
	Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the CIES:	
(1,975)	Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,729)
872	Revaluation (losses) gains on Property, Plant and Equipment	(374)
(74)	Amortisation of intangible assets	(74)
(6,101)	Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	28
18,948		23,524
4,299	Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve	407
23,247	Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	23,931
	Capital financing applied in the year:	
0	Application of grants to capital financing from the capital grants receipt in advance	35
701	Statutory and voluntary provision for the financing of capital investment charges against the General Fund	1,019
1,670	Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	1,044
2,371		2,098
55	Movements in the market value of Investment Properties debited or credited to the CIES	(105)
25,673	Balance at 31 March	25,924

iii Pension Reserve

The pension reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provision. The Authority accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed, as the Authority makes employer's



contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Authority has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
(421,988)	Balance at 1 April	(274,770)
156,412	Actuarial gains or (losses) on pensions assets and liabilities	5
(21,261)	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(16,788)
12,062	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	11,607
5	Provision for employer's contributions	(5)
(274,770)	Balance at 31 March	(279,951)

iv Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The Collection Fund Adjustment Account manages the differences arising from the recognition of council tax and non-domestic rates income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as it falls due from council tax payers and business rates payers compared with the statutory arrangements for paying across amounts to the General Fund from the Collection Fund.

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
(1,601)	Balance at 1 April	(320)
1,281	Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rates income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax and non-domestic rates income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	134
(320)	Balance at 31 March	(186)

v **Accumulated Absences Account**

The accumulated absences account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
(289)	Balance at 1 April	(267)
289	Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	267
(267)	Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	(331)
(267)	Balance at 31 March	(331)

vi **Deferred capital receipts reserve**

The deferred capital receipts reserve holds the gains recognised on the disposal of non-current assets but for which cash settlement has yet to take place. Under statutory arrangements, the gain is not yet usable for financing new capital expenditure. When the deferred cash settlement eventually takes place, and is available for use, amounts are transferred to the capital receipts reserve.

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
389	Balance as at 1 April	382
0	Lease Premium - Theale Fire Station	
(7)	Release to Usable Capital Receipts	(6)
382	Balance as at 31 March	376

8.32 **Related Parties**

The Authority is required to disclose material transactions with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Authority, or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Authority might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently, or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Authority.



Central Government has effective control over the general operations of the Authority – it is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Authority operates and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Authority has with other parties. It also provided direct financial support to the Authority in 2023/24.

The Authority has entered into agreements with other public bodies. The Authority signed a legal agreement with Oxfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority which established Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS). TVFCS went live in April 2015 and operates as a joint committee with Member representation from the three services. The capital assets for the Joint Control Room are recognised as an equal third on the Balance Sheet. The combined assets gross book value is £1,317,000 of which £439,000 relates to this Authority. The depreciation charge for 2023/24 on the Authority's share of the assets was £19,000 resulting in a net book value of £206,000 at 31 March 2024. The revenue cost of running TVFCS during 2023/24 was £2,697,000 with the Authority's share amounting to £998,000.

The Authority does not provide any significant financial assistance to outside bodies that are outside of its normal contractual arrangements.

Members of the Authority have control over the Authority's financial and operational policies. All contracts entered into by the Authority are in full compliance with the Authority's constitution and contract standing orders. Members have a duty to declare any conflicts of interest to the Monitoring Officer at the start of Committee meetings. Details of any material interests are recorded in the Register of Members' Interests, which is open to public inspection.

Senior Officers have control over the day-to-day management of the Authority and have been asked to declare any related party transactions. As of 31 March 2024, the Chief Fire Officer's spouse is the Deputy Chief Fire Officer of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. Both Services work collaboratively, specifically in relation to Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Internal governance, core code of ethics and professional integrity ensure transparency and appropriate separation of duties. Additionally, the Head of Finance and Procurement is a Director of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC). FRIC provides risk protection arrangements for the Authority by pooling funds with other member authorities. The insurance year runs from 1 November to 31 October. The Authority made a contribution of £435,000 for the insurance year ending 31 October 2024, of which £181,000 relates to the 2023/24 financial year.

8.33 Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying the accounting policies as set out in 8.2, the Authority has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events.



The critical judgements made in the Statement of Accounts are:

- The Authority has joined up with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services to form the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS). A judgement has been made to treat this arrangement as a joint operation.
- The accounts are prepared with the underlying assumptions of the accruals basis and the going concern basis, i.e. the Authority's functions and services will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The provisions in the Code in respect of going concern reporting requirements reflect the economic and statutory environment in which authorities operate. These provisions confirm that, as authorities cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription, they must prepare their financial statements on a going concern basis of accounting.

8.34 Assumptions about the future and sources of estimation uncertainty

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Authority about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Authority's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024 for which there is a significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are set out below.

Depreciation and amortisation of intangible assets – assets are depreciated over useful lives that are dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance that will be incurred in relation to individual assets. The Authority relies on the expertise of an external valuer to determine the lives of all building assets. The lives of vehicles, plant and equipment and intangible assets are based on historical experience and professional estimates.

Revaluations and Impairments - valuations are dependent on a number of assumptions including the property market at the point of valuation. The net book value of land and buildings at 31 March 2024 was £61,205,000. An alteration to the assumptions made and a subsequent 1% change in that valuation would lead to a movement of £612,000. If the useful life of the assets are reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the assets falls. It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge for buildings would increase by £19,000 if the useful life for each respective building was reduced by one year.

Pensions Liability - Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in the retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. Actuaries are engaged to provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied and sensitivity to changes in judgements and assumptions.



McCloud / Sergeant case

The prospective remedy was implemented through the Police and Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which came into effect on 1 April 2022. The second stage is the delivery of the retrospective remedy, which commenced on 1 October 2023.

Matthews / O'Brien Case

The Government has committed to provide further remedy to those individuals who were employed as retained firefighters between 7 April 2000 and 5 April 2006 inclusive by providing access to the modified section of Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 (referred to as 'the modified scheme'). Regulations came into force on 1 October 2023 and the Authority has commenced work on remedy.

The sensitivities regarding the principal assumptions used to measure pension scheme liabilities are set out below.

Local Government Pension Scheme	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Adjustment to discount rate	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present value of total obligation	36,650	39,408	40,147	40,908	44,181
Projected service cost	1,080	1,279	1,333	1,389	1,636
Adjustment to long term salary increase	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present value of total obligation	40,494	40,215	40,147	40,080	39,818
Projected service cost	1,337	1,334	1,333	1,332	1,328
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present value of total obligation	43,899	40,854	40,147	39,460	36,898
Projected service cost	1,644	1,390	1,333	1,278	1,073
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions		+1 Year	None	-1 Year	
Present value of total obligation		41,481	40,147	38,860	
Projected service cost		1,382	1,333	1,285	



Firefighter Pension Scheme	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Adjustment to discount rate	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present value of total obligation	255,528	271,160	275,313	279,570	297,712
Projected service cost	2,061	2,542	2,755	2,809	3,404
Adjustment to long term salary increase	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present value of total obligation	276,997	275,645	275,313	274,983	273,683
Projected service cost	2,685	2,676	2,755	2,671	2,662
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present value of total obligation	296,363	279,315	275,313	271,408	256,713
Projected service cost	3,421	2,811	2,755	2,541	2,045
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions		+1 Year	None	-1 Year	
Present value of total obligation		286,137	275,313	264,921	
Projected service cost		2,795	2,755	2,555	

Financial Assets and Liabilities – further details about the assumptions made and the potential impact can be found in section 8.19.

8.35 Events after the Balance Sheet Date

The statement of accounts was authorised for issue by the Head of Finance and Procurement on 31 May 2024. Events taking place after this date will not be reflected in the financial statements or notes. Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31 March 2024, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

8.36 Standards issued but not yet adopted

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom requires the disclosure of information relating to the expected impact of accounting changes that will be required by new standards that have been issued but not yet adopted by the Code.

The 2024/25 Codes mandates the adoption of IFRS 16 Leases (issued in 2016). As the Authority has not yet adopted IFRS 16, leases where the Fire Authority acts as a lessee will in future appear on the Balance Sheet. However, low-value items and leases expiring on or before 31st March 2025 are not required to be recognised from 1 April 2024.

For arrangements previously classified as operating leases, a right-of-use asset and a lease liability will be included in the balance sheet from 1 April 2024. This means that right-of-use assets and lease liability will have been calculated as if IFRS16 has always applied, resulting in the cumulative effect being recognized on 1 April 2024.



As of 31 March 2024, the Authority had several operating leases. However, after applying the exemptions of both low-value items and short-term leases, none of these operating leases will be included in the opening Balance Sheet for 2024/25.

The Authority does, however, have a non-commercial lease for one of its fire stations which is currently not on its Balance Sheet. Under IFRS16, this peppercorn lease will be recognised as a donated asset in the Authority's 2024/2025 financial statements. There will be no impact to the General Fund as the gain which will be credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement will subsequently be neutralised by reversing the corresponding amount into the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The adoption of IFRS16 will result in the following entries as of 1 April 2024:

Dr Right of Use Asset £232,600

Cr CIES – Taxation and Non-Specific Grants £232,600

Dr General Fund (MIRS) £232,600

Cr Capital Adjustment Account £232,600

The 2024/25 Code also contains various amendments to accounting standards but these will not have any impact on the Authority's 2024/25 Statement of Accounts.

8.37 Contingent Assets

The Authority has instructed a third party to represent the Authority in respect of the legal action taken against an alleged truck cartel. The claim is focused on the difference between the price paid for such trucks and what would have been paid if the alleged cartel had not existed. At this stage the full value and quantum of any impact is unknown.

The Competition Appeal Tribunal (the Tribunal) took the decision in December 2023 to uphold the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)'s decision to impose a charge control mechanism on Motorola in respect of the revenue Airwave can earn from its charges. Motorola has lodged an application for permission to appeal the Tribunal's decision to the Court of Appeal (CoA). If, ultimately, Motorola are unsuccessful in their court application, credits will be released to the Authority.

8.38 Contingent Liabilities

Firefighters' pension scheme retrospective remedy – The Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022 provides an overarching framework to allow public service pension schemes to remedy the impact of unlawful age discrimination. That discrimination arose due to certain transitional arrangements put in place when public service pension schemes (including the firefighters' schemes) were reformed between 2014 and 2016. The prospective remedy was implemented through the Police and Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which came into effect on 1 April 2022. The second stage is the delivery of the retrospective remedy, which commenced on 1 October 2023. At this stage the total value and quantum of impacts are unknown due to the complexity of the process.



9. Financial Statements for the Firefighters' Pension Fund

i Financial Arrangements for the Firefighters' Pension Schemes

Before 1 April 2006, Fire authorities suffered budgetary volatility due to fluctuations in the number of firefighters retiring in any given year. To overcome this problem, the Government decided that fire authorities must keep a separate Pensions Account from which pensions will be paid. On the income side, employer and employee contributions are paid into the account. Employer contributions consist of flat rate contributions and an ill-health charge. Ill-health charges are spread over three years. Transfer values for firefighters that transfer into and out of the scheme are also posted to the account. If the account is in deficit at the end of the financial year, the Government will provide a top-up to bring the account into balance.

ii Pension Fund Account

2022/23 £000		2023/24 £000
	Contributions Receivable:	
(3,933)	Employer Flat Rate Contributions	(4,102)
0	Employer Ill-Health Contributions	(45)
(1,802)	Employee Contributions	(1,869)
0	Transfers In	(205)
(26)	Other income	(9)
	Benefits Payable:	
9,480	Pensions	10,578
2,206	Commutations and Lump Sum Benefits	1,217
298	Transfers Out	0
108	Other payment	0
6,331	Top-up Grant Receivable	5,565



iii Net Assets Statement

31 March 2023 £000		31 March 2024 £000
830	Prepayment of April pension paid in March	848
1,732	Top-up Grant receivable from the Government	496
2,562	Total Assets	1,344
(2,562)	Amount owing to the General Fund	(1,344)
(2,562)	Total Liabilities	(1,344)
0	Net Assets	0

It should be noted that the Fund's financial statements do not take account of liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after 2023/24. These liabilities are shown in the Authority's main financial statements.



10. Glossary of Financial Terms

Accrual

The concept that income and expenditure are recognised as they are earned or incurred, not as money is received or paid.

Accounting Policies

The specific principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices applied by the Authority in preparing and presenting financial statements.

Amortisation/ Amortise

The equivalent of depreciation when applied to intangible assets.

Appropriations

Amounts transferred to or from revenue or capital reserves.

Balance

The surplus or deficit on any account at the end of the year.

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet is fundamental to the understanding of the Authority's financial position at the year-end. It shows the Authority's balances and reserves, its long-term indebtedness, and the non-current and current assets employed in the Authority's operations.

Budget

A statement defining in financial terms the Authority's plans over a specific period. The budget is prepared as part of the process of setting the precept.

Capital Adjustment Account

Provides a balancing mechanism between IFRS accounting and statutory provisions.

Capital Charge

A charge to service revenue accounts to reflect the cost of property, plant and equipment used in the provision of services.

Capital Expenditure

The acquisition of property, plant and equipment which will have a long-term value to the Authority, e.g. land, buildings, vehicles, IT hardware. It includes expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of an existing fixed asset.

Capital Financing Requirement

This measures the underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure. The methods of financing include borrowing, leasing, direct revenue financing, use of capital receipts, capital grants, capital contributions and earmarked reserves.

Capital Receipt

The proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets. Capital receipts can be used to finance new capital expenditure within the rules laid down by the Government. They cannot be used to finance revenue spending.

Carrying Amount

This refers to the current value of an asset or liability, i.e. the original amount less accumulated depreciation or amortisation or other adjustment.



CIES

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is one of the primary statements required in the Statement of Accounts.

It sets out the annual cost to deliver the Authority's statutory functions and shows how that cost has been financed from precepts, grants and other income.

CIPFA

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The accounting body which provides accounting guidance to the public sector. The guidance provided by CIPFA is defined as 'proper practice' and has statutory backing.

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (the Code)

This specifies the principles and accounting practices required to give a 'true and fair' view of the financial position, financial performance and cash flow of the Authority.

Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The Collection Fund Adjustment Account provides a mechanism to recognise the Authority's share of the Collection Fund surplus/deficits at year end.

The Collection Fund is the fund maintained by billing authorities that records income and expenditure relating to Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) and records the way in which these have been distributed to preceptors.

Commutation

This is where a member of the pension scheme gives up part of their annual

pension in exchange for an immediate lump sum payment.

Consistency

The concept that the accounting treatment of transactions within accounting periods and from one period to another is the same.

Contingency

A condition which exists at the Balance Sheet date, where the outcome will only be confirmed on the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events.

Corporate Governance

Corporate governance is the system of rules, practices, and processes by which the Authority is directed and controlled. It encompasses practically every sphere of management, from action plans and internal controls to performance measurement and statutory disclosure.

Council Tax

One of the income streams to fund local government. This is a property based tax where the amount levied depends on the valuation of each dwelling.

CPI (see also RPI)

Consumer Price Index – a key measure of inflation in the UK

Creditors

Amounts owed by the Authority for work done, goods received or services rendered but for which payment has not been made at the Balance Sheet date.



CRMP

The Authority's Community Risk Management Plan explains how all fire and rescue-related risk in the community is evaluated and how resources are allocated to manage those risks.

Current Assets

Assets from which the Authority derives a benefit but which will be consumed or realised during the next accounting period, e.g. stocks, debtors, and cash.

Current Liabilities

Sums of money owed by the Authority and due for payment during the next accounting period, e.g. short-term borrowing and creditors.

Debtors

Sums of money due to the Authority for work done, goods sold or services rendered but not received at the Balance Sheet date.

Deferred Liability

An amount owed by the Authority for work done, goods received or services rendered, which is to be paid in predetermined instalments over more than one accounting period.

Defined Benefits Scheme

A pension or other retirement benefit scheme where the scheme rules define the benefits independently of the contributions payable and the benefits are not directly related to the investments of the scheme. The scheme may be funded or unfunded.

Depreciation

The measure of the wearing out, consumption, or other reduction over the useful life of an asset.

Derecognition

The removal of a previously recognised financial asset or liability from the Balance Sheet following the transfer of an asset to a third party, expiry of contractual rights to an assets or otherwise disposal of an asset.

Expected Return on Pension Assets

For a funded defined benefits scheme, this is the average rate of return, including both income and changes in fair value but net of scheme expenses, which is expected over the remaining life of the related obligation on the actual assets held by the scheme.

Fair Value

Fair value is based on market value, as the price at which an asset could be exchanged in an arm's length transaction. The fair value of investments or loans is based on the prevailing interest rates rather than the actual rates payable or receivable.

Financial Instrument

This is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset for one party and a financial liability for another party. The term covers both financial assets (e.g. loans receivable) and financial liabilities (e.g. borrowings).

Finance Lease

A lease that transfers substantially all of the risks and rewards of ownership of an asset to the lessee.



Funded Pension Scheme

A funded pension scheme is one in which the future liabilities for pension benefits are provided for by the accumulation of assets held externally to the employer's business.

General Fund

The General Fund is a reserve held by the Authority that has not been earmarked for specific purposes.

Going Concern

The concept that the Authority will remain in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

Government Grants

Assistance by government and inter-government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, in the form of cash or transfers of assets to the Authority, in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the Authority.

Gross Expenditure

The total cost of providing the Authority's services before taking into account any income from specific government grants, fees and charges.

IAS

International Accounting Standards (IASs) were issued by the International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC) from 1973 to 2001.

IFRS

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) have been issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) since 2001.

Impairment

A reduction in the value of a non-current asset below its carrying amount on the Balance Sheet.

Intangible Assets

These are assets that have no physical substance, for example, multi-year computer software licences.

Interest Cost (Pensions)

In a defined benefit pension scheme, the expected increase during the period of the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

Investments (Pension Fund)

The investments of the pension fund will be accounted for in the statements of that fund. However, authorities are also required to disclose, as part of the disclosure requirements relating to retirement benefits, the attributable share of the pension scheme assets associated with their underlying obligations.

Liquid Resources

Current asset investments that are readily disposable by the Authority without disrupting its business and are either:

- readily convertible to known amounts of cash at or close to the carrying amount; or
- traded in an active market.

Long Term Borrowing

Loans that are raised from external bodies, for periods greater than one year.



Materiality

The concept that the Statement of Accounts should include all amounts which, if omitted, or misstated, could be expected to lead to a distortion of the financial statements and ultimately mislead a user of the accounts.

Medium-Term Financial Plan

A four-year plan of net revenue expenditure, including the financing costs of planned capital expenditure.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

The minimum amount that the Authority must set aside from its revenue resources each year as a provision for debt incurred in financing capital expenditure.

Net Book Value

The amount at which fixed assets are included in the Balance Sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current cost, less the cumulative amounts provided for depreciation and/or impairment.

Net Current Replacement Cost

The cost of replacing or recreating a particular asset in its existing condition and in its existing use, i.e. the cost of its replacement or of the nearest equivalent asset, adjusted to reflect the current condition of the existing asset.

Non-Current Assets

Assets that yield benefits to the Authority over a period of more than one year.

Non-Domestic Rates (NDR)

Commonly referred to as business rates – this income is collected by the billing

authorities and a proportion is paid over to the Authority.

Non-Operational Assets

Non-current assets held by the Authority that are not directly used the delivery of services.

Operating Lease

A lease, or rental, other than a finance lease, where the ownership of the asset remains with the lessor.

Operational Assets

Assets held and occupied, used or consumed by the Authority in the direct delivery of those services for which it either has a statutory or discretionary responsibility.

Pension Fund Account

The Authority is required to set up a separate fund from the rest of its operation for transactions relating to firefighters' pension arrangements. The Authority has a statutory responsibility for paying firefighters' pensions. The fund is balanced to nil each year by the receipt of a pension top-up grant from Government.

Pension Scheme Liabilities

The liabilities of a pension scheme for outgoings due after the Balance Sheet date.

Precept

An amount of money levied by one authority (the precepting authority) which is collected by another authority (the billing authority) as part of council tax. The Authority is the precepting authority and



the six unitary authorities in Berkshire are the billing authorities.

Prepayments

Payments for goods or services in advance, even though part or all of the benefit will be received in a later period.

Prior Period Adjustments

Those material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors. A fundamental error is one that is of such significance as to destroy the validity of the financial statements. They do not include normal recurring corrections or adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

Property, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and yield benefits to the Authority for more than one year.

Provisions

Provisions are amounts set aside to cover liabilities or losses, which are likely or certain to be incurred but there is uncertainty as to the amounts or the dates on which they will arise.

Prudential Code

The purpose of the Code is to ensure that capital investment plans of authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

Public Works Loan Board (PWLb)

A Central Government Agency which provides loans for one year and above to authorities for capital projects.

Realised / Unrealised Gains

A realised gain is the capital gain that is made on an asset when it is sold. An unrealised gain is an increase in the carrying value of an asset that has yet to be sold.

Remuneration

All sums paid to or receivable by an employee and sums due by way of expenses allowances (as far as those sums are chargeable to UK income tax) and the money value of any other benefits received other than in cash. Pension contributions payable by the employer are excluded.

Reserves

Accumulated funds that finance net assets. Usable reserves are generated from realised gains and can be used to fund expenditure. Unusable reserves are generated from unrealised gains and are not available to support expenditure.

Revaluation Reserve

This reserve contains unrealised revaluation gains from holding non-current assets dating back to 1 April 2007, the date the Reserve was created.

Revenue Expenditure

This refers to the day-to-day running costs of the Authority.

Revenue Support Grant

This is a Government grant to support the Authority's services generally. It is based upon the Government's assessment of how much the Authority needs to spend in order to meet its core statutory duties.



RPI

Retail Price Index – a measure of inflation in the UK. RPI generally produces a higher inflation figure than CPI.

Surplus Assets

An asset that is not being used to deliver services but does not meet the criteria to be classified as either an investment property or an asset held for sale.

Unfunded Pension Scheme

A pension scheme in which pensions are paid from current employer and employee contributions with any shortfall in funding being met by the Government on an annual basis. The Authority operates such schemes for its firefighters.

Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP)

Any additional amounts charged to revenue for the repayment of debt that is in excess of the minimum revenue provision required by statute.

