

Draft Statement of Accounts

2023/24



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**

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Please note that figures are rounded to the nearest thousand (where applicable) throughout the document and may not sum due to rounding.

Narrative Report

Financial Year ended 31 March 2024

Dear Reader,

I am pleased to present the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2023/24, and I hope you will find them of interest.

In what has been another extraordinary year, the Council has continued to operate in challenging financial times, but it is pleasing to report that the Council's financial standing remains strong, with sound financial management practices and controls in place.

My narrative report includes the financial statements with an overall explanation of the Council's financial position during 2023/24 and commentary on the medium-term picture. It also includes information about the operation of the Council and the major influences affecting the accounts. It provides information on service and financial performance over the financial year ending 31 March 2024, risks and community engagement. All this information is given with the aim of providing all stakeholders and interested parties' assurance as to the Council's sound financial standing and that public money has been properly accounted for.

The narrative report is presented under the following headings:

About our Area and our Council

Our Priorities and Commitments (Plan on a Page 2024 to 2026)

Financial Overview of 2023/24

A Summary of the Council's Financial Performance in 2023/24

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27

Explanation of the Financial Statements

Corporate and Strategic Risks

Community Engagement and Feedback

Further Information

About our Area and our Council

- The borough is located in central Hertfordshire covering an area of approximately 130 square kilometres. Around 79 per cent of the borough is currently designated as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- It includes the two towns of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City (WGC) and eight other large villages and settlements to the north and south of these towns. Around 76 per cent of the population live in the two towns.
- The borough's location on radial routes out of London means it is highly accessible by road and rail with the A1(M) and the East Coast Main Line running north and south through the borough, and the M25 located just to the south of the borough.
- The borough's population is estimated to be around 119,900 at mid-2021, an increase of around 8.5% since the 2011 Census.
- There is a significant student population at the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield in the College Lane and de Havilland campuses, and at two other college campuses at Oaklands College in Welwyn Garden City and the Royal Veterinary College in Potters Bar.
- The borough continues to offer good employment opportunities with more than one job available for every working age resident, with many people commuting into the borough to work and commuting out towards London.
- The health of the local population is generally very good, with life expectancy recorded above the national average for males and females and there are currently no health indicators in which the borough is significantly worse than the national average.
- We are one of ten borough and district councils in Hertfordshire that work together with the county council and many different town and parish councils to provide a wide range of local services.
- We are represented by 48 borough councillors in 16 wards who are directly elected by public vote to each serve up to four years term of office, with a Cabinet made up of 7 members of a joint administration as at 31 March 2024.
- A Mayor and Deputy Mayor are appointed to serve one year terms of office.
- We directly employ over 400 full time equivalent staff across key services that are responsible for housing, planning, environment, finance, public health, leisure, community, law and place.
- We work with many community and commercial partners who provide local services on our behalf, some of whom are contracted on long term partnerships to deliver high quality value for money services to residents and businesses.



H

Homes to be proud of

- Build new social and affordable homes
- High-quality homes for all
- Support and prevent homelessness
- Plan for future homes in the right places



E

Enable an economy that delivers for everyone

- Champion local businesses
- Support vibrant town centres
- Enable access to amenities in our neighbourhood centres
- Boost the economy in rural areas



A

Action on Climate Change

- Renew our commitments to be a net zero Council by 2030
- Step up climate change adaptation and mitigation measures
- Lead by example and encourage others to make positive change
- Increase and promote biodiversity



R

Run an effective council

- Be accessible
- Be accountable and adopt a first time right approach
- Make financial decisions to deliver efficient and quality services
- Build our reputation, locally and with partners



T

Together, create opportunities for our communities

- Be proud of our environment and heritage
- Promote health and wellbeing through local leisure and cultural opportunities
- Celebrate our diverse cultures and communities
- Help us feel safer where we live

WE WILL BE: **COLLABORATIVE OPEN RESPONSIBLE EXCELLENT**



1. Financial Overview of 2023/24

The budget and Council Tax for 2023/24 was set by Full Council in February 2023 with the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27. The budget set out the detailed financial plans for the authority in its revenue and capital budgets for the 2023/24 year.

Throughout 2023/24, the Council's finances and services were directly impacted by a general decline in public sector funding from Government, recovery from the pandemic (which impacted on our income streams) and the cost of living crisis.

The Council was able to make use of grants provided by the government to offset some of the additional costs and income losses, as well as using earmarked reserves set aside in previous financial years. Despite including prudent assumptions for future financial risks, the future remains uncertain. More details on the impacts are set out in section 2.8.

Whilst for 2023/24, our overall Government funding increased, this increase was not in line with inflation which meant a real-terms cut to our funding. This follows a substantial period where the Government continued to reduce funding to Local Government. The Council set its budget in order to respond to these financial challenges, but each year these challenges get harder to achieve. The focus of the Council has remained on improving efficiency whilst also embracing new technology and ways of working, which has allowed us to continue investment in front line services. In 2023/24 we successfully implemented savings whilst also contributing to our strategic reserves.

The Council set a General Fund Budget of £14.77m for the year and the Council Tax requirement for the borough was £10.123m, with a parish precept of £2.031m, giving a total Council Tax requirement of £12.154m. The other key income comes from government grants and the retention of a small proportion of business rates collected. The General Fund outturn was £14.03m, and contributions from reserves have resulted in a net decrease in the General Fund balance of £0.015m.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net budget was £13.05m and there was a planned increase to the HRA reserve of £0.24m. The final HRA outturn position was a £0.19m increase to the HRA reserve.

At 31 March 2024 the Council has £1.209bn of Non-Current Assets on its balance sheet, of which £1.042bn relates to the HRA Council Dwellings. The net value of Non-Current assets decreased by £0.085m over the year. There were additions of £27.959m due to capital expenditure and £11.75m of Non-Current assets were disposed of.

2. A Summary of the Council's Financial Performance in 2023/24

2.1 General Fund Revenue Outturn

The Statement of Accounts sets out the Council's spending and financing in line with accounting and statutory requirements. The Council has a very robust financial position and has sound financial management.

The outturn was a contribution from general reserves of £0.015m, which compares to an original budgeted contribution from reserves of £0.617m.

The below table shows a summary of the services budget and net expenditure outturn.

| | Original Budget £'000 | Actual £'000 | Variance £'000 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Customer Service and Transformation | 1,516 | 1,628 | 112 |
| Finance | 5,754 | 5,049 | (705) |
| ICT and Digital | 1,825 | 1,791 | (34) |
| Legal and Governance | 2,797 | 2,735 | (62) |
| Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) | 11,892 | 11,203 | (689) |
| Leisure, Community and Cultural Services | 2,922 | 2,990 | 68 |
| Planning | 789 | 1,496 | 707 |
| Regeneration and Economic Development | (3,010) | (3,366) | (356) |
| Executive Director (Place) | 701 | 1,120 | 419 |
| Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change) | (928) | (1,198) | (269) |
| Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) | 8,842 | 8,545 | (298) |
| Senior Leadership Team | 505 | 404 | (101) |
| Net Recharge to the Housing Revenue Account | (6,243) | (6,045) | 198 |
| Net Operating Expenditure | 14,769 | 14,029 | (740) |
| Capital Financing, Interest Costs and Debt Impairment | 1,934 | 172 | (1,762) |
| Total Net Expenditure | 16,703 | 14,201 | (2,502) |
| Funded by: | | | |
| Retained Business Rates | (3,950) | (2,266) | 1,684 |
| Government Grants | (1,158) | (1,388) | (230) |
| Council Tax | (12,152) | (12,152) | - |
| Collection fund deficit/(surplus) | 2,579 | (1,750) | (4,329) |
| Total Funding | (14,681) | (17,556) | (2,875) |
| Net Outturn | 2,022 | (3,355) | (5,377) |
| Parish Precepts | 2,031 | 2,031 | - |
| Net Contribution (from) / to Earmarked Reserves | (3,436) | 1,339 | 4,775 |
| Net (Increase) / Decrease in General Fund | 617 | 15 | (601) |

The significant variances contained within the outturn are as follows:

- Housing Benefit - £0.670m net adverse variance on housing benefit payments due to the amount of subsidy allowed to be claimed being less than rental prices, such as for out-of-borough accommodation and use of bed and breakfast.
- Leisure, Community and Cultural Services - £0.663m net adverse variance on leisure facilities – the cost of living crisis and lower footfall than anticipated has caused reductions in income at Campus West.
- Interest and Investment Income - £1.607m net favourable variance. Interest and investment income received by the Council has been higher than expected due to lower capital spend than budgeted and higher interest rates throughout the year.

The Outturn as reported in this section and Housing Revenue Outturn provide the Outturn as reported to Cabinet in the Expenditure and Financing Analysis.

Further information on the movement of earmarked reserves can be found in Note 8 – Earmarked Reserves.

2.2 Housing Revenue Account Outturn

The Council is legally obliged to hold separate accounts for the running of its housing stock. The balance at the end of the year was £2.952m.

A comparison of actual spending during the year and the original budget is summarised below. The Housing Revenue Account outturn was a £188k contribution to balances, compared to a budgeted contribution of £242k from balances.

| | Original Budget £'000 | Actual £'000 | Variance £'000 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Income | (60,036) | (60,041) | (5) |
| Expenditure | 46,055 | 75,005 | 28,951 |
| HRA Share of Corporate Democratic Core | 928 | 795 | (133) |
| Net Cost of Service | (13,053) | 15,760 | 28,813 |
| Statutory Items Expenditure | 12,811 | (15,948) | (28,759) |
| Net (Increase) / Decrease in HRA Balance | (242) | (188) | 54 |

This table summarises the Housing Revenue Account outturn as reported to Cabinet. The key variances in drawdown from balances are:

- (£2.019m) favourable Expenditure variance on interest paid. The amount of interest paid was lower than budgeted due to a lower level of borrowing than anticipated, mainly linked to the rephasing of capital schemes to later years.
- £1.163m net adverse expenditure variance on repairs due to increased costs for voids, additional damp and mould cases, and higher material costs.
- (£1.321m) favourable expenditure variance on the Stock Condition Survey. Works have not completed, and funding will be transferred to an earmarked reserve to be used in 2024/25.
- (£1.587m) favourable Expenditure variance on the depreciation charge. This charge is based upon actual valuation of properties. The depreciation charge is credited to the major repairs reserve to fund the capital programme. The reduction to the charge will be offset by an increase in the revenue contribution to capital. This means both the revenue and capital funds will not be materially impacted by changes in valuation.

2.3 Capital Outturn

The total capital expenditure in the 2023/24 financial year was £29.52m, compared with an original budget of £41.33m, resulting in a favourable variance of £11.81m. This comparison relates to spend against original budgets, which do not include re-phased amounts from 2022/23.

| | Original Budget | Actual | Variance |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Executive Director - Finance and Transformation (GF) | 1,196 | 2,936 | 1,740 |
| Executive Director - Place (GF) | 415 | 1,379 | 964 |
| Service Director - Property Maintenance and Climate Change (GF) | 715 | 370 | (345) |
| Service Director - Resident and Neighbourhood (GF) | 637 | 1,911 | 1,274 |
| Executive Director - Finance and Transformation (HRA) | - | 34 | 34 |
| Executive Director - Place (HRA) | 9,887 | 7,223 | (2,664) |
| Service Director - Property Maintenance and Climate Change (HRA) | 28,352 | 15,437 | (12,915) |
| Service Director - Resident and Neighbourhood (HRA) | 125 | 230 | 105 |
| Capital Expenditure Out-Turn | 41,327 | 29,519 | (11,808) |
| Funded By: | | | |
| Capital Grants and Contributions | 27,958 | 2,699 | (25,259) |
| Borrowing | 8,008 | 1,205 | (6,803) |
| Capital Receipts and Reserves | 592 | 19,651 | 19,059 |
| Revenue Contribution to Capital | 4,769 | 5,963 | 1,194 |
| Total Funding Received | 41,327 | 29,519 | (11,808) |

The main projects undertaken during the year include:

- £1.93m on the completion of the building of a new crematorium.
- £7.21m on the purchase and development of affordable housing properties.
- £15.44m on capital improvements and replacements of major components for the Council's Housing stock.

There was a reduction in spend against the original budget due to re-phasing of some of the Council's larger regeneration and development projects. These schemes are still pressing ahead, and the budget will be utilised for the projects in future years. For areas of overspend, budget was rephased from 2022/23, or there is budget for these projects in future years, and these budgets will be brought forward to cover the overspend.

Balance Sheet

The Council has maintained a very strong balance sheet, with £1.222bn of Non-Current Assets as at 31 March 2024 and current assets of £28.869m, current liabilities of £59.054m, and long term liabilities of £247.918m. Furthermore, the Council has usable reserves of 48.511m.

| | At 31 March 2024 £'000 | At 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Non-current Assets | 1,222,183 | 1,281,657 |
| Current Assets | 28,869 | 46,310 |
| Current Liabilities | (59,054) | (79,282) |
| Long Term Liabilities | (247,918) | (225,803) |
| Net Assets | 944,080 | 1,022,882 |
| Represented by: | | |
| Usable Reserves | (48,511) | (45,133) |
| Unusable Reserves | (895,569) | (977,749) |
| Total Reserves | (944,080) | (1,022,882) |

2.4 Pensions Liability

This year the pension fund net position changed to a surplus of £12.193m from a surplus of £0.365m in 2022/23, before the application of an asset ceiling. This change is mainly due to an increase in both asset values and liabilities.

As pension fund assets are now greater than funded obligations, an asset ceiling has been applied as accounting standards restrict the amount of surplus that can be disclosed. This adjusts the net closing position on the Pension Fund to a deficit of £21.91m.

The pension asset/liability has a significant effect on the net worth of the Council; however, our annual contribution to the fund and the statutory arrangements for funding any deficit over time means that the financial position of the authority remains healthy, and sudden swings in liability do not materially affect the council in the medium term.

The last Triennial pension valuation was based on March 2022, and contribution rates have been agreed until March 2026.

2.5 Borrowing and Capital Financing

The Authority currently has £220.9m borrowing outstanding relating to the Housing Stock debt that transferred on 1 April 2012 and the development of new social housing. In addition, the Council has £25.15m of borrowing outstanding relating to General Fund capital expenditure. The Council has set a borrowing limit of £375.44m. There has been new long-term borrowing of £25m in 2023/24 with no early redemptions.

The Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2027/28 was agreed by Council in February 2023.

During 2023/24 there was a reduced need to borrow externally compared to original forecasts. This was due to rephasing of capital projects (as set out in section 2.3), resulting in higher reserve balances at year end. This led to favourable variances on the General Fund outturn borrowing position.

2.6 Provisions, contingent liabilities and assets

There was a revaluation of properties undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency in 2023, which saw a significant increase in rateable values in the area, significantly more than the national average. Due to these revaluations, there has been a net increase of £1.605m for Business Rates appeals provision. This has been based on the appeals lodged with the Valuation Office as at 31 March 2024 and other available data such as Government statistics.

There has also been a net increase of £0.563m for insurance claims provisions, based on the Council's estimated liabilities under its self-insurance arrangements and outstanding legal claims.

2.7 Significant changes in accounting policies

The accounts for 2023/24 are presented in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) which specifies the principles and practices of accounting required to give a 'true and fair' view of the financial position and the transactions of a local authority.

The Code sets out the proper accounting practices required by section 21(2) of the Local Government Act 2003. These proper practices apply to the Statement of Accounts prepared in accordance with the statutory framework established for England by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The 2023/24 Code incorporates required accounting standard amendments, although there were no material impacts on the council as a result of the amendments.

2.8 Economic Climate

Since 2010 the Council has delivered approximately £22m of efficiency savings to maintain a balanced budget ensuring it balances the reduction in funding received from central government and growth in demand for some services. There are a number of uncertainties relating to local government funding that will impact the Council's finances over time.

These include:

- The Council's medium-term forecasts are dependent upon the outcome of the Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and 75% Business Rates Retention system, and a full reset of all the mechanisms within the business rates system. Forecasting the Council's likely level of income over the next four years has required a large degree of judgement and estimation.
- The Government has also announced further proposed changes to the New Homes Bonus scheme and there is work continuing on the fundamental review of the Local Government funding regime.
- Continued economic changes could have material impacts on the Council's finances, as service demand would be impacted by such changes. This could include increased housing and temporary accommodation demand, increased welfare support, adverse impacts on borrowing costs, increased fuel and utility costs and impacts on commercial property and other income.

- See the Medium-Term Financial Plan for how the Council plans to manage its resources over a five-year period in order to meet the Council's overall corporate objectives. [Financial Strategy – Principles \(welhat.gov.uk\)](https://www.welhat.gov.uk/financial-strategy-principles)
- Since the balance sheet date, the Government has announced a General Election. The result of the elections may impact on the Governments planned funding reforms and will need to be considered when the medium-term forecasts are updated in the summer of 2024.

2.9 Going Concern

The accounts are prepared on a going concern basis; that is, on the assumption that the functions of the Council will continue in operational existence for twelve months from the date that the accounts are authorised for issue.

The Council has undertaken cash flow modelling through to May 2025 which demonstrates the Council's ability to work within its Capital Financing Requirement and cash management framework.

It is therefore noted that based on the Council's cash flow forecasting and resultant liquidity position, cash and short term investment balances of £14.3m at 31 March 2024 and the ability to borrow short term if required, the Council thereby concludes that it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis, and that the Council will be a going concern, 12 months from the date of approval of the accounts. This demonstrates that the Council has sufficient liquidity over the same period, assuming forecast minimal short-term borrowings for liquidity purposes if required.

Furthermore, the Code requires that local authorities prepare their accounts on a going concern basis, as they can only be discontinued under statutory prescription. For these reasons, the Council does not consider that there is material uncertainty in respect of its ability to continue as a going concern.

2.10 Collection Fund Rates for Council Tax and National-Non Domestic Rates

The collection rates achieved during 2023/24 are summarised below:

| Collection Rate 2023/24 | Budget | Actual |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|
| Council Tax | 99.4% | 97.24% |
| NDR | 99.7% | 98.04% |

Collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates remain at a very similar level to 2022/23. The budgeted value is the long term collection rate target, not the in year collection rate target.

A deficit remains on the collection fund. However, government grants have been set aside in earmarked reserves to support with the repayment of the deficit.

2.11 Non-Current Asset Revaluation

The Council appointed Avison Young to carry out a rolling valuation programme of a proportion of the General Fund assets in 2023/24.

The District Valuer was appointed to carry out a desktop valuation of the Housing Revenue Account's housing stock as at 31 March 2024.

The impact of these valuations is reported within the notes to these accounts.

3. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2026/27

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023/24 to 2026/27 was agreed by Full Council in February 2023. This sets out the Council's strategy for maintaining financial sustainability and a commitment to provide the best possible value for money for the community.

It also provides a framework for the Council to plan and manage its resources over the current Comprehensive Spending Review period in order to meet the Council's overall corporate objectives.

The council is in a good overall financial position with General Fund non earmarked reserves of £6.77m at the end of 2023/24, and a HRA Balance of £2.95m This is a direct result of robust financial management and a prolonged period of achieving efficiencies to balance the budget. However, in line with other local authorities, the Council is facing further severe financial constraints as central government grants continue to reduce in real-terms. At the same time the demand on some of the Council's services continue to grow and further responsibilities are put on Local Government as new burdens.

The Council is required to find a further £2.0m of savings on the general fund by 2025/26, even with a planned use of reserves, in order to live within its means and maintain a reasonable cushion in reserves. This is a significant challenge and whilst the focus remains on safeguarding services it may not be possible to find efficiencies of this magnitude and guarantee no impact upon frontline services.

Despite the challenging environment, the Council seeks to continue to reduce its costs, sharing good practice, simplifying delivery processes and reducing the Council's administration costs. In addition to this, housing related government policy proposals do create challenges for the sustainability of the HRA over the medium term, which may be compounded if caps on rent increases were to be implemented again in future years. The council will need to continue to borrow externally to fund the Affordable Housing Programme going forward.

There remain a high number of uncertainties and risks to the Council's finances in the medium term, the details of which are contained within the MTFS. The Council will continue to experience pressure on services arising from demographic and government policy changes and continued high expectations of service delivery. We will keep our MTFS under review and make changes accordingly to reflect the rapidly changing local government environment.

4. Explanation of the Financial Statements

Movement in Reserves statement (MiRS)

The movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council is shown in this statement. This is analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e., those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other reserves. The Movement in Reserves Statement is a summary of the changes that have taken place in the bottom half of the Balance Sheet over the financial year. It does this by analysing:

- the increase or decrease in the net worth of the authority as a result of incurring expenses and generating income,
- the increase or decrease in the net worth of the authority as a result of movements in the current or fair value of its assets,
- movements between reserves to increase or reduce the resources available to the authority according to statutory provisions.

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. The Council raises taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and Movement in Reserves statements.

Balance Sheet

The value at the end of the reporting period (i.e. 31 March) of the assets and liabilities recognised by the authority are shown on the balance sheet. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council.

Reserves are reported in two categories:

- Usable reserves - 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 the capital receipts reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt),
- Unusable reserves - those that the authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves 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 are 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 movement in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing or financing activities.

The net cash flow 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 Council.

Notes to the core financial statements

The notes provide support to the core financial statements, inform the reader and give sufficient information to present a good understanding of the Council's activities.

Statement of Accounting Policies

These set out the principles, rules, conventions and practices applied that specify how the effects of transactions and other events are reflected in the accounts.

Supplementary financial statements:

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Income and Expenditure statement

The HRA Income and Expenditure Statement shows the economic cost in the year of providing housing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from rents and government grants. Authorities charge rents to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost.

The increase or decrease in the year on the basis on which rents are raised is shown in the Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement.

The Collection Fund

The Collection Fund is an agent's statement that reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate Collection Fund. The statement shows the transactions of the billing authority in relation to the collection from taxpayers and distribution to local authorities and the Government of council tax and non-domestic rates.

Notes to the supplementary financial statements

The notes provide support to the supplementary financial statements; inform the reader and give sufficient information to present a good understanding of the Council's activities. The notes are part of the detail that helps to ensure the statements show a true and fair view of the Council's financial position.

5. Corporate and Strategic Risks

The council continues to operate in a challenging environment. We are a complex organisation, delivering on a range of priorities for our communities against a backdrop of tighter finances and the need to continuously improve efficiency and customer focus. We work to deliver our priorities in partnership with many organisations across the public, private and third sectors.

Within this context the management of risk, including opportunity risk, is essential to ensure the achievement of our objectives. The effective management of risk is a statutory requirement and is also a central component of the council's governance.

A planned approach to the identification, analysis and mitigation of risk helps to plan for the right balance between innovation and change, and the avoidance of unexpected risk events.

A risk management framework is in place for the Council's risks which are managed under two main areas of strategic and operational risks. The current top strategic risks from the council's risk register include:

- Recruitment and Retention
- Legal Challenge to Planning Decisions
- Asset Data
- Damp, Mould and Condensation
- Complaints
- Financial Sustainability
- Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Standards
- Planning for, and delivering, high quality affordable homes for everyone
- Management of Council Owned Housing Property Assets

More detail on the strategic risks and the assessment of risks as at 31 March 2024 can be found here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 6th February 2024, 6.30 pm – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council \(welhat.gov.uk\)](#)

6. Community Engagement and Feedback

The council welcomes the views of local residents, businesses, user groups, and other stakeholders about the Council's performance. There are also a number of qualitative performance indicators that assist in explaining how the council's services are perceived by its users.

Further information about the Council's performance can be found on our website at the following link: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 04/06/2024 18:30 \(welhat.gov.uk\)](#)

For further information on how you can be consulted on Council decisions, or to provide feedback on our services, please visit <http://www.welhat.gov.uk/Haveyoursay>

7. Further Information

If you would like to receive further information about these accounts, please do not hesitate to contact me at accountancy@welhat.gov.uk or 01707 357000.

Richard Baker (CPFA)
Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)
31 May 2024

Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis is a note to the accounts that shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, rents, council tax and business rates) by local authorities in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by authorities in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the council's directorates / services / departments and is not a primary statement of the accounts. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

2023/24

| | Notes | Out-Turn as reported to Cabinet £'000 | Adjustments ¹ £'000 | Net Expenditure Chargeable to the GF and HRA £'000 | Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis | | | Net Expenditure in the CIES £'000 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | | | | Adjustments for Capital Purposes £'000 | Net Charge for Pensions Adjustments £'000 | Other Differences £'000 | |
| Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) | | 11,203 | (7,096) | 4,126 | 1,394 | (376) | (12) | 5,131 |
| Executive Director (Place) | | 1,120 | 2,116 | 3,236 | 2,352 | (353) | (12) | 5,225 |
| Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change) | | (1,198) | (1,483) | (2,680) | 953 | (29) | 1 | (1,756) |
| Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) | | 8,545 | 793 | 9,338 | 6,818 | (149) | (9) | 15,998 |
| Senior Leadership Team | | 404 | (367) | 37 | 0 | (26) | (2) | 9 |
| Housing Revenue Account | | (188) | (7,491) | (7,680) | 14,130 | (372) | (1) | 6,077 |
| Net cost of Services | | 19,886 | (13,528) | 6,377 | 25,647 | (1,305) | (35) | 30,684 |
| Other operating expenditure | 9 | | | 2,031 | 4,805 | 0 | 0 | 6,836 |
| (Income) and expenditure in relation to investment | 10 | | | 6,184 | 0 | (48) | (682) | 5,454 |
| Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income and Expenditure | 11 | | | (17,558) | (3,008) | 0 | (407) | (20,973) |
| (Surplus) or Deficit | | | | (2,996) | 27,444 | (1,353) | (1,124) | 22,001 |
| Opening General Fund and HRA Balances² | | | | (20,828) | | | | |
| Less/Plus (Surplus) or Deficit on General Fund and HRA Balance in Year | | | | (2,996) | | | | |
| Closing General Fund and HRA Balances at 31 March² | | | | (23,794) | | | | |

2022/23

| | Notes | Outturn as reported to Cabinet | | Adjustment ¹ | Net Expenditure Chargeable to the GF and HRA | Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis | | | Net Expenditure in the CIES |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | £'000 | £'000 | | | Adjustments for Capital Purposes | Net Charge for Pensions Adjustments | Other Differences | |
| Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) | | 11,251 | (7,062) | | 4,189 | 346 | 541 | 235 | 5,311 |
| Executive Director (Place) | | 1,851 | 2,394 | | 4,245 | 3,284 | 803 | 6 | 8,339 |
| Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change) | | 83 | (1,636) | | (1,554) | 836 | 60 | 0 | (657) |
| Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) | | 7,822 | 1,152 | | 8,973 | 655 | 380 | 3 | 10,012 |
| Senior Leadership Team | | 928 | (792) | | 136 | 0 | 78 | 0 | 214 |
| Housing Revenue Account | | (111) | (5,874) | | (5,985) | (3,881) | 703 | (7) | (9,170) |
| Net cost of Services | | 21,824 | (11,818) | | 10,004 | 1,240 | 2,565 | 237 | 14,049 |
| Other operating expenditure | 9 | | | | 1,894 | 845 | 0 | 0 | 2,739 |
| (Income) and expenditure in relation to investment | 10 | | | | 6,181 | 1,500 | 1,164 | (173) | 8,673 |
| Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income and Expenditure | 11 | | | | (19,444) | (6,948) | 0 | 2,437 | (23,955) |
| (Surplus) or Deficit | | | | | (1,365) | (3,363) | 3,729 | 2,501 | 1,506 |
| Opening General Fund and HRA Balances² | | | | | (19,463) | | | | |
| Less/Plus (Surplus) or Deficit on General Fund and HRA Balance in Year | | | | | (1,365) | | | | |
| Closing General Fund and HRA Balances at 31 March² | | | | | (20,828) | | | | |

¹ Some transactions are not reported to Cabinet in our monitoring as this focusses on activities delivered by services.

² For a split of this balance between the General Fund and the HRA and Earmarked Reserves – see the Movement in Reserves Statement.

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. Councils raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost.

| | Notes | 2023/2024 | | | 2022/2023 | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Gross Expenditure £'000 | Gross Income £'000 | Net Expenditure £'000 | Gross Expenditure £'000 | Gross Income £'000 | Net Expenditure £'000 |
| Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) | | 35,387 | (30,256) | 5,131 | 39,792 | (34,481) | 5,311 |
| Executive Director (Place) | | 17,067 | (11,843) | 5,225 | 21,310 | (12,971) | 8,339 |
| Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change) | | 1,264 | (3,020) | (1,756) | 1,595 | (2,252) | (657) |
| Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) | | 18,899 | (2,901) | 15,998 | 13,255 | (3,243) | 10,012 |
| Senior Leadership Team | | 9 | 1 | 9 | 214 | - | 214 |
| Housing Revenue Account | | 64,939 | (58,862) | 6,077 | 45,877 | (55,047) | (9,170) |
| Cost of Services | | 137,565 | (106,881) | 30,684 | 122,043 | (107,994) | 14,049 |
| Other operating expenditure | 9 | | | 6,836 | | | 2,739 |
| (Income) and expenditure in relation to investment | 10 | | | 5,454 | | | 8,673 |
| Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure | 11 | | | (20,973) | | | (23,955) |
| (Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services | | | | 22,001 | | | 1,506 |
| (Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of property, plant and equipment assets | | | | 32,806 | | | (47,477) |
| Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability / (asset) | | | | 23,626 | | | (45,972) |
| Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure | | | | 56,432 | | | (93,449) |
| Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure | | | | 78,433 | | | (91,943) |

Movement in Reserves Statement

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the council, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e., those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other reserves. The '*surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services*' line shows the true economic cost of providing the council's services, more details of which are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund balance and the Housing Revenue Account for council tax setting and dwellings rent setting purposes. The '*net increase /decrease before transfers to reserves*' line shows the statutory General Fund balance and Housing Revenue Account Balance before any discretionary transfers to / from reserves undertaken by the council.

2023/24

| | Notes | General Fund Balance £'000 | Housing Revenue Account £'000 | Usable Capital Receipts Reserve £'000 | Capital Grants Unapplied £'000 | Earmarked Reserves £'000 | Total Usable Reserves £'000 | Unusable Reserves £'000 | Total Council Reserves £'000 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Balance at 31 March 2023 | | (6,785) | (2,764) | (19,256) | (5,049) | (11,279) | (45,133) | (977,749) | (1,022,882) |
| Changes | | | | | | | | | |
| Balance at 01 April 2022 | | (6,785) | (2,764) | (19,256) | (5,049) | (11,279) | (45,133) | (977,749) | (1,022,882) |
| Movement in Reserves during 2023/24 | | | | | | | | | |
| Total comprehensive income and expenditure | | 6,130 | 15,871 | - | - | - | 22,001 | 56,802 | 78,803 |
| Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations | 7 | (7,457) | (17,512) | (91) | (322) | - | (25,381) | 25,381 | - |
| Transfers to / from reserves | 8 | 1,340 | 1,452 | - | 1 | (2,792) | 2 | (3) | (1) |
| Increase / (Decrease) in 2023/24 | | 13 | (189) | (91) | (321) | (2,792) | (3,378) | 82,180 | 78,802 |
| Balance at 31 March 2024 | | (6,772) | (2,953) | (19,347) | (5,370) | (14,071) | (48,511) | (895,568) | (944,080) |

Movement in Reserves Statement

2022/23

| | <i>Notes</i> | General Fund Balance £'000 | Housing Revenue Account £'000 | Useable Capital Receipts Reserve £'000 | Capital Grants Unapplied £'000 | Earmarked Reserves £'000 | Total Usable Reserves £'000 | Unusable Reserves £'000 | Total Council Reserves £'000 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Balance at 31 March 2022 | | (6,682) | (2,653) | (20,265) | (5,544) | (10,128) | (45,272) | (902,405) | (947,677) |
| Changes | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Balance at 01 April 2021 | | (6,682) | (2,653) | (20,265) | (5,544) | (10,128) | (45,272) | (902,405) | (947,677) |
| Movement in Reserves during 2022/23 | | | | | | | - | | - |
| Total comprehensive income and expenditure | | 3,257 | (1,752) | - | - | - | 1,505 | (75,891) | (74,386) |
| Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations | 7 | (4,514) | 1,642 | 1,009 | 493 | - | (1,370) | 16,190 | 14,819 |
| Transfers to / from reserves | 8 | 1,152 | - | - | - | (1,152) | - | (46) | (46) |
| Increase / (Decrease) in 2022/23 | | (105) | (110) | 1,009 | 493 | (1,152) | 135 | (59,747) | (59,613) |
| Balance at 31 March 2023 | | (6,787) | (2,763) | (19,256) | (5,051) | (11,280) | (45,137) | (962,152) | (1,007,290) |

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the balance sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the authority. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council.

| | <i>Notes</i> | 31 March 2024 £'000 | 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Property, plant and equipment | 14 | 1,208,606 | 1,268,600 |
| Heritage Assets | | 83 | 89 |
| Investment properties | 15 | 4,520 | 4,520 |
| Intangible assets | 16 | 1,114 | 278 |
| Long-term Investments | 17.2 | 3,538 | 3,681 |
| Long-term Debtors | 18 | 4,322 | 4,489 |
| Long-term assets | | 1,222,183 | 1,281,657 |
| Short-term investments | 17.2 | 14,361 | 23,735 |
| Inventories | | 32 | 30 |
| Short-term debtors | 18 | 14,476 | 22,045 |
| Assets held for sale | 20 | - | 500 |
| Current assets | | 28,869 | 46,310 |
| Short-term borrowing | 17.2 | (28,710) | (50,202) |
| Short-term creditors | 21 | (30,239) | (28,230) |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 19 | (105) | (850) |
| Current liabilities | | (59,054) | (79,282) |
| Provisions | 22 | (5,040) | (2,979) |
| Long-term borrowing | 17.2 | (218,832) | (221,051) |
| Other long-term liabilities | 21/33 | (24,011) | (1,738) |
| Capital Grants Receipts in Advance | 29 | (35) | (35) |
| Long-term liabilities | | (247,918) | (225,803) |
| Net assets | | 944,080 | 1,022,882 |
| Financed by : | | | |
| General Fund balance | | (6,771) | (6,785) |
| Housing Revenue Account | | (2,952) | (2,764) |
| Usable Capital Receipts Reserve | | (19,347) | (19,256) |
| Capital Grants Unapplied Account | | (5,370) | (5,049) |
| Earmarked reserves | 8 | (14,071) | (11,279) |
| Usable reserves | | (48,511) | (45,133) |
| Revaluation Reserve | 23.1 | (419,630) | (459,253) |
| Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve | 23.2 | 471 | 327 |
| Capital Adjustment Account | 23.3 | (497,325) | (517,756) |
| Pensions Reserve | 23.4 | 21,908 | (365) |
| Deferred Capital Receipts | | (4,146) | (4,299) |
| Collection Fund Adjustment Account | 23.5 | 3,012 | 3,420 |
| Accumulated Compensation Absence and Employment Reserve | | 141 | 177 |
| Unusable reserves | | (895,569) | (977,749) |
| Total reserves | | (944,080) | (1,022,882) |

Cash Flow Statement

The cash flow statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as: operating, investing, and financing activities.

Cash Flow Statement

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Net surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services | (22,001) | (1,506) |
| Depreciation | 19,349 | 18,667 |
| Impairment and downward valuations | 26,557 | 2,239 |
| Amortisation | 93 | 94 |
| Increase/(decrease) in creditors | 3,540 | (8,919) |
| (Increase)/decrease in debtors | 11,181 | (3,192) |
| (Increase)/decrease in inventories | (2) | (1) |
| Movement in pension liability | (1,353) | 3,730 |
| Carrying amount of non-current assets and non-current assets held for sale, sold or derecognised | 9,379 | 9,295 |
| Other non-cash items charged to the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services | 2,204 | 3,078 |
| Adjustment to surplus or deficit on the provision of services for noncash movements* | 70,947 | 24,991 |
| Proceeds from short (not considered to be cash equivalents) and long-term investments (includes investments in associates, joint ventures and subsidiaries) | 23,648 | 22,079 |
| Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets | (4,574) | (8,661) |
| Any other items for which the cash effects are investing or financing cash flows | (2,686) | (7,308) |
| Adjust for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities* | 16,388 | 6,110 |
| Net Cash flows from operating activities | 65,334 | 29,595 |
| Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets | (26,700) | (47,970) |
| Purchase of short and long-term investments | (14,234) | (23,648) |
| Other payments for investing activities | - | - |
| Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets | 4,727 | 8,664 |
| Other receipts from investing activities | 2,999 | 9,134 |
| Net cash flows from investing activities | (33,208) | (53,820) |
| Cash receipts of short and long-term borrowing | 25,000 | 51,000 |
| Repayments of short and long-term borrowing | (48,619) | (23,652) |
| Other receipts/(payments) for financing activities | (7,761) | (1,320) |
| Net cash flows from financing activities | (31,380) | 26,028 |
| Net increase or (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents | 746 | 1,803 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period | (850) | (2,653) |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period | (105) | (850) |
| Net increase or (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents | 745 | 1,803 |

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Interest received | 1,506 | 1,048 |
| Interest paid | (7,271) | (6,221) |

Notes to the accounts

1. Accounting policies

1.1 General principles

The statement of accounts summarises the Council's financial transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2024. The authority is required to prepare an annual statement of accounts by the Accounts and Audit regulations 2015 (as amended), and this requires the preparation to be in accordance with proper accounting practices.

These practices under Section 21 of the 2003 Local Government Act primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under Section 12 of the 2003 Local Government Act.

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

1.2 Accruals of income and expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when the 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 in 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 for the income that might not be collected.

1.3 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that

mature in three calendar months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the Cash Flow Statement cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Council's cash management.

1.4 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 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.

1.5 Charges to revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the real cost of holding non-current 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 losses can be written off,
- amortisation of intangible non-current assets attributable to the service.

The Council is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisation. However, it is required to make a prudent annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are therefore replaced by the contribution in the general fund balance (Minimum Revenue Provision or the statutory repayment of loans fund advances), by way of an adjusting transaction with the capital adjustment account in the movement in reserves statement for the difference between the two.

1.6 Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates (England)

The Council acts as a billing authority, or agent on behalf of major preceptors in relation to Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR). In this case the Council is collecting Council Tax and NDR income on behalf of itself and preceptors (Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (HPCC) in relation to Council Tax and Government and HCC in relation to Non-Domestic Rates).

The Council is required by statute to maintain a separate fund (the Collection Fund) for the collection and distribution of amounts due in respect of council tax and NDR. Under the

legislative framework for the Collection Fund, billing authorities, major preceptors and central government share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of council tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted.

The implication for this is that any balance sheet transactions at the year end, in relation to these Agent relationships, are split between the principal parties and, therefore, the balances contained on the Balance Sheet for a particular debt are the Council's own proportion of the debt and associated balances. The proportions of transactions that relate to the other parties to the relationship are shown as debtors or creditors due from/to these parties.

Business Improvement Districts

A Business Improvement District (BID) scheme applies across Welwyn Garden City town centre. The scheme is funded by a BID levy paid by Non-Domestic Rate payers. The authority acts as principal under the scheme, and accounts for income received and expenditure incurred (including contributions to the BID project) within the relevant services within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

1.7 Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled wholly within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages, salaries and paid annual leave and sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits for current employees and are as an expense in the year in which the employee renders the service to the Council. An accrual is made, for the cost of holiday entitlement and other forms of leave earned by employees but not taken before the year end, and which may be carried forward into the next financial year.

Any accrual made is required under statute to be reversed out of the General Fund balance by a credit to the Accumulated Compensation Absences Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Council 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. These costs are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, these are treated in line with statutory provisions outlined under the local government pension scheme section of the accounting policies.

Post-employment Benefits

Employees of the Authority may be members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, administered by Hertfordshire County Council. The scheme provides defined benefits to members including pensions and for some a retirement lump sum, earned as employees working for the Council.

The Local Government Pension Scheme

The Local Government Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme.

The liabilities of the Hertfordshire 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 projected earnings for current employees.

Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate as detailed in the notes to the accounts, under basis for estimating assets and liabilities.

The assets of Hertfordshire Pension Fund attributable to the authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:

- quoted securities – current bid price,
- unquoted securities – professional estimate,
- unitised securities – current bid price,
- property – market value.

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

- 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**, i.e. net interest expense for the Council - the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.
- Re-measurements comprising:
 - **the return on plan assets** – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability – 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 Hertfordshire Pension Fund** – cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

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 fund 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 transfers 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 are 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.

1.8 Events after the Reporting Period

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period 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 are not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events 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.

1.9 Financial Instruments and Financial assets

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the balance sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) 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 CIES is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

Where premiums and discounts have been charged to the CIES, regulations allow the impact on the general fund balance to be spread over future years. The authority has a policy of spreading the gain or loss over the term that was remaining on the loan against which the premium was payable or discount receivable when it was repaid. The reconciliation of amounts charged to the CIES to the net charge required against the general fund balance is managed by a transfer to or from the financial instruments adjustment account in the movement in reserves statement. For most of the borrowings that the Council has, this means that the amount presented on the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year in the loan agreement. Where the financial liability is a short duration payable, like creditors, with no stated interest rate an effective interest calculation has not been made.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the Council's business model for holding those financial assets and their cash flow characteristics.

The Council's financial assets are classified into three types and are measured at:

- amortised cost,
- fair value through profit and loss (FVPL),
- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI).

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 (CIES) for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the investment. For most of the financial assets held by the authority, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the CIES is the amount receivable for the year.

Expected Credit Loss Model

The authority recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost either on a 12-month or lifetime basis. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the authority.

Impairment losses are calculated to reflect the expectation that the future cash flows might not take place because the borrower could default on their obligations. Credit risk plays a crucial part in assessing losses. Where risk has increased significantly since an instrument was initially recognised, losses are assessed on a lifetime basis. Where risk has not increased significantly or remains low, losses are assessed on the basis of 12-month expected losses.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit of Loss

Financial assets that are measured at FVPL are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value. Fair value gains and losses are recognised as they arrive in the surplus or deficit on the provision of services.

Instruments entered into before 1 April 2006

The Council entered into a number of financial guarantees that are not required to be accounted for as financial instruments. These guarantees are reflected in the statement of accounts to the extent that provisions might be required or a contingent liability note is needed.

1.10 Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, or by instalments or in arrears, grants and third party contributions 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 grant or contribution will be received.

Amounts recognised as due to the Authority are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations regarding the use of the grant which if not met would render the grant returnable to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been met are carried as creditors in the Balance Sheet. When conditions are satisfied the item is credited to taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure (non-ringfenced revenue grants and all capital grants) or the appropriate service line in the CIES.

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 Account. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied Account are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

1.11 Heritage Assets

The carrying amounts of heritage assets recognised by the Council is included in the Balance Sheet and are reviewed where there is evidence of impairment of these assets. Any impairment is recognised and measured in accordance with the authority's general policies on impairment.

1.12 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 (e.g. 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.

Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is solely or primarily intended to promote or advertise the authority's goods or services.

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Useful lives for intangibles generally range from between 3-7 years.

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.

1.13 Interests in Companies and Other Entities

The Council had an interest in a company, Now Housing Ltd, that had the nature of a subsidiary. Now Housing Ltd commenced trading in 2020/21 and the Council prepared Group Accounts for the first time in the 2020/21 accounts.

In the Council's own single entity accounts, the interest in the company was recorded as a financial asset at cost less any provision for losses.

Now Housing Ltd ceased trading on 31 March 2023 due to increases in construction costs and inflationary pressures, which, with the limitations on the company's ability to raise rents, have adversely impacted on the ability to identify future viable sites for development. The company has now applied for strike off.

Further information is available online.

1.14 Inventories and Long Term Contracts

Inventories are included in the balance sheet at the lower of cost and net realisable value. The cost of inventories is assigned using the first in – first out (FIFO) costing formula.

Long term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the surplus or deficit on the provision of services with the value of works and services received under the contract during the financial year.

1.15 Investment Property

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

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, based on the amount at which the asset could be exchanged between knowledgeable parties in an arm's length transaction. Investment Properties are not depreciated but are re-valued annually according to market conditions at the year end. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment 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 property are credited to the Financing and Investment line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, and result in a gain for the General Fund balance.

Revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund balance. Gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account or (for any sale where cash received is greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

1.16 Joint Operations

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.

1.17 Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfers 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 operational leases.

Where a lease covers both land and buildings the land and building 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 payments are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets.

The Authority as Lessee

Finance leases

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the balance sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease's inception (or the

present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Authority are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Lease payments are apportioned between:

- a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property, plant and equipment – applied to write down the lease liability, and
- a finance charge (debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

Property, Plant and Equipment recognised under finance leases is accounted for using the policies applied generally to such assets, subject to depreciation being charged over the lease term if this is shorter than the assets estimated useful life.

The authority is not required to raise council tax to cover depreciation or revaluation and impairment losses arising on leased assets (see accounting policy 1.5).

Operating leases

Rentals paid under operational leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the service benefiting from the use of the leased property, plant or equipment. Charges are made on a straight line basis over the life of the lease which generally means that rentals are charged when they become payable.

The Authority as Lessor

Finance leases

Where the authority grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the relevant asset is written out of the balance sheet as a disposal. At the commencement of the lease, 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. A gain, representing the authority's net investment in the lease, is 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), matched by a lease (long-term debtor) asset in the balance sheet.

Lease rentals receivable are apportioned between:

- a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property – applied to write down the lease debtor (together with any premiums received), and
- finance income (credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

The gain credited to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement on disposal is not permitted by statute to increase the general fund balance and is required to be treated as a capital receipt. Where a premium has been received, this is posted out of the general fund balance to the capital receipts reserve in the movement in reserves statement. Where the

amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future financial years, this is posted out of the general fund balance to the deferred capital receipts reserve in the movement in reserves statement. When the future rentals are received, the element for the capital receipt for the disposal of the asset is used to write down the lease debtor. At this point, the deferred capital receipts are transferred to the capital receipts reserve.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of non-current assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are therefore appropriated to the capital adjustment account from the general fund balance in the movement in reserves statement.

Operating Leases

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., if there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease).

1.18 Overheads and support services

Where applicable, the cost of overheads and support services are charged to those that benefit from the supply or services.

1.19 Property Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, for rental to others, 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 in the accounts. Expenditure in excess of £10,000 on non-current assets is capitalised – except in the case of capital grants given to voluntary bodies and community chest payments when the limit is set at £5,000, provided that the non-current asset yields benefits to the Council and the services it provides, for a period of more than one year. This excludes expenditure on routine repairs and maintenance of non-current assets that is charged direct to service revenue accounts.

Where an element of staff time has been capitalised and the actual figures were not available an estimate has been calculated based on the charges to date.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising all expenditure that is directly attributable to bringing the asset into working condition for its intended use. The authority does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred while assets are under construction.

Assets are carried in the balance sheet using the following measurement bases:

- council dwellings: current value determined using the basis of existing use value for social housing basis i.e. 38% of market value,

- property: surplus assets are included in the balance sheet at fair value, determined using the amount that would be paid for the asset in its 'best use',
- property: other land and buildings are included in the balance sheet at current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV),
- property: where no market exists or the property is specialised, current value is measured at depreciated replacement cost,
- vehicles, plant and equipment: depreciated historic cost,
- infrastructure assets: depreciated historic cost,
- community assets: depreciated historic cost,
- assets under construction: depreciated historic cost.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at fair value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. The last full valuation was carried out in March 2014 for General Fund assets, after which we have started valuing all General Fund assets on a rolling programme where all high value (more than £1.0m) assets and approximately 20% of the remaining assets are revalued each year. A full valuation for housing is completed every five years and was last completed in 2020/21. A desktop valuation is completed each year.

Increases in valuations are matched by credits in 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 revaluation loss or an impairment loss previously charged to a service revenue account. Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for by:

- 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 against the relevant service line(s) 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 they 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 for decreases in value explained above.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant service line(s) 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 all property, plant and equipment assets (other than land, certain community assets and assets under construction) where a finite useful life has been determined. This is with the intention of writing off their balance sheet values in equal annual instalments over their remaining expected useful lives. This is commonly referred to as the 'straight line' method. Depreciation is charged from the end of the year following the year of acquisition. Useful lives for asset types are shown below.

| Type of asset | Life (years) |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Council dwellings | 20-60 |
| Other land and buildings | 20-50 |
| Car parks | 25-30 |
| Vehicles, plant and equipment | 5-10 |
| Footway lighting | 20 |

Where an item of property, plant and equipment has major components, the cost of which is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately. Where a component is replaced or restored the carrying amount of the old component is derecognised to avoid double counting; the new component is reflected in the carrying amount. Componentisation does not apply to investment properties.

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current value depreciation charge 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.

Disposals and non-current 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 previously recognised losses in the surplus or deficit on the provision of services. Depreciation is not charged on assets held for sale.

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 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. Any receipts from disposals are credited to the same line in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement. Any

revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the revaluation reserve are transferred to the capital adjustment account.

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. A proportion of capital receipts relating to housing disposals is payable to the government. The balance of receipts remains within 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 (the capital financing requirement). Receipts are appropriated to the Capital Receipts Reserve through the movement in reserves statement.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of non-current assets 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.

1.20 Rent to mortgage properties

The Council's equity interest in rent to mortgage property is assessed as current vacant possession value, based on a beacon principle, less the remaining discount awarded but not taken. The asset is considered to be a long term debtor and this is matched by a deferred capital receipt.

1.21 Provisions and Contingent Liabilities

Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Council a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by the transfer of economic benefit, where a reliable estimate can be made, but where the timing of the transfer is uncertain. For instance, the Council may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in the making of a settlement or payment of compensation.

The Council maintains a provision for the funding of the self-financed element of insurance claims. This provision is funded through contributions from the relevant service revenue accounts.

Provisions for bad or doubtful debts are separately disclosed against debtors on the Balance Sheet and are not included in the provisions figure. They have been made within the accounts for expected losses of income in respect of sums due but not received from debtors. Known uncollectible debts have been written off.

Provisions are charged to the appropriate revenue account and when payments for expenditure are incurred to which the provision relates they are charged direct to the provision. Provisions are reviewed at each balance sheet date and if no longer required the provision is reversed.

Contingent liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the authority a possible obligation whose existence 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.

1.22 Reserves

The Council 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. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service revenue account in that year to count against the Net Cost of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES). The reserve is then transferred back to 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, retirement benefits and employee benefits. They do not represent usable resources for the Council.

Capital reserves are not available for revenue purposes and certain ones can only be used for specific statutory purposes.

The Capital Adjustment Account represents the amounts set aside from revenue or capital receipts to finance expenditure on non-current assets, provision for the repayment of external loans and the reversal of amounts included in the CIES which are not required by statute to be included in the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account balance.

The Revaluation Reserve contains valuation gains recognised since 1 April 2007.

The Major Repairs Reserve is required by statutory provision in relation to the Housing Revenue Account.

The Council also has other specific earmarked reserves set out in more detail in the Notes to the Accounts. These are set aside for purposes falling outside the definition of provisions. They are earmarked specifically to meet future items of revenue or capital expenditure.

1.23 Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)

Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS) is expenditure which may be capitalised, but which does not result in the creation of a non-current asset controlled by the authority. REFCUS incurred during the year is written off as expenditure to the relevant service revenue account in the year. Examples include grants to third parties for capital purposes and expenditure on private sector housing renewal. Where the Council meets the cost of the REFCUS from existing capital resources a transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses out the amounts charged in the Movement in Reserves Statement so there is no impact on the level of council tax.

1.24 VAT

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). VAT receivable is excluded from income.

1.25 Fair value measurement of non-financial assets

Investment properties, surplus assets, some assets held for sale (and some financial instruments) are held at fair value at the 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 transaction is assumed to take place either:

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

This method should take the asset in its highest or best use.

There is a three level hierarchy for inputs into a fair value calculation:

- Level 1 – quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities e.g., bond prices,
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset or liability e.g., interest rates or yields for similar assets,
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability e.g., cash flow forecasts.

2. Accounting standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted

Accounting standards issued, but not yet adopted are disclosed below.

- IFRS 16 Leases: This will require Local Authorities that are lessees to recognise most leases on their Balance Sheets as right-of-use assets with corresponding lease liabilities (there is recognition for low-value and short-term leases). CIPFA/LASAAC have announced an optional two-year delay to the introduction of this standard, therefore Local Authorities can choose to implement IFRS16 on either 1st April 2022, 1st April 2023 or 1st April 2024. The implementation of IFRS 16 will be in the 2024/25 Code but both the 2022/23 and the 2023/24 Codes allow for adoption should an authority wish to do so from 1 April 2022 or 2023. The Council will implement IFRS16 from 1 April 2024; we have already identified some Leases which will be impacted and will carry out an exercise throughout 2024/25 to ensure all other relevant leases are treated in accordance with IFRS16.

3. Critical judgments in applying accounting policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, the Council has made certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertain events.

There is a high degree of uncertainty about future funding for Local Government. However, the Council has determined that this uncertainty is not sufficient to provide an indication that the assets of the Authority might be impaired as a result of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.

Other key items of uncertainty are highlighted in Note 4 and the Narrative Report.

4. Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for the revenues and expenses during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates.

The key judgements and estimation uncertainty that have a significant risk of causing material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are:

| Item | Uncertainties | Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Property, Plant and Equipment | <p>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.</p> <p>The current economic climate makes it uncertain that the Authority will be able to sustain its current spending on repairs and maintenance, bringing into doubt the useful lives assigned to assets.</p> | <p>If the useful life of assets is reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the assets falls.</p> <p>It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge would increase by £0.779m for every year that useful lives had to be reduced.</p> |
| Pensions Liability | <p>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 retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. A firm of consulting actuaries is engaged to provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.</p> <p>Pension fund defined liabilities are provided by the Hertfordshire County Council actuary, and are based on significant estimates that are likely to prove to be materially different, but represent the best estimate as at 31 March 2024.</p> | <p>The effects on the net pension liability of changes in individual assumptions can be measured. For example, before application of the asset ceiling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 0.1% decrease in the Real Discount Rate would result in an increase in the pension liability of 2% (£2.90m), • a 0.1% increase in the Rate of Salary Increase would result in an increase in pension liability of 0%, (£0.09m), • a 0.1% increase in the Pension Increase rate would result in an increased pension liability of 2%, (£2.86m). |
| Arrears | <p>At 31 March 2024, the Authority had an outstanding balance of short term debtors of £14.12m. A review of significant debt types has led to an updated impairment</p> | <p>An understatement of doubtful debts would lead to a future adjustment and impairment to be reflected. The allowance held is</p> |

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>allowance of debts of £6.18m. However, in the current economic climate, it is not certain that such an allowance would be sufficient.</p> | <p>based on policies adapted to the nature of the debt and service area.</p> <p>If collection rates on dwelling rents were to deteriorate by 1%, the impairment allowance for doubtful debts would require an additional £0.56m to be set aside.</p> |
| <p>NDR Appeals Provision</p> | <p>Under the business rates retention scheme Local Authorities are liable for their proportionate share of successful appeals against business rates charged in the period to 31 March 2024. A provision based on best available information including the Valuation Office (VAO) ratings list of appeals, and an analysis of successful appeals to date has been recognised for this liability of £1.19m.</p> | <p>The income losses which are recognised in the Council's comprehensive income and expenditure statement, associated with these liabilities, are capped at 7.5% of its baseline funding.</p> |

5. Material items of income and expense

The Code of Practice requires the disclosure of the nature and amount of any material items of income and expenditure which are not separately disclosed on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The following material items of income and expenditure are included in the Cost of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

| Category | Description | Comment |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Construction Services | Contract payments | The Authority paid a total of £4.9 million to R G Carter Cambridge Ltd, £2.6m to Boom Construction Ltd, £2.5m to Kier Services Limited, £1.4m to Novus Property Solutions Ltd and £1.0m to Lovell Partnerships Limited for Construction Services. |
| Housing Services | Contract payments | The Authority paid a total of £10.4m to Morgan Sindall Property Services Limited, £2.5m to Aaron Services Ltd, £2.0m to Gracelands Complete Maintenance Services Ltd, £1.3m to Mulalley & Co Ltd, £1.2m to RGE Services Ltd and £1.2m to AJS Limited for housing maintenance. |
| Service Delivery Contracts | Contract payments | The Authority paid a total of £2.5m to Liberata UK Ltd to provide Council Tax, Housing Benefit, and Business Rates Services. |
| Environmental Services | Contract payments | The Authority paid a total of £5.8m to Urbaser Ltd and £1.8m to Continental Landscapes Ltd for grounds maintenance, street cleansing, recycling and refuse collection. |

6. Events after the Balance Sheet date

The Statement of Accounts was authorised for issue by the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) on 31 May 2024. Events taking place after this date are not 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.

Key items of estimation uncertainty are highlighted in Note 4 and the Narrative Report.

7. Adjustment between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the authority in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the authority to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

2023/24

| | Usable Reserves | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| | General Fund £'000 | Housing Revenue Account £'000 | Capital Receipts Reserve £'000 | Major Repairs Reserve £'000 | Capital Grants Unapplied £'000 |
| Adjustments to the Revenue Resources: | | | | | |
| Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements: | | | | | |
| Pensions costs (transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve) | 967 | 386 | - | - | - |
| Financial Instruments (transfers to or from the Capital Adjustment Account) | (144) | - | - | - | - |
| Council tax and NDR (transfers to or from Collection Fund) | 407 | - | - | - | - |
| Holiday pay (transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve) | 34 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account): | (12,059) | (29,086) | - | (15,014) | - |
| Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources | (10,793) | (28,699) | - | (15,014) | - |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources: | | | | | |
| Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve and Deferred Capital Receipts | 637 | 4,090 | (4,727) | - | - |
| Payments to the government housing receipts pool (funded by a transfer from the Capital Receipts Reserve) | - | - | - | - | - |
| Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account) | 826 | - | - | - | - |
| Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account) | 5 | 5,958 | - | - | - |
| Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources | 1,468 | 10,048 | (4,727) | - | - |
| Adjustments to Capital Resources: | | | | | |
| Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure | - | - | 4,636 | - | - |
| Use of the Major Repairs Reserve to finance capital expenditure | - | - | - | 15,014 | - |
| Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure | 1,869 | 1,139 | - | - | (322) |
| Total Adjustments to Capital Resources | 1,869 | 1,139 | 4,636 | 15,014 | (322) |
| Total Adjustments | (7,457) | (17,512) | (91) | - | (322) |

2022/23

| | Usable Reserves | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| | General Fund Balance £'000 | Housing Revenue Account £'000 | Capital Receipts Reserve £'000 | Major Repairs Reserve £'000 | Capital Grants Unapplied £'000 |
| Adjustments to the Revenue Resources: | | | | | |
| Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from | | | | | |
| Pensions costs (transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve) | (2,708) | (1,022) | - | - | - |
| Financial Instruments (transfers to or from the Capital Adjustment Account) | (692) | - | - | - | - |
| Council tax and NDR (transfers to or from Collection Fund) | (2,671) | - | - | - | - |
| Holiday pay (transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve) | (10) | - | - | - | - |
| Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account): | (5,792) | (9,555) | - | (14,825) | - |
| Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources | (11,872) | (10,577) | - | (14,825) | - |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources: | | | | | |
| Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve and Deferred Capital Receipts | 326 | 8,338 | (8,664) | - | - |
| Payments to the government housing receipts pool (funded by a transfer from the Capital Receipts Reserve) | (121) | - | 121 | - | - |
| Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account) | 817 | - | - | - | - |
| Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account) | 47 | 5,430 | - | - | - |
| Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources | 1,069 | 13,768 | (8,543) | - | - |
| Adjustments to Capital Resources: | | | | | |
| Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure | - | - | 9,552 | - | - |
| Use of the Major Repairs Reserve to finance capital expenditure | - | - | - | 14,825 | - |
| Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure | 7,084 | - | - | - | 358 |
| Total Adjustments to Capital Resources | 7,084 | - | 9,552 | 14,825 | 358 |
| Total Adjustments | (3,719) | 3,191 | 1,009 | - | 358 |

8. Transfers to / from earmarked reserves

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

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| | Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000 | Net movement in year £'000 | Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000 | Net movement in year £'000 | Balance at 31 March 2022 £'000 | |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Initiatives Reserve | (1,377) | 55 | (1,432) | 56 | (1,488) | For use for one-off specific projects and fixed term growth directly delivering corporate objectives. |
| Business Rates Retention Reserve | (5,154) | (397) | (4,757) | (1,926) | (2,831) | To manage volatility of the Business Rates Retention Scheme and Collection Fund Deficits. |
| Pensions Reserve | (801) | 400 | (1,201) | - | (1,201) | This reserve is necessary to help mitigate the impact of additional costs arising in the triennial review cycle. |
| Transformation Reserve | (988) | (238) | (750) | 418 | (1,168) | For use on transformation projects to deliver longer term efficiencies. |
| Commitment Reserves | (301) | (84) | (217) | (48) | (169) | These reserves manage expenditure and projects the Council is committed to but for which actual expenditure has not yet been incurred. |
| Grants and Contributions Reserves | (2,973) | (886) | (2,087) | 305 | (2,392) | These reserves set aside grants received for specific purposes which will fund future expenditure. |
| Local Plan Reserve | (453) | (153) | (300) | - | (300) | Funds set aside to aid the Local Plan |
| Civic Buildings Reserve | (301) | (60) | (241) | 81 | (322) | The reserve is for Decarbonisation Projects and High Level repairs to the Civic Buildings |
| Social Housing Commitments Reserve (HRA) | (1,452) | (1,452) | - | - | - | To manage expenditure and projects relating to the HRA. |
| Other Reserves | (271) | 24 | (295) | (38) | (257) | Other miscellaneous reserves. |
| Total | (14,071) | (2,792) | (11,279) | (1,151) | (10,128) | |

9. Other operating expenditure

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Parish Council Precepts | 2,031 | 1,894 |
| Payments to the Government's Housing Capital | - | 121 |
| Receipts Pool | | |
| (Gains) / losses on disposal of non-current assets | 4,805 | 724 |
| Total | 6,836 | 2,739 |

10. (Income) and expenditure in relation to investment

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Interest payable and similar charges | 7,179 | 6,791 |
| Net interest on the net defined benefit liability | (46) | 1,164 |
| Interest receivable and similar income | (1,547) | (1,062) |
| Changes in Fair Value of Financial Instruments | 144 | 689 |
| Income and expenditure in relation to investment properties and changes in their fair value | (344) | 1,121 |
| Impairment loss allowances | 68 | (30) |
| Total | 5,454 | 8,673 |

11. Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Council tax income | (11,909) | (11,383) |
| Non domestic rates income and expenditure | (1,351) | 1,590 |
| Lower Tier Grants | (72) | (105) |
| Business Rates related Grants | (3,318) | (5,549) |
| New Homes Bonus Grant | (288) | (712) |
| New Burdens Grant | (157) | (377) |
| Local Services Support Grant | (118) | (228) |
| Capital Grants | (3,008) | (6,948) |
| Contributions and other items | (752) | (243) |
| Total | (20,973) | (23,955) |

12. Expenditure and income analysed by nature

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Expenditure | | |
| Employee Benefit Expenses | 20,657 | 22,877 |
| Premises Expenditure | 6,826 | 6,713 |
| Travel Expenditure | 124 | 141 |
| Supplies and Services | 10,663 | 10,253 |
| Third Party Payments | 25,271 | 32,012 |
| Transfer Payments | 27,605 | 28,607 |
| Depreciation, Amortisation and Impairment | 46,543 | 21,411 |
| Other Expenditure below Net Cost of Service | 20,390 | 23,507 |
| Total Expenditure | 158,079 | 145,521 |
| Income | | |
| Fees, Charges and other Service Income | (107,005) | (107,966) |
| Other Income below Net Cost of Service | (29,073) | (36,050) |
| Total Income | (136,078) | (144,016) |
| (Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services | 22,001 | 1,506 |

13. Revenue from contracts with service recipients

Amounts included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for contracts with service recipients:

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Revenue from contracts with service recipients | 521 | 1,843 |
| Total included in Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | 521 | 1,843 |

Amounts included in the Balance Sheet for contracts with service recipients:

| | At 31 March | At 31 March |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | 2024 | 2023 |
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Receivables, which are included in debtors | 78 | 479 |
| Total included in Net Assets | 78 | 479 |

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The value of revenue that is expected to be recognised in the future related to performance obligations that are unsatisfied (or partially unsatisfied) at the end of the year is:

| | At 31 March 2024 £'000 | At 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Not later than one year | 78 | 479 |
| Amounts of transaction price, partially or fully unsatisfied | 78 | 479 |

14. Property, plant and equipment

Movements on Balances in 2023/24

| | Dwellings £'000 | Other land and buildings £'000 | Vehicles, plant and equipment £'000 | Infrastructure £'000 | Community assets £'000 | Assets under construction £'000 | Total property, plant and equipment £'000 |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Cost or valuation | | | | | | | |
| At 31 March 2023 | 1,072,184 | 136,153 | 21,661 | 7,098 | 2,043 | 54,453 | 1,293,592 |
| Additions | 16,052 | 3,161 | 1,108 | - | - | 7,639 | 27,959 |
| Disposals | (9,105) | (509) | (1,283) | - | (701) | (155) | (11,753) |
| Reclassifications | 41,972 | 5,650 | 666 | - | - | (48,289) | - |
| Write out of depreciation on revaluation | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Revaluation gains / (losses) | (79,521) | 3,621 | - | - | - | - | (75,900) |
| At 31 March 2024 | 1,041,582 | 148,075 | 22,151 | 7,098 | 1,343 | 13,648 | 1,233,898 |
| Depreciation and impairments | | | | | | | |
| At 31 March 2023 | - | (2,701) | (15,266) | (5,225) | (1,784) | (17) | (24,992) |
| Charge for the year | (14,866) | (777) | (1,447) | (171) | (7) | - | (17,267) |
| Disposals | - | 112 | 1,275 | - | 701 | 12 | 2,101 |
| Reclassifications | 404 | - | - | - | - | - | 404 |
| Write out of depreciation on Revaluation | 14,463 | - | - | - | - | - | 14,463 |
| At 31 March 2024 | 0 | (3,366) | (15,438) | (5,396) | (1,090) | (5) | (25,293) |
| Balance Sheet amount as at 31 March 2021 | | | | | | | |
| At 31 March 2023 | 1,041,582 | 144,710 | 6,714 | 1,703 | 253 | 13,644 | 1,208,605 |
| Nature of asset holding | | | | | | | |
| Owned | 1,041,582 | 144,666 | 6,714 | 1,703 | 253 | 13,644 | 1,208,561 |
| Finance lease | - | 44 | - | - | - | - | 44 |
| At 31 March 2024 | 1,041,582 | 144,710 | 6,714 | 1,703 | 253 | 13,644 | 1,208,605 |

Movements on Balances in 2022/23

| | Dwellings £'000 | Other land and buildings £'000 | Vehicles, plant and equipment £'000 | Infrastructure £'000 | Community assets £'000 | Assets under construction £'000 | Total property, plant and equipment £'000 |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Cost or valuation | | | | | | | |
| At 31 March 2022 | 1,054,513 | 125,928 | 19,999 | 7,185 | 2,040 | 32,964 | 1,242,629 |
| Additions | 14,930 | 10,142 | 1,662 | 9 | 4 | 22,007 | 48,753 |
| Disposals | (12,360) | - | - | (96) | - | - | (12,456) |
| Reclassifications | 367 | 151 | - | - | - | (518) | (0) |
| Write out of depreciation on revaluation | (14,252) | (2,102) | - | - | - | - | (16,354) |
| Revaluation gains / (losses) | 28,986 | 2,034 | - | - | - | - | 31,020 |
| At 31 March 2023 | 1,072,184 | 136,153 | 21,661 | 7,098 | 2,043 | 54,453 | 1,293,592 |
| Depreciation and impairments | | | | | | | |
| At 31 March 2022 | - | (2,268) | (14,089) | (5,133) | (1,776) | (12) | (23,278) |
| Charge for the year | (14,700) | (2,540) | (1,177) | (176) | (7) | - | (18,600) |
| Disposals | 447 | - | - | 84 | - | - | 531 |
| Reclassifications | - | 5 | - | - | - | (5) | - |
| Write out of depreciation on Revaluation | 14,252 | 2,102 | - | - | - | - | 16,354 |
| At 31 March 2023 | 0 | (2,701) | (15,266) | (5,225) | (1,784) | (17) | (24,993) |
| Balance Sheet amount as at 31 March 2023 | | | | | | | |
| At 31 March 2022 | 1,072,184 | 133,452 | 6,395 | 1,873 | 260 | 54,436 | 1,268,600 |
| Nature of asset holding | | | | | | | |
| Owned | 1,072,184 | 133,407 | 6,395 | 1,873 | 260 | 54,436 | 1,268,555 |
| Finance lease | - | 45 | - | - | - | - | 45 |
| At 31 March 2023 | 1,072,184 | 133,452 | 6,395 | 1,873 | 260 | 54,436 | 1,268,600 |

Capital Commitments

As at 31 March 2024, the Council is committed to a number of contracts to deliver major construction or enhancement of property, plant and equipment in future years. The major capital commitments are:

- Aaron Services Ltd & British Gas Social Housing Ltd T/A PH Jones (£2.627m) – for gas servicing and installation in the Council’s dwelling stock in Welwyn Garden City (Aaron Services Ltd), and Hatfield and surrounding areas (PH Jones). These contracts expire in March 2026.
- Blink Charging Limited (£1.159m) – for the installation, operation, and maintenance of the customer network of 105 vehicle charging points across 23 sites. This contract expires in November 2030.
- Equans Regeneration Limited (£7.500m) - for housing repairs required across the borough. This contract expires in March 2028.
- Gracelands Complete Maintenance Services Ltd (£1.200m) – for interior and exterior adaptations to Private and Public sector housing. This contract expires in March 2025.
- Morgan Sindall (£11.000m) – for housing repairs required across the borough. This contract expires in September 2032.
- Novus Property Solutions Limited (£7.500m) - for housing repairs required across the borough. This contract expires in March 2028.

Revaluation

The Authority conducts a full valuation every five years of HRA assets. A full valuation for HRA assets were carried out with an effective date of 31 March 2021.

In between these five yearly valuations an annual desktop review is undertaken.

All general fund assets were revalued on 1 April 2014. A proportion of the assets have been valued each year since and will continue to be so in future years as part of a rolling programme whereby all assets will be valued at least once every 5 years.

The Council uses external valuers for asset valuation.

Valuations of land and buildings were carried out in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Valuations of fixed assets carried at current value

The following statement shows the progress of the Council's programme for the valuation of fixed assets.

| | Council Dwellings £'000 | Other Land and Buildings £'000 | Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £'000 | Infra- structure £'000 | Community Assets £'000 | Assets Under Construction £'000 | Total £'000 |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Valued at depreciated historical cost | | | 22,151 | 7,098 | 1,343 | 13,648 | 44,241 |
| Valued at current value in: | | | | | | | |
| 2022/23 (31 March 2023) | 1,041,582 | 107,032 | | | | | 1,148,613 |
| 2021/22 (31 March 2022) | | 2,880 | | | | | 2,880 |
| 2020/21 (31 March 2021) | | 1,923 | | | | | 1,923 |
| 2019/20 (31 March 2020) | | 31,731 | | | | | 31,731 |
| 2018/19 (1 April 2019) | | 4,510 | | | | | 4,510 |
| Total | 1,041,582 | 148,075 | 22,151 | 7,098 | 1,343 | 13,648 | 1,233,898 |

15. Investment Property

The authority does not hold any investment property under operating leases.

The following items of income and expense have been accounted for in the Financing and Investment line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Rental income from investment property | (402) | (421) |
| Direct operating expenses and overheads | 58 | 22 |
| Net (gain) / loss | (344) | (399) |

There are no restrictions on the Authority's ability to realise the value inherent in its investment property or on the Authority's right to the remittance of the income and proceeds of disposal.

The Authority has no contractual obligation to purchase, construct or develop investment property or repairs, maintenance or enhancement.

The following table summarises the movement in the fair value of investment properties over the year.

| | 2023/24 | 2022/23 |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Balance at start of the year | 4,520 | 6,020 |
| Net gains / (losses) from fair value adjustment | - | (1,500) |
| Balance at end of the year | 4,520 | 4,520 |

15.1 Fair Value Hierarchy

Details of the authority's investment properties and information about the fair value hierarchy are as follows:

| | Fair Value as at 31 March 2024 | Fair Value as at 31 March 2023 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Commercial Units Other significant observable inputs (Level 2) | 4,520 | 4,520 |

15.2 Transfers between Levels of the Fair Value Hierarchy

There were no transfers between levels 1, 2, or 3 during the year.

15.3 Valuation Techniques used to Determine Level for Investment Properties Significant Observable Inputs – Level 2

The fair value for the investment properties (at market rents) has been based on the market approach using current market conditions and recent sale prices and other relevant information for similar assets in the local authority area. Market conditions are such that similar properties

are purchased and sold and the levels of observable inputs are significant, leading to the properties being categorised at Level 2 in the fair value hierarchy.

15.4 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.

15.5 Valuation Techniques

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

15.6 Valuation Process for Investment Properties

The fair value of the authority's investment property is measured annually at each reporting date. All valuations are carried out externally, 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 valuers work closely with finance officers, who report directly to the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) on a regular basis regarding all valuation matters.

16. Intangible Assets

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Balance at 1 April | | |
| Gross carrying amounts | 3,189 | 3,131 |
| Accumulated amortisation | (2,911) | (2,817) |
| Net carrying amount at start of year | 278 | 314 |
| Additions: | | |
| - Internal development | 0 | 0 |
| - Purchases | 928 | 58 |
| - Acquired through business combinations | 0 | 0 |
| Other disposals | 0 | 0 |
| Amortisation for the period | (93) | (94) |
| Other changes | 0 | 0 |
| Net carrying amount at end of year | 1,114 | 278 |
| Comprising: | | |
| - Gross carrying amounts | 4,117 | 3,189 |
| - Accumulated amortisation | (3,003) | (2,911) |
| Balance at 31 March | 1,114 | 278 |

17. Financial instruments

17.1 Financial Instruments - Classifications

A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Non-exchange transactions, such as those relating to taxes, benefits and government grants, do not give rise to financial instruments.

Financial Liabilities

A financial liability is an obligation to transfer economic benefits controlled by the Council and can be represented by a contractual obligation to deliver cash or financial assets or an obligation to exchange financial assets and liabilities with another entity that is potentially unfavourable to the Council.

The majority of the Council's financial liabilities held during the year are measured at amortised cost and comprise:

- long-term loans from the Public Works Loan Board,
- short-term loans from other local authorities
- lease payables,
- trade payables for goods and services received.

Financial Assets

A financial asset is a right to future economic benefits controlled by the Council that is represented by cash, equity instruments or a contractual right to receive cash or other financial assets or a right to exchange financial assets and liabilities with another entity that is potentially favourable to the Council. The financial assets held by the Council during the year are accounted for under the following classifications:

- Amortised cost (where cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest and the Council's business model is to collect those cash flows) comprising:
 - cash in hand,
 - bank current, notice and deposit accounts,
 - deposits with the UK government,
 - trade receivables for goods and services provided.
- Fair value through profit and loss (all other financial assets) comprising:
 - money market funds managed by five fund managers,
 - a property fund managed by CCLA fund managers.

Financial assets held at amortised cost are shown net of a loss allowance reflecting the statistical likelihood that the borrower or debtor will be unable to meet their contractual commitments to the Council.

17.2 Financial Instruments - Balances

The financial assets and liabilities disclosed in the Balance Sheet are analysed across the following categories:

Financial Assets

| | Long term | | Current | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 31 March | 31 March | 31 March | 31 March |
| | 2024 | 2023 | 2024 | 2023 |
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Amortised Cost: | | | | |
| Principal at amortised cost | - | - | 5,000 | 10,000 |
| Accrued interest | - | - | 4 | 3 |
| Loss Allowance | - | - | - | - |
| Fair value through Profit and Loss: | | | | |
| Fair value | 3,538 | 3,681 | 9,234 | 13,648 |
| Accrued interest | - | - | 124 | 84 |
| Total investments | 3,538 | 3,681 | 14,362 | 23,735 |
| Amortised Cost: | | | | |
| Cash (including bank accounts) | | | (105) | (850) |
| Cash equivalents at amortised cost | | | - | - |
| Accrued interest | | | - | - |
| Total cash and cash equivalents | | | (105) | (850) |
| Amortised Cost: | | | | |
| Loans made to subsidiaries | - | - | - | - |
| Accrued interest | - | - | - | - |
| Loss Allowance | - | - | - | - |
| Lease receivables | 101 | 101 | - | - |
| Trade receivables | 4,221 | 4,388 | 1,342 | 1,135 |
| Total debtors * | 4,322 | 4,489 | 1,342 | 1,135 |

* - The debtors lines on the Balance Sheet include £13,134k (2023: £20.767k) short term debtors that do not meet the definition of a financial asset as they relate to non-exchange transactions.

Financial Liabilities

| | Long term | | Current | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 |
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Loans at amortised cost: | | | | |
| Accrued interest at amortised cost | - | - | 1,491 | 1,583 |
| Principal sum borrowed - PWLB loan | 218,832 | 221,051 | 27,219 | 35,619 |
| Short term Loan | - | - | - | 13,000 |
| Total borrowing ** | 218,832 | 221,051 | 28,710 | 50,202 |
| Liabilities at amortised cost: | | | | |
| Trade payables | - | - | 23,042 | 19,949 |
| Finance lease liabilities | 2,103 | 2,103 | - | - |
| Total creditors *** | 2,103 | 2,103 | 23,042 | 19,949 |

** - The total short term borrowing includes £1.49m (2023: £1.58m) representing accrued interest and £27.22m (2023: £35.62m) principal repayments that are due within 12 months on long term borrowings.

*** - The creditors lines on the Balance Sheet include £7,197k (2023: £8.424k) short term creditors that do not meet the definition of a financial liability as they relate to non-exchange transactions.

17.3 Financial Instruments - Gains and Losses

The gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in relation to financial instruments consist of the following:

2023/24

| | Financial liabilities | Financial assets | | Total |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| | Amortised cost | Amortised Cost | FVPL | |
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Interest expense | 7,001 | - | - | 7,001 |
| Total expense in (surplus) / deficit on provision of services | | | | 7,001 |
| Interest income | - | (1,349) | (206) | (1,555) |
| Total income in (surplus) / deficit on provision of services | - | (1,349) | (206) | (1,555) |
| Net (gain) / loss for the year | 7,001 | (1,349) | (206) | 5,446 |

2022/23

| | Financial liabilities | Financial assets | | Total |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| | Amortised cost | Amortised Cost | FVPL | |
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | |
| Interest expense | 6,595 | - | - | 6,595 |
| Total expense in (surplus) / deficit on provision of services | | | | 6,595 |
| Interest income | - | (879) | (187) | (1,066) |
| Total income in (surplus) / deficit on provision of services | - | (879) | (187) | (1,066) |
| Net (gain) / loss for the year | 6,595 | (879) | (187) | 5,529 |

17.4 Financial Instruments - Fair Values

Financial instruments, except those classified at amortised cost, are carried in the Balance Sheet at fair value. For most assets, including bonds, and shares in money market funds and other pooled funds, the fair value is taken from the market price.

Financial instruments classified at amortised cost are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair values have been estimated by calculating the net present value of the remaining contractual cash flows at 31 March 2024 using the following methods and assumptions:

- Loans borrowed by the Council have been valued by discounting the contractual cash flows over the whole life of the instrument at the appropriate market rate for local authority loans,
- The fair values of other long-term loans and investments have been discounted at the market rates for similar instruments with similar remaining terms to maturity on 31 March,
- The fair values of finance lease assets and liabilities have been calculated by discounting the contractual cash flows,
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised for any financial instrument,
- The fair value of short-term instruments, including trade payables and receivables, is assumed to approximate to the carrying amount given the low and stable interest rate environment.

Fair values are shown in the table below, split by their level in the fair value hierarchy:

- Level 1 – fair value is only derived from quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities, e.g., bond prices,
- Level 2 – fair value is calculated from inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset or liability, e.g., interest rates or yields for similar instruments,
- Level 3 – fair value is determined using unobservable inputs, e.g., non-market data such as cash flow forecasts or estimated creditworthiness.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| | Fair Value Level | 31 March 2024 | | 31 March 2023 | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | | Balance sheet | Fair value | Balance sheet | Fair value |
| | | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Financial liabilities held at amortised cost | | | | | |
| Loans from PWLB | 2 | 247,542 | 225,506 | 258,068 | 230,285 |
| Short term Loan | 2 | - | - | 13,186 | 13,150 |
| Lease payables | 3 | 2,103 | 2,103 | 2,103 | 2,103 |
| Trade payables | 3 | 23,042 | 23,042 | 19,949 | 19,949 |
| Total | | 272,687 | 250,651 | 293,306 | 265,487 |
| Total financial liabilities | | 272,687 | | 293,306 | |
| Recorded on balance sheet as: | | | | | |
| Short term creditors | | 23,042 | | 19,949 | |
| Short term borrowing | | 28,710 | | 50,202 | |
| Long term creditors | | 2,103 | | 2,103 | |
| Long term borrowing | | 218,832 | | 221,052 | |
| Total financial liabilities | | 272,687 | | 293,306 | |

| | Fair Value Level | 31 March 2024 | | 31 March 2023 | |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | Balance sheet | Fair value | Balance sheet | Fair value |
| | | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Financial assets held at fair value: | | | | | |
| Money market funds | 1 | 9,307 | 9,307 | 13,685 | 13,685 |
| Property fund | 2 | 3,589 | 3,589 | 3,728 | 3,728 |
| Equity investment in housing company | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| Financial assets held at amortised cost: | | | | | |
| Short term deposits with UK government | 2 | 5,004 | 5,004 | 10,003 | 10,003 |
| Short term deposits with banks | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 2 | (105) | (105) | (850) | (850) |
| Long term loans to housing company | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| Short term loans to housing company | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| Lease receivables | 3 | 101 | 101 | 101 | 101 |
| Trade receivables | 3 | 5,563 | 5,563 | 5,523 | 5,523 |
| Total | | 23,459 | 23,459 | 32,190 | 32,190 |
| Total financial assets | | 23,459 | | 32,190 | |
| Recorded on balance sheet as: | | | | | |
| Long term debtors | | 4,221 | | 4,489 | |
| Long term investments | | 3,538 | | 3,681 | |
| Short term debtors | | 1,342 | | 1,135 | |
| Short term investments | | 14,362 | | 23,735 | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | | (105) | | (850) | |
| Total financial assets | | 23,459 | | 32,190 | |

The fair value of short term financial assets held at amortised cost is assumed to be approximate to the carrying amount.

17.5 Financial Instruments - Risks

The Council complies with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

In line with the Treasury Management Code, the Council approves a Treasury Management Strategy before the commencement of each financial year. The Strategy sets out the parameters for the management of risks associated with financial instruments. The Council also maintains Treasury Management Practices specifying the practical arrangements to be followed to manage these risks.

The Treasury Management Strategy includes an Investment Strategy in compliance with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Guidance on Local Government Investments. This Guidance emphasises that priority is to be given to security and liquidity, rather than yield. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy and its Treasury Management Practices seek to achieve a suitable balance between risk and return or cost.

The main risks covered are:

- Credit Risk: The possibility that the counterparty to a financial asset will fail to meet its contractual obligations, causing a loss to the Council,
- Liquidity Risk: The possibility that the Council might not have the cash available to make contracted payments on time,
- Market Risk: The possibility that an unplanned financial loss will materialise because of changes in market variables such as interest rates or equity prices.

Credit Risk: Treasury Investments

The Council manages credit risk by ensuring that treasury investments are only placed with organisations of high credit quality as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy. These include commercial entities with a minimum long-term credit rating of A-, the UK government, other local authorities, and organisations without credit ratings upon which the Council has received independent investment advice. Recognising that credit ratings are imperfect predictors of default, the Council has regard to other measures including credit default swaps and equity prices when selecting commercial entities for investment.

A limit of £4m of the total portfolio is placed on the amount of money that can be invested with a single counterparty (other than the UK government). For unsecured investments in banks, building societies and companies, a smaller limit of £3m applies. No more than £5m in total can be invested for a period longer than one year.

The table below summarises the credit risk exposures of the Council's treasury investment portfolio by credit rating and remaining time to maturity:

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| | Long Term | | Short Term | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 |
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| AAA | - | - | 9,307 | 13,685 |
| AA- | - | - | 5,004 | 10,003 |
| Unrated local authorities | - | - | - | |
| Total | - | - | 14,311 | 23,688 |
| Credit risk not applicable* | 3,538 | 3,681 | 51 | 47 |
| Total investments | 3,538 | 3,681 | 14,362 | 23,735 |

* Credit risk is not applicable to the property pooled fund where the Council has no contractual right to receive any sum of money.

Loss allowances on treasury investments have been calculated by reference to historic default data published by credit rating agencies, multiplied by 86% (2023: 112%) to adjust for current and forecast economic conditions. A two-year delay in cash flows is assumed to arise in the event of default. Investments are determined to have suffered a significant increase in credit risk where they have been downgraded by three or more credit rating notches or equivalent since initial recognition, unless they retain an investment grade credit rating. They are determined to be credit-impaired when awarded a "D" credit rating or equivalent. At 31 March 2024 the loss allowance related to treasury investments was £nil (2023: £nil) as the only treasury investments held at that date were with the UK government where a probability of a loss is negligible, and in Money Market Funds which due to them being instant access means the probability of loss is also negligible.

17.6 Credit Risk: Trade and Lease Receivables and Contract Assets

The Council manages its risk on trade receivables by following a debt management process which includes multiple reminders, chasing and eventually taking legal action if required.

The Council's credit risk on lease receivables is mitigated by its legal ownership of the assets leased, which can be repossessed if the debtor defaults on the lease contract.

The following analysis summarises the Council's trade and lease receivables, by due date. Only those receivables meeting the definition of a financial asset are included.

Credit Risk - Trade and Lease Receivables

| | At 31 March 2024 | | At 31 March 2023 | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Trade receivables | Lease receivables | Trade receivables | Lease receivables |
| Neither past due nor impaired | - | - | - | - |
| Past due < 90 days | 280 | - | 639 | - |
| Past due 91-365 days | 665 | - | 97 | - |
| Past due 12+ months | 4,618 | 101 | 4,787 | 101 |
| Total | 5,563 | 101 | 5,523 | 101 |
| | Gross receivable | Loss allowance | Gross receivable | Loss allowance |
| Sundry Debtors | 5,664 | 1,062 | 5,624 | 2,799 |

Loss allowances on trade receivables have been calculated on the total of debts over 90 days which are not being repaid according to an agreed instalment plan or are owed by UK central or Local Government. Although these amounts have been written off to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, steps are still being taken to collect the sums owing under the debt management procedure.

17.7 Liquidity Risk

The Council has ready access to borrowing at favourable rates from the Public Works Loan Board and other local authorities, and at higher rates from banks and building societies. There is no perceived risk that the Council will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments. It is however exposed to the risk that it will need to refinance a significant proportion of its borrowing at a time of unfavourably high interest rates. This risk is managed by maintaining a spread of fixed rate loans and setting percentage of portfolio limits on maturity periods annually as part of the Treasury Management Strategy. The Council holds £9.234m (2023: £13.648m) of liquid financial assets which can be withdrawn or sold at short notice if required to meet cashflows on financial liabilities.

The maturity analysis of financial instruments is as follows:

| Time to maturity (years) | 31 March 2024 | | | 31 March 2023 | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| | Borrowing £'000 | Investments £'000 | Net £'000 | Borrowing £'000 | Investments £'000 | Net £'000 |
| Not over 1 | 27,219 | (14,234) | 12,985 | 50,202 | (23,735) | 26,467 |
| Over 1 but not over 2 | 28,919 | - | 28,919 | 27,219 | - | 27,219 |
| Over 2 but not over 5 | 76,456 | - | 76,456 | 90,856 | - | 90,856 |
| Over 5 but not over 10 | 72,495 | - | 72,495 | 65,795 | - | 65,795 |
| Over 10 but not over 20 | 40,962 | - | 40,962 | 37,181 | - | 37,181 |
| Over 20 but not over 50 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Uncertain date* | - | (3,538) | (3,538) | - | (3,681) | (3,681) |
| Total | 246,051 | (17,772) | 228,279 | 271,253 | (27,416) | 243,837 |

* - The Council has a holding in the CCLA property fund, which is held for as a strategic investment, therefore the maturity date is uncertain.

17.8 Market risk

Interest rate risk

The Council 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. For instance, a rise in interest rates would have the following effects:

- borrowings at fixed rates – the fair value of the liabilities will fall,
- investments at variable rates – the interest income will rise,
- investments at fixed rates – the fair value of the assets will fall.

Investments measured at amortised cost and loans borrowed are not carried at fair value, so changes in their fair value will have no impact on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. All borrowings are at fixed rates, however, changes in interest receivable on variable rate investments will be posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services.

Movements in the fair value of fixed rate investments measured at fair value will be reflected in

Other Comprehensive Income or the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services as appropriate.

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

| | 31 March 2024 £'000 | 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Increase in interest receivable on variable rate investments | 85 | 125 |
| Impact on Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services | 85 | 125 |
| Decrease in fair value of loans and investments at amortised cost* | (2) | 60 |
| Decrease in fair value of fixed rate borrowing* | (9,855) | (9,495) |

* - No impact on Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

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

Price risk

The Council's investment in a pooled property fund is subject to the risk of falling commercial property prices. This risk is limited by the Council's maximum exposure to property investments of £4m. A 5% fall in commercial property prices at 31 March 2024 would result in a £155k (2023: £172k) charge to Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure which is then transferred to Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve.

18. Debtors

An analysis of debtors is shown below:

| | Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000 | Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Government departments | 1,890 | 7,426 |
| Other local authorities | 6,928 | 8,507 |
| NHS bodies | - | 1 |
| Other entities and individuals | | |
| - current debtors | 11,165 | 10,926 |
| - long term debtors | 4,322 | 4,489 |
| | 24,304 | 31,349 |
| Provision for doubtful debts | (2,673) | (2,555) |
| Impairment allowance for bad debts | (3,511) | (2,799) |
| Payments in advance | 678 | 539 |
| Total | 18,798 | 26,534 |

19. Cash and Cash Equivalents

| | Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000 | Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Bank current accounts and Cash held* | (105) | (850) |
| Total cash and cash equivalents | (105) | (850) |

* - Negative current account balances show an overdraft.

20. Assets Held for Sale

| | Current 2023/2024 £'000 | Current 2022/2023 £'000 |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Balance outstanding at start of year | 500 | 500 |
| Assets sold | (500) | - |
| Balance outstanding at year end | - | 500 |

21. Creditors

An analysis of creditors is shown below:

| | Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000 | Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Government departments | 3,272 | 5,404 |
| Other local authorities | 1,254 | 515 |
| Other entities and individuals | | |
| - current creditors | 25,713 | 22,311 |
| Total | 30,239 | 28,230 |

22. Provisions

The total value of specific provisions held at 31 March 2024 is:

| | General Provision £'000 | Claims provision £'000 | NNDR Provision for Appeals £'000 | Total £'000 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Balance at 31 March 2023 | (106) | (700) | (2,172) | (2,979) |
| Additional provisions made | 0 | (612) | (2,640) | (3,252) |
| Amounts used | 105 | 49 | 1,035 | 1,189 |
| Unused amounts reversed | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Balance at 31 March 2024 | 0 | (1,263) | (3,777) | (5,040) |

NDR Provision for Appeals

Business Rate Payers are entitled to appeal against the rateable value allocated to it by the Valuation Office Agency. From 1 April 2013 onwards, in the event that the appeal is successful, the Council is responsible for repaying its share of Business Rate income to the ratepayer. This provision has been made based on the expected outcome of the appeals outstanding with the VOA as at 31 March 2024 and other available data such as Government statistics.

Claims provision

The Council is self-insured up to specific limits for various categories of risk. Any claims beyond these specific limits are insured externally. The level of provision made is adequate to meet the Council's estimated known liabilities under its self-insurance arrangements for all outstanding claims.

Following the demise of Municipal Mutual Insurance Ltd., the MMI Scheme of Arrangement was established in January 1994 to offer financial provision for claim settlements under policies incepted with MMI. This Council paid £50,000 into the scheme, under the proviso that should a solvent run-off not be achieved, any payments made on our behalf can be clawed back, less the £50,000.

The directors of MMI "triggered" MMI's Scheme of Arrangement on 13th November 2012. The Scheme provides that following the occurrence of a Trigger Event, a Levy may be imposed on

all those Scheme Creditors who have been paid an amount in respect of Established Scheme Liabilities which exceed £50,000 in aggregate. Payments made after the imposition of the Levy to Scheme Creditors will be made at a reduced rate.

After 13th November 2012 a review was carried out of the assets and liabilities of MMI, to determine whether a Levy on Scheme Creditors was required. It was subsequently concluded that a Levy of 15% be imposed and a charge of £62,984 was made in February 2014.

The Scheme requires a review of the Levy rate at least once every 12 months and includes provisions for the rate to be adjusted up or down, as the liability trends evolve. Due to the nature of many of the claims the projections are subject to substantial uncertainty. An additional levy of 10% was therefore imposed on 1 April 2016 and £42,118 paid. As the levy has been imposed twice, the decision was taken at the time to provide for the full remaining clawback liability.

As of 31 March 2024, the total amount liable to claw back is £363k. This issue is likely to run for many years before final resolution is achieved.

The claims provision also includes provision for HRA related claims.

23. Unusable Reserves

23.1 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:

- Re-valued 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.

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Balance at 1 April | (459,253) | (395,971) |
| Upward Revaluation of assets | (14,925) | (52,455) |
| Downward Revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the surplus deficit on the provision of service | 47,731 | 4,978 |
| Difference between fair value depreciation and historic cost | 6,448 | 5,293 |
| Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped | 370 | 2,647 |
| Amounts written off to the Capital Adjustment Account | - | (23,745) |
| Balance at 31 March | (419,630) | (459,253) |

23.2 Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve

The Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve is made up of the accumulated gains and losses made from the changes in the value of the investments held at Fair Value through Profit & Loss. The balance is reduced when investments with accumulated gains are revalued downwards or impaired, or when the investment is disposed of and the gains are realised.

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Balance at 1 April | 327 | (399) |
| Revaluation of investments not charged to the Surplus / | 144 | 726 |
| Deficit on the Provision of Services | | |
| Balance at 31 March | 471 | 327 |

23.3 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 provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation; impairment losses and amortisation are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). 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 7 provides details of the source of all the transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £000 | £000 |
| Balance at 1 April | (517,756) | (544,533) |
| Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement: | | |
| Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets | 19,348 | 18,666 |
| Revaluation gains / (losses) on Property, Plant and Equipment | 26,557 | 2,239 |
| Amortisation of intangible assets | 93 | 94 |
| Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute | 630 | 524 |
| Revaluation gains / (losses) on Loan to Subsidiaries | - | (34) |
| Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain / loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | 9,379 | 9,295 |
| | 56,007 | 30,784 |
| Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve | (6,448) | 32,593 |
| | 49,559 | 63,377 |
| Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year | | |
| Capital financing applied in the year: | | |
| Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure | (4,636) | (9,539) |
| Use of the Major Repairs Reserve to finance new capital expenditure | (15,014) | (14,825) |
| Capital grants and contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing | (2,056) | (6,918) |
| Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account | (630) | (524) |
| Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund and HRA balances | (826) | (817) |
| Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund and HRA balances | (5,963) | (5,477) |
| Total capital financing applied in year | (29,126) | (38,101) |
| Movements in the market value of Investment Properties and Assets Held For Sale debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | - | 1,500 |
| | (29,126) | (36,601) |
| Balance at 31 March | (497,323) | (517,756) |

23.4 Pension Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. 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 pay 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.

The Pension Reserve reflects the amounts recorded in the IAS19 report regarding the position of the pension fund. Although The Code suggests that the post-employment benefit cost should also be recorded in the pension reserve the Council have accounted for the costs of termination in the Employment reserve to enable the pension fund reserve to continue to be consistent with the IAS19 report on pension liabilities.

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Balance at 1 April | (365) | 41,877 |
| Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability | 23,626 | (45,972) |
| Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | 2,978 | 7,125 |
| Employers' pensions contributions | (4,331) | (3,395) |
| Balance at 31 March | 21,908 | (365) |

23.5 Collection Fund Adjustment Account

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

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Balance at 1 April | 3,420 | 749 |
| Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rating income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax and non-domestic rating income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements | (408) | 2,671 |
| Balance at 31 March | 3,012 | 3,420 |

24. Investments in Subsidiaries

The Authority had no investments in subsidiaries during the year.

25. Members Allowances

The Authority paid the following amounts to members of the council during the year.

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Basic allowance | 299 | 294 |
| Special responsibility allowance | 138 | 128 |
| Travelling and subsistence | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 439 | 423 |

26. Officers Remuneration

The Accounts and Audit Regulations contain a legal requirement for the accounts to disclose remuneration of senior employees. In particular, senior employees whose salary is £50,000 or more per year but less than £150,000 are required to be listed individually by way of job title and this is shown in the following table. The Council has no employees with a salary greater than £150,000.

Senior officers' remuneration –

2023/24

| Post Title | Note | Salary £'000 | Compensation for loss of office £'000 | Pension contributions £'000 | Total remuneration including pension contributions £'000 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chief Executive | | 145 | - | 28 | 173 |
| Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) (Section 151 Officer) | | 105 | - | 20 | 125 |
| Executive Director (Place) | | 105 | - | 20 | 125 |
| Executive Director (Resident Services and Climate Change) | 1 | 12 | - | 2 | 14 |
| Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) | 2 | 83 | - | 16 | 99 |
| Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) (Monitoring Officer) | 3 | 64 | - | 14 | 78 |
| Total | | 514 | - | 100 | 614 |

Note 1 – The post of Executive Director (Resident Services and Climate Change) was created on 14th February 2024. The annualised salary for this post is £100k.

Note 2 – The post of Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) was deleted on 13th February 2024. The annualised salary for this post is £95k.

Note 3 – The Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) role fulfills the statutory requirement of Monitoring Officer.

2022/2023

| Post Title | Note | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Chief Executive | | 140 | - | 26 | 166 |
| Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) (Section 151 Officer) | 1 | 81 | - | 15 | 96 |
| Executive Director (Place) | 2 | 56 | - | 10 | 66 |
| Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) | 3 | 52 | - | 10 | 62 |
| Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) (Monitoring Officer) | 4 | 69 | - | 10 | 79 |
| Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) (Monitoring Officer) | 5 | 16 | - | 3 | 19 |
| The following roles were deleted on 31 May 2022: | | | | | |
| Corporate Director, Housing and Communities | | - | - | - | - |
| Corporate Director, Public Protection, Planning and Governance | | - | - | - | - |
| Corporate Director, Resources, Environment and Cultural Head of Resources (Section 151 Officer) | 6 | 14 | - | 2 | 16 |
| Total | | 428 | - | 76 | 504 |

Note 1 – Role filled from 1 June 2022. Their annualised salary was £97k.

Note 2 – Role filled from 5 September 2022. Their annualised salary was £97k.

Note 3 – Role filled from 5 September 2022. Their annualised salary was £92k.

Note 4 - The Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) left this role on 31 January 2023. Their annualised salary was £82k.

Note 5 - Staff member acting up to cover role from 15 January 2023 to 31 March 2023 after the Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) left. Their annualised salary was £71k.

Note 6 - The S. 151 Officer responsibilities transferred to the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) on 1 June 2022. The annualised salary of this role was £82k.

Officers' remuneration

The number of employees – including senior officers shown in the note above - whose remuneration, excluding employer's pension contributions, was £50,000 or more is shown below in bands of £5,000. Remuneration includes all amounts paid to recipients including those in respect of redundancy and severance pay in the financial year.

| | Number of employees | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| £50,000 - £54,999 | 11 | 14 |
| £55,000 - £59,999 | 14 | 4 |
| £60,000 - £64,999 | 2 | 6 |
| £65,000 - £69,999 | 3 | 3 |
| £70,000 - £74,999 | 6 | 0 |
| £75,000 - £79,999 | 1 | 0 |
| £80,000 - £84,999 | 1 | 0 |
| £85,000 - £89,999 | 0 | 0 |
| £90,000 - £94,999 | 1 | 1 |
| £95,000 - £99,999 | 0 | 1 |
| £100,000 - £104,999 | 2 | 0 |
| £105,000 - £109,999 | 0 | 1 |
| £110,000 - £114,999 | 0 | 0 |
| £115,000 - £119,999 | 0 | 0 |
| £120,000 - £124,999 | 0 | 0 |
| £125,000 - £129,999 | 0 | 0 |
| £130,000 - £134,999 | 0 | 0 |
| £140,000 - £144,999 | 0 | 1 |
| £145,000 - £149,999 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 42 | 31 |

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The number of exit packages with total cost per band and total cost of the compulsory and other redundancies are set out in the table below:

| (a) Exit package cost band (including special payments) | (b) Number of compulsory redundancies | | (c) Number of other departures agreed | | (d) Total number of exit packages by cost band (b)+(c) | | (e) Total cost of exit packages for each band | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
| | | | | | | | £'000 | £'000 |
| £0 - £20,000 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 79 | 29 |
| £20,001 - £40,000 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 27 | 0 |
| £40,001 - £60,000 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 91 | 59 |
| £60,001 - £80,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| £80,001 - £100,000 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 85 |
| £100,001 - £150,000 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 221 |
| Total | 1 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 197 | 394 |

Termination Benefits

The table above includes amounts paid to the pension fund under statutory provision amounting to £246k in 2023/24. There were payments of £71k made in 2022/23.

27. External audit costs

The Authority has incurred the following costs in relation to the audit of the Statement of Accounts, certification of grant claims and statutory inspections and for non-audit services provided by the Authority's external auditors:

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Fees payable with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor | 169 | 110 |
| Audit-related assurance services (Housing Benefit)* | 251 | - |
| Fees payable for the certification of grant claims and returns | 5 | 15 |
| Total | 425 | 125 |

*Of the £251k relating to audit-related assurance services for Housing Benefit, £24k relates to 2023/24 audits, £15k relates to 2022/23 audits and the remaining £212k relates to previous years audits.

28. Grant Income

The Authority credited grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Grants credited to taxation and non-specific are detailed in Note 11.

The Authority credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the services in:

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Credited to Services | | |
| Council Tax and Housing Benefit Administration Grant | (314) | (317) |
| Housing Benefit Subsidy Grant | (26,468) | (25,638) |
| Other Housing General Fund | (1,192) | (948) |
| Business Support Grants | (1,232) | (337) |
| Council Tax Utility Rebate | - | (5,259) |
| Other Grant Income | (982) | (952) |
| Total | (30,188) | (33,451) |

Capital Grants and Contributions Received in Advance

The Authority has received contributions that have yet to be recognised as income as they have conditions attached to them that may require the return of balances. The balances at the year-end are as follows:

| | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Capital Contributions Received in Advance | | |
| Developers Contributions | (30) | (35) |
| Total | (30) | (35) |

29. Related Parties

The Council is required to disclose material transactions with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Council or to be controlled or influenced by the Council. Disclosures of these transactions allow readers to assess the extent to which the Council 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 Council.

Central Government has significant influence over the general operations of the Council – it is responsible for providing the statutory framework, within which the Council operates, provides the majority of its funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Council has with other parties (e.g., housing benefits). Grants received from government departments are set out in Note 28 (Grant Income) and Note 11 (Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure). Capital grants received in advance at 31 March 2024 are shown in Note 28.

Members of the Council have direct control over the Council’s financial and operating policies. The total of members’ allowances paid in 2023/24 is shown in Note 25. During 2023/24 payments totalling £385k have been given to voluntary organisations where councillors have declared an involvement. In all instances, the payments were made with proper consideration of declarations of interest. The relevant members did not take part in any discussion or decision relating to the payments. Details of all these transactions are recorded in the Register of Members' Interest, open to public inspection at the Council offices during office hours.

The organisations involved are as follows:

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| Organisation | 2023/2024 | | 2022/2023 | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| | Value of Payment £'000 | Number of Councillors declaring an involvement | Value of Payment £'000 | Number of Councillors declaring an involvement |
| Breaks Manor Youth and Community Centre | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) | 354 | 2 | 319 | 1 |
| Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Ludwick Family Club | 0 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Women's Refuge | 20 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 385 | 11 | 321 | 3 |

Hertfordshire Building Control Limited

The council partnered with seven other local authorities across Hertfordshire to create a fully integrated building control service which was launched in August 2016; the council holds 12.5% share of the business (share capital £1) and is represented on the board. The company aims to provide a more flexible and efficient response to building control issues across the county. Control is shared equally among the eight partners and the company is operating out of Campus East, Welwyn Garden City. In 2023/24 the proportionate share of Hertfordshire Building Control Limited loss was £44k (in 2022/23 this was a profit of £69k). In August 2016 the council made a loan to the company of £107k which is held in Long Term Debtors (other loans) on the balance sheet.

30. Capital expenditure and financing

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Opening Capital Financing Requirement | 297,443 | 288,657 |
| Capital Investment | | |
| Property, plant and equipment assets | 28,032 | 48,782 |
| Heritage assets | | |
| Intangible assets | 857 | 27 |
| Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute | 630 | 524 |
| Sources of finance | | |
| Capital receipts and Reserves | (19,650) | (24,362) |
| Government grants and other contributions | (2,699) | (9,891) |
| Revenue Contribution to Capital | (5,963) | (5,477) |
| Statutory Provision for the repayment of debt | (826) | (817) |
| Closing Capital Financing Requirement | 297,821 | 297,443 |
| Explanation of movements in year | | |
| Increase / (Decrease) in underlying need to borrowing (unsupported by government financial assistance) | 379 | 8,786 |
| Increase / (decrease) in capital financing requirement | 379 | 8,786 |

31. Leases

31.1 Authority as Lessee

Finance leases

The Council has acquired two properties under finance leases: Weltech Business Centre and Chantry Court. The assets acquired under these leases are carried as Property, Plant and Equipment in the Balance Sheet at the following net amounts:

| | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Other land and buildings | 44 | 45 |
| | 44 | 45 |

The Authority is committed to making minimum payments under these leases comprising settlement of the long-term liability for the interest in the property acquired by the Authority and finance costs that will be payable by the Authority in future years while the liability remains outstanding. The minimum lease payments are made up of the following amounts:

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| | 31 March 2024 £'000 | 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Finance lease liabilities (net present value of minimum lease payments): | | |
| - Non current | 2,103 | 2,103 |
| Finance costs payable in future years | 14,505 | 14,650 |
| Minimum lease payments | 16,608 | 16,753 |

The minimum lease payments will be payable over the following periods:

| | Minimum lease payments | | Finance lease liabilities | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | 31 March 2024 £'000 | 31 March 2023 £'000 | 31 March 2024 £'000 | 31 March 2023 £'000 |
| | Not later than one year | 145 | 145 | - |
| Later than one year and not later than five years | 579 | 579 | - | - |
| Later than five years | 15,884 | 16,029 | 2,103 | 2,103 |
| Total | 16,608 | 16,753 | 2,103 | 2,103 |

The minimum lease payments do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews.

31.2 Authority as Lessor

Finance leases

The Authority has leased out property at the Gosling Sports Centre on a finance lease with a remaining term of 108 years. The Authority has a gross investment in the lease, made up of the minimum lease payments expected to be received over the remaining term.

The minimum lease payments comprise settlement of the long-term debtor for the interest in the property acquired by the lessee and finance income that will be earned by the Authority in future years whilst the debtor remains outstanding. The gross investment is made up of the following amounts:

| | 31 March 2024 £'000 | 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Finance lease debtor (net present value of minimum lease payments): | | |
| - Non current | 101 | 101 |
| Unearned finance income | 612 | 619 |
| Gross investment in the lease | 713 | 720 |

The gross investment in the lease and the minimum lease payments will be received over the following periods:

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

| | Gross Investment in the Lease 31 March 2024 £'000 | Minimum Lease Payments 31 March 2024 £'000 | Gross Investment in the Lease 31 March 2023 £'000 | Minimum Lease Payments 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Not later than one year | - | 7 | - | 7 |
| Later than one year and not later than five years | - | 26 | - | 26 |
| Later than five years | 101 | 680 | 101 | 686 |
| Total | 101 | 713 | 101 | 719 |

The minimum lease payments do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews.

Operating leases

The Council is a lessor of a number of properties, including town centre shops, garages and industrial units. These items are held in the balance sheet as other land and buildings within property, plant and equipment. The gross value of these properties is outlined in Note 14. The future lease payments receivable in future years are shown in the table below:

| Authority as lessor - operating leases | 31 March 2024 £'000 | 31 March 2023 £'000 |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Not later than one year | 3,695 | 2,179 |
| Later than one year and not later than five years | 10,136 | 6,306 |
| Later than five years | 33,141 | 33,012 |
| Total | 46,972 | 41,498 |

The minimum lease payments receivable do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews.

32. Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

32.1 Pension scheme

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Authority makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Authority has a commitment to make the payments that needs to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The authority participates in two post-employment schemes:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme, administered locally by Hertfordshire County Council – this is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions liabilities with investment assets,
- Arrangements for the award of discretionary post-retirement benefits upon early retirement – this is an unfunded defined benefit arrangement, under which liabilities are recognised when awards are made. However, there are no investment assets built up to meet these pension liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pension payments as they eventually fall due.

The principal risks to the authority of the scheme are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, structural changes to the scheme (i.e., large-scale withdrawals from the scheme), changes to inflation, bond yields and the performance of the equity investments held by the scheme. These are mitigated to a certain extent by the statutory requirements to charge to the General Fund the amounts required by statute as described in the accounting policies note.

32.2 Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

The cost of retirement benefits is recognised in the reported 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:

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

| | 2023/2024 £'000 | 2022/2023 £'000 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Cost of services | | |
| Current service cost | 2,888 | 5,785 |
| Past service costs / (gain) | 138 | 176 |
| Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure | | |
| Net Interest Cost | (48) | 1,164 |
| Total post employment benefit charged to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services | 2,978 | 7,125 |
| Other post employment benefit charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | | |
| Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising: | | |
| - Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions | (1,136) | (1,673) |
| „ Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense) | (7,784) | 18,129 |
| - Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions | (7,511) | (76,919) |
| - Changes in asset ceiling | 34,101 | - |
| - Other | 5,956 | 14,491 |
| Total post employment benefit charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | 26,604 | (38,847) |
| 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 | 2,978 | (7,125) |
| Actual amount charged against the General Fund balance for pensions in the year | | |
| Employers' contributions payable to scheme | 4,331 | 3,395 |
| | 4,331 | 3,395 |

The latest actuarial report showed that the net pension fund position has changed from a surplus of £0.365m in 2022/23 to a surplus of £12.193m in 2023/24. The change is mainly due to an increase in asset values while the value of liabilities has remained constant. As pension fund assets are now greater than funded obligations, an asset ceiling has been applied as IAS19 accounting standards restrict the amount of surplus that can be disclosed.

The surplus on the Pension Fund is not fully realisable by the authority in the form of reductions in employer contributions or refunds, and therefore, disclosing the surplus without adjustment is not providing a true picture of the amount of economic benefit available to the authority.

The asset ceiling applied, as calculated by the actuary, was £34.101m. This adjusts the net closing position on the Pension Fund to a deficit of £21.91m.

32.3 Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The amount included in the Balance Sheet arising from the authority's obligation in respect of its defined benefit plans is as follows:

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Present value of the defined benefit obligation | 213,402 | 178,769 |
| Fair Value of Plan assets | (191,494) | (179,134) |
| Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation | 21,908 | (365) |

32.4 Reconciliation of the Movements in the Fair Value of Scheme Assets

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Opening fair value of scheme assets | (179,134) | (195,325) |
| Interest Income | (8,419) | (5,226) |
| Remeasurement gain / (loss): | | |
| - The return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense | (7,784) | 18,129 |
| - Other | - | - |
| Contributions from employer | (4,331) | (3,395) |
| Contributions from employees into the scheme | (881) | (815) |
| Benefits paid | 9,055 | 7,498 |
| Closing fair value of scheme assets | (191,494) | (179,134) |

32.5 Reconciliation of Present Value of the Scheme Liabilities (Defined Benefit Obligation)

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Opening balance at 1 April | 178,769 | 237,202 |
| Current service cost | 2,888 | 5,785 |
| Interest Cost | 8,371 | 6,390 |
| Contributions from scheme participants | 881 | 815 |
| Remeasurement (gains) and losses: | | |
| - Actuarial gains / losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions | (1,136) | (1,673) |
| - Actuarial gains / losses arising from changes in financial assumptions | (7,511) | (76,919) |
| - Changes in asset ceiling | 34,101 | - |
| - Other | 5,956 | 14,491 |
| Past service cost | 138 | 176 |
| Benefits paid | (9,055) | (7,498) |
| Closing balance at 31 March | 213,402 | 178,769 |

32.6 Local Government Pension Scheme assets comprised

| | 2023/2024 £'000 | | | 2022/2023 £'000 | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| | Quoted prices in active markets | Quoted prices not in active markets | Total | Quoted prices in active markets | Quoted prices not in active markets | Total |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | 12,030 | | 12,030 | 10,101 | | 10,101 |
| Equity Securities: | | | | | | |
| - Consumer | 2,591 | | 2,591 | 2,362 | | 2,362 |
| - Manufacturing | 3,004 | | 3,004 | 1,042 | | 1,042 |
| - Financial Institutions | 1,704 | | 1,704 | 897 | | 897 |
| - Health and Care | 1,623 | | 1,623 | 1,403 | | 1,403 |
| - Information and Technology | 2,656 | | 2,656 | 3,133 | | 3,133 |
| - Other | | | | 0 | | 0 |
| Debt Securities: | | | | | | |
| - UK Government | 9,763 | | 9,763 | 13,116 | | 13,116 |
| - Other | | 4,869 | 4,869 | | 5,223 | 5,223 |
| Private Equity | | 16,732 | 16,732 | | 16,902 | 16,902 |
| Real Estate: | | | | | | |
| - UK Property | | 13,196 | 13,196 | | 15,073 | 15,073 |
| - Overseas Property | | 9,589 | 9,589 | | 11,933 | 11,933 |
| Investment Funds and Unit Trusts: | | | | | | |
| - Equities | 72,304 | | 72,304 | 60,351 | | 60,351 |
| - Bonds | 27,436 | | 27,436 | 23,438 | | 23,438 |
| - Infrastructure | | 289 | 289 | | 186 | 186 |
| - Other | 1,436 | 11,714 | 13,150 | 1,667 | 12,074 | 13,741 |
| Derivatives: | | | | | | |
| - Foreign Exchange | | 557 | 557 | | (537) | (537) |

32.7 Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities have been assessed by Hymans Robertson, an independent firm of actuaries, for the County Council Fund being based on the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2022.

The principal assumptions used by the actuary have been:

Basis for estimating assets and liabilities

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Mortality assumptions: | | |
| Longevity at 65 for current pensioners: | | |
| Men | 21.5 | 21.6 |
| Women | 24 | 24.2 |
| Longevity at 65 for future pensioners: | | |
| Men | 22.6 | 22.8 |
| Women | 25.7 | 26 |
| Rate of increase in pensions | 2.8% | 3.0% |
| Rate of increase in salaries | 3.3% | 3.5% |

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme, i.e., on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period, and are before the application of an asset ceiling.

Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Scheme

| Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Scheme | Approximate % increase to Employer Liability | Approximate monetary amount (£'000) |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 0.1% decrease in Real Discount Rate | 2.0% | 2,900 |
| 1 year increase in member life expectancy | 4.0% | 7,172 |
| 0.1% increase in Salary Increase Rate | 0.0% | 90 |

32.8 Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

The actuaries anticipate Employers Contributions for the period to 31 March 2024 will be approximately £4.331m.

Discretionary benefits

The Council 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. Other employee benefits are accounted for using the policies as are applied to the local government pension scheme.

33. Contingent Liabilities

Guarantees

Mortgages

The Council acts as a guarantor for mortgages on equity share properties. In the event of default by the associations or the mortgagee, the Council will be liable for the debt.

Pensions

Only certain organisations can participate in the Local Government Pension Scheme. A Transferee Admission Body is usually formed when a service or function offered by a local authority is contracted out to the private sector. These bodies gain entry into the Pension Fund by entering into an admission agreement with the Administering Authority (HCC) and the Outsourcing Scheme Employer. The Outsourcing Scheme Employer (i.e. Welwyn Hatfield) must guarantee the admitted body's liabilities in respect of the pension scheme.

The guarantee means that if an admitted body fails to pay its pension obligations to the Pension Fund then the guarantor will take on those obligations, however it is a contract requirement that the admitted body provides a Bond in case of default on payment.

The Council has the following agreements with Bonds in place:

- Urbaser Ltd
- Morgan Sindall Group
- Liberata

The Council does not have a Bond in place for Welwyn Hatfield Leisure Limited (novated to Greenwich Leisure Limited on 1 May 2018), or with Communities First and is therefore liable for any non-payment and deficit at the end of the schemes.

34. Contingent Assets

The Council is expecting to receive approximately £950,000 relating to covenant releases, dependent on certain conditions being met, over which the Council has no control

Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement

The HRA Income and Expenditure Statement shows the economic cost in the year of providing housing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from rents and government grants. Authorities charge rents to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The increase or decrease in the year, on the basis of which rents are raised, is shown in the Movement on the HRA Statement.

| | Notes | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | £'000 | £'000 |
| Expenditure | | | |
| Repairs and maintenance | | 12,175 | 12,184 |
| Supervision and management | | 11,323 | 10,118 |
| Special services | | 3,868 | 3,701 |
| Rent, rates, taxes and other charges | | 1,722 | 1,220 |
| Increase/(decrease) in impairment allowance for doubtful debts | | 258 | 354 |
| Depreciation and impairments of non-current assets | <i>H5</i> | 35,103 | 16,374 |
| Debt management expenses | | 67 | 49 |
| Sums directed by the Secretary of State | | 39 | 49 |
| IAS19 adjustments | | (372) | 703 |
| Total expenditure | | 64,184 | 44,753 |
| Income | | | |
| Dwelling rents | | (55,055) | (51,718) |
| Non-dwelling rents | | (508) | (497) |
| Tenants' charges for services and facilities | | (1,868) | (1,823) |
| Leaseholders' charges for services and facilities | | (1,234) | (848) |
| Contributions towards expenditure | | (236) | (242) |
| Total income | | (58,902) | (55,128) |
| Net cost of HRA services as included in the council's | | 5,282 | (10,375) |
| Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | | | |
| HRA share of corporate and democratic core | | 795 | 1,212 |
| Net income from HRA services | | 6,077 | (9,163) |
| (Gain) or loss on sale of HRA non-current assets | | 4,908 | 1,217 |
| Interest payable and similar charges | | 6,101 | 6,014 |
| Net Interest on the Net Defined Benefit Liability | | (14) | 319 |
| HRA interest and investment income | | (62) | (139) |
| Non-Specific Grants, Contributions & Other Capital | | (1,139) | - |
| (Surplus) / Deficit for the year on HRA services | | 15,871 | (1,752) |

Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement

The HRA Income and Expenditure Account shows the actual financial performance for the year, measured in terms of the resources consumed and generated over the last twelve months. However, the Council is required to account for its statutory housing activity on a different accounting basis, the main differences being:

- The gain or loss on the disposal of HRA assets has to be reversed before a final balance is calculated; and
- Any impairment on HRA assets, either due to economic consumption or valuation, has to be reversed from the account before a statutory balance can be finalised,

This reconciliation statement summarises the differences between the outturn on the Income and Expenditure Account and the Housing Revenue Account Balance.

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Opening balance on HRA as at 01 April | (2,764) | (2,653) |
| (Surplus) / Deficit on the HRA Income and Expenditure Statement | 15,871 | (1,752) |
| Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations: | | |
| Difference between any other item of income and expenditure determined in accordance with the code and determined in accordance with statutory HRA requirements (revaluation loss) | (20,088) | (1,549) |
| Gain or loss on sale of HRA non-current assets | (4,908) | (1,217) |
| Non Specific Grants, Contributions & Other Capital | | - |
| Capital Grants transferred to capital grant unapplied account | 1,139 | - |
| Net increase or decrease before transfers to or from reserves | (7,986) | (4,518) |
| Transfers to or from earmarked reserves: | | |
| Revenue Contribution to Capital | 5,958 | 5,430 |
| HRA share of contributions to or from Pension Reserve | 386 | (1,022) |
| HRA Other Earmarked Reserves | 1,452 | - |
| (Increase) / Decrease in year on HRA | (188) | (111) |

Notes to the Housing Revenue Account

H1 Housing stock numbers and values

H1.1 Number and type of dwellings in housing stock

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Number | Number |
| Houses and bungalows | 6,247 | 6,247 |
| Flats and maisonettes | 2,796 | 2,676 |
| Equity share | 6 | 6 |
| | 9,049 | 8,929 |

H1.2 Asset values

| | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Operational assets | | |
| Dwellings | 1,041,582 | 1,072,184 |
| Other land and buildings | 2,821 | 2,948 |
| Equipment | 407 | 292 |
| Non-operational assets | | |
| Assets Under Construction | 2,416 | 37,920 |
| Total | 1,047,225 | 1,113,345 |

H2 Vacant possession value of housing stock

The vacant possession value and balance sheet value of dwellings within the HRA show the economic cost of providing council housing at less than open market rents.

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Vacant possession value of housing stock at 1 April | 2,742,145 | 2,777,970 |

H3 Analysis of movement on the major repairs reserve

This reserve was set up on the 1 April 2001 and is financed by the depreciation charge to the HRA account. The reserve may only be used for capital related expenditure on the housing stock. The movement was as follows:

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Opening balance as at 1 April | - | - |
| Transfer to major repairs reserve during financial year | (15,014) | (14,825) |
| Capital expenditure | 15,014 | 14,825 |
| Closing balance as at 31 March | - | - |

H4 Summaries of total capital expenditure and receipts

H4.1 Summary of total capital expenditure

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Total capital expenditure in year | 22,922 | 30,559 |
| Financed by: | | |
| Direct revenue funding | 5,958 | 5,430 |
| Grants and Contributions | 947 | - |
| Capital receipts reserve | 3,214 | 8,672 |
| Increase/(Decrease) in Capital | | |
| Financing Requirement | (2,211) | 1,633 |
| Major repairs reserve | 15,014 | 14,825 |
| Total financing | 22,922 | 30,560 |

H4.2 Summary of total capital receipts

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| House sales | 3,149 | 8,268 |
| Discounts recovered | - | 19 |
| Total receipts | 3,149 | 8,287 |

H5 Depreciation and impairment of assets

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Depreciation: | | |
| HRA Dwellings | 14,863 | 14,700 |
| Other land and buildings | 66 | 66 |
| Vehicles, Plant and Equipment | 85 | 59 |
| Revaluation Losses / (Gains): | | |
| HRA Dwellings | 20,088 | 1,549 |
| Total | 35,102 | 16,374 |

H6 Rent arrears

| | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | £'000 | £'000 |
| Outstanding rent arrears at 31 March | 2,195 | 2,048 |
| Provision for uncollectable debts at 31 March | (1,936) | (1,816) |

Collection Fund

The Collection Fund is an agent's statement that reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate collection fund. The statement shows the transactions of the billing authority in relation to the collection from taxpayers and distribution to local authorities and the government of council tax and non-domestic rates.

2023/24

| | Council Tax £'000 | Business Rates £'000 | Total £'000 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Income | | | |
| Council Tax Receivable | (91,880) | - | (91,880) |
| Business Rates Receivable | - | (78,758) | (78,758) |
| Total income | (91,880) | (78,758) | (170,637) |
| Expenditure | | | |
| Precepts, Demands and Shares | | | |
| - Hertfordshire County Council | 70,434 | 7,808 | 78,242 |
| - Hertfordshire Police Authority (Council Tax only) | 10,440 | - | 10,440 |
| - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council | 12,154 | 31,232 | 43,386 |
| - Central Government (Business Rates only) | - | 39,040 | 39,040 |
| Charges to Collection Fund | | | |
| - Less costs of collection | - | 156 | 156 |
| - Less write offs of uncollectable amounts | - | - | - |
| - Less increase / (decrease) allowances for impairment | 694 | 235 | 928 |
| - Less increase / (decrease) provision for appeals | - | 4,012 | 4,012 |
| Transitional Payment Protection due | - | - | - |
| Contribution towards previous year (deficit) / surplus | | | |
| - Hertfordshire County Council | (1,945) | (451) | (2,396) |
| - Hertfordshire Police Authority (Council Tax only) | (283) | - | (283) |
| - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council | (342) | (1,802) | (2,144) |
| - Central Government (Business Rates only) | - | (2,253) | (2,253) |
| Total Expenditure | 91,152 | 77,979 | 169,131 |
| Movement on fund balance | (728) | (779) | (1,506) |
| Balance at beginning of year | 3,117 | 7,529 | 10,646 |
| Balance at end of year (surplus) / deficit | 2,390 | 6,750 | 9,140 |
| Shares of balance | | | |
| - Hertfordshire County Council | 1,809 | 681 | 2,491 |
| - Hertfordshire Police Authority (Council Tax only) | 268 | - | 268 |
| - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council | 312 | 2,699 | 3,011 |
| - Central Government (Business Rates only) | - | 3,370 | 3,370 |
| | 2,390 | 6,750 | 9,140 |

2022/23

| | Council Tax £'000 | Business Rates £'000 | Total £'000 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Income | | | |
| Council Tax Receivable | (86,468) | - | (86,468) |
| Business Rates Receivable | - | (54,217) | (54,217) |
| Total income | (86,468) | (54,217) | (140,685) |
| Expenditure | | | |
| Precepts, Demands and Shares | | | |
| - Hertfordshire County Council | 66,521 | 5,761 | 72,282 |
| - Hertfordshire Police Authority (Council Tax only) | 9,700 | - | 9,700 |
| - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council | 11,641 | 23,042 | 34,684 |
| - Central Government (Business Rates only) | - | 28,803 | 28,803 |
| Charges to Collection Fund | | | |
| - Less costs of collection | - | 144 | 144 |
| - Less write offs of uncollectable amounts | - | - | - |
| - Less increase / (decrease) allowances for impairment | 600 | 456 | 1,056 |
| - Less increase / (decrease) provision for appeals | - | 872 | 872 |
| Transitional Payment Protection due | - | 223 | 223 |
| Contribution towards previous year (deficit) / surplus | | | |
| - Hertfordshire County Council | (2,197) | 192 | (2,005) |
| - Hertfordshire Police Authority (Council Tax only) | (318) | - | (318) |
| - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council | (389) | 769 | 380 |
| - Central Government (Business Rates only) | - | 961 | 961 |
| Total Expenditure | 85,559 | 61,224 | 146,783 |
| Movement on fund balance | (909) | 7,007 | 6,098 |
| Balance at beginning of year | 4,026 | 522 | 4,548 |
| Balance at end of year (surplus) / deficit | 3,117 | 7,529 | 10,646 |
| Shares of balance | | | |
| - Hertfordshire County Council | 2,358 | 759 | 3,117 |
| - Hertfordshire Police Authority (Council Tax only) | 349 | - | 349 |
| - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council | 410 | 3,010 | 3,420 |
| - Central Government (Business Rates only) | - | 3,759 | 3,759 |
| | 3,117 | 7,529 | 10,646 |

Notes to the Collection Fund

C1 Non-domestic rates

The total non-domestic rateable value as at 31 March 2024 was £191.82m.

The national non-domestic rate multiplier for the 2023/24 year was 49.9p for small business and 51.2p for other businesses.

C2 Calculation of council tax

The tax base calculation is derived by first multiplying the estimated number of domestic properties in each tax band less exemptions by a weighting factor. This result is then reduced by a percentage to allow for losses on collection and reductions through appeals.

| Band | Property number less exemptions and discounts | Factor | Band D equivalents |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| A | 770.0 | 6/9 | 513.4 |
| B | 4,599.4 | 7/9 | 3,577.3 |
| C | 14,328.5 | 8/9 | 12,736.3 |
| D | 11,087.3 | 1/1 | 11,087.3 |
| E | 5,090.0 | 11/9 | 6,221.0 |
| F | 4,245.8 | 13/9 | 6,132.9 |
| G | 3,775.5 | 15/9 | 6,292.5 |
| H | 683.4 | 2/1 | 1,366.7 |
| Total | 44,579.8 | | 47,927.4 |
| | Less adjustment for Council Tax Support | | (3,795.5) |
| | Total tax base before Collection Rate Adjustment | | 44,131.9 |
| | Less adjustment for collection rates at 99.4% | | 99.4% |
| | Council tax base | | 43,867.1 |

Statement of responsibilities

The Council's responsibilities

The council 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 Executive Director (Finance and Transformation),
- manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of its resources and safeguard its assets,
- approve the Statement of Accounts by 31 May (for 2023/24).

The Chief Financial Officer's responsibilities

The chief financial officer 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, I have:

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

I have also:

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

Chief Financial Officer's certification

I certify that the Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at the reporting date and of its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Richard Baker (CPFA)
Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)
31 May 2024

Glossary of Terms

Accounting Policies

Those principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices applied by an entity that specify how the effects of transactions and other events are to be reflected in its financial statements through:

- recognising,
- selecting measurement bases for, and
- presenting,

assets, liabilities, gains, losses and changes to reserves.

Accruals

The inclusion of income or expenditure in the accounts for the financial year in which the activity occurred rather than when the money was received or paid.

Accumulated Absences

Holiday entitlements or any other form of leave such as time off in lieu earned by employees, which has not been taken by the end of the financial year and can be carried forward to the next financial year.

Actuarial Gains and Losses

The changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses that arise because:

- events have not coincided with the assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation (experience gains and losses), or
- the actuarial assumptions have changed.

Amortisation

The measure of the cost or revalued amount of benefits of the intangible non-current assets that have been consumed during the period. Consumption includes wearing out, using up or other reduction in the useful life of a non-current asset arising from use, effluxion of time or obsolescence through either changes in technology or demand for the goods and services produced by the asset.

Asset

An asset is anything owned that can be given a monetary value, such as buildings, investments or cash.

- A current asset is one that will be used or cease to have material value by the end of the next financial year,
- A long term asset provides benefits for a period of more than one year.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset or expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of an existing fixed asset. Expenditure which does not fall within this definition must be charged to a revenue account.

Capital Receipts

The proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets which can be used to finance new capital expenditure.

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The amount the council would need to borrow to finance its capital expenditure.

Cash Equivalent

Current asset investments that are available for disposal 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.

CIPFA

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy is the professional body for accountants in the public sector.

Code of Practice (the Code)

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting sets out the arrangements required to be followed in the Statement of Accounts. It constitutes 'proper accounting practice' and is recognised as such by statute.

Collection Fund

Every billing authority (District/Borough Council) is required to maintain a Collection Fund into which is paid the Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates collected from the tax/rate payers. For Council Tax, payments are made from the fund to the precepting authorities (County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner) whilst a share of Non-Domestic Rates income is passed to central government and the County Council.

Community Assets

Assets that the local authority intends to hold in perpetuity, that have no determinable useful life and that may have restrictions on their disposal. Examples of community assets are parks and historical buildings.

Contingent Asset

A contingent asset is a possible asset arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the local authority's control.

Contingent Liability

A contingent liability is either:

- a possible obligation arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the authority's control, or
- a present obligation arising from past events where it is not probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

Corporate and Democratic Core

The corporate and democratic core comprises all activities which local authorities engage in specifically because they are elected, multi-purpose authorities. The cost of these activities are thus over and above those which would be incurred by a series of independent, single-purpose, nominated bodies managing the same services. There is therefore no logical basis for apportioning these costs to services.

Creditors

Amounts owed by the council for goods and services received but not paid on 31 March.

Current Service Cost (Pensions)

The increase in the present value of a defined benefit scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current period.

Curtailment (Pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, an event that reduces the expected years of future service of present employees or reduces for a number of employees the accrual of defined benefits for some or all of their future service. Curtailments include:

- termination of employees' services earlier than expected, for example as a result of closing a factory or discontinuing a segment of a business, and
- termination of, or amendment to the terms of, a defined benefit scheme so that some or all future service by current employees will no longer qualify for benefits or will qualify only for reduced benefits.

Debtors

Amounts owed to the council for goods and services provided but where payment has not been received by 31 March.

Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

A pension or other retirement benefit scheme other than a defined contribution scheme. Usually, 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 (including notionally funded).

Depreciation

The measure of the cost or re-valued amount of the benefits of the fixed asset that have been consumed during the period.

Consumption includes the wearing out, using up or other reduction in the useful life of a fixed asset whether arising from use, the passage of time or obsolescence through either changes in technology or demand for the goods and services produced by the asset.

Discretionary Benefits

Retirement benefits which the employer has no legal, contractual or constructive obligation to award and are awarded under the authority's discretionary powers, such as the Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations 1996.

Earmarked Reserve

These are funds that are set aside for a specific purpose, or a particular service, or type of service.

Estimation

The methods adopted by an entity to arrive at estimated monetary amounts, corresponding to the measurement bases selected, for assets, liabilities, gains, losses and changes to reserves.

Estimation techniques implement the measurement aspects of accounting policies. An accounting policy will specify the basis on which an item is to be measured; where there is uncertainty over the monetary amount corresponding to that basis, the amount will be arrived at by using an estimation technique. Estimation techniques include, for example:

- methods of depreciation, such as straight-line and reducing balance, applied in the context of a particular measurement basis, used to estimate the proportion of the economic benefits of a tangible fixed asset consumed in a period, or
- different methods used to estimate the proportion of debts that will not be recovered, particularly where such methods consider a population as whole rather than individual balances.

Events after the Balance Sheet Date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the Balance Sheet date and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue.

Exceptional Items

Material items which derive from events or transactions that fall within the ordinary activities of the authority and which need to be disclosed separately by virtue of their size or incidence to give fair presentation of the accounts.

Fair Value

The value of an asset or liability based on the current market price.

Finance Lease

A finance lease is one that transfers substantially all of the risks and rewards of ownership of a fixed asset to the lessee.

Financial Instruments

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability of another.

Going Concern

The concept that the authority will remain in operational existence for the foreseeable future, in particular that the income and expenditure accounts and Balance Sheet assume no intention to curtail significantly the scale of operations.

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 an authority in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the authority.

Heritage Assets

A heritage asset is an asset with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities that is held and maintained principally for its contribution to knowledge and culture.

International Accounting Standards (IAS) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)

IASs are an earlier form of an international accounting standard. Since 2000 all international standards are IFRSs. The accounts have been prepared in accordance with IFRS, adapted for public sector where appropriate.

Impairment

A reduction in the value of an asset below its carrying amount on the Balance Sheet.

Infrastructure Assets

These are assets that comprise public facilities and which provide essential services and enhance the productive capacity of the economy, for example highways and footpaths.

Intangible Assets

An intangible asset is an *identifiable* non-monetary asset without physical substance (typically software).

Inventory

The amount of unused or unconsumed inventory held in expectation of future use. When use will not arise until a later period, it is appropriate to carry forward the amount to be matched to the use or consumption when it arises. Inventories comprise the following categories:

- goods or other assets purchased for resale,
- consumable stores,
- raw materials and components purchased for incorporation into products for sale,
- products and services in intermediate stages of completion,
- long-term contract balances, and
- finished goods.

Investment Properties

Interest in land and/or buildings:

- in respect of which construction work and development have been completed; and
- which is held for its investment potential, with any rental income being negotiated at arm's length.

Investments (Non-Pensions Fund)

A long-term investment is an investment that is intended to be held for use on a continuing basis in the activities of the authority. Investments should be so classified only where an intention to hold the investment for the long-term can clearly be demonstrated or where there are restrictions as to the investor's ability to dispose of the investment.

Investments, other than those in relation to the Pensions Fund, that do not meet the above criteria should be classified as current assets.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

The minimum amount that the council must charge to the income and expenditure statement to provide for repayment of debt.

Net Book Value

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

Net Interest on the Net Defined Benefit Liability (Pensions)

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

Net Realisable Value

The open market value of the asset in its existing use (or market value in the case of non-operational assets), less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

Non-Current Assets

Assets held by the council which yield a return for more than one year.

Operating Leases

A lease other than a finance lease.

Past Service Cost (Pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, the increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employee service in prior periods arising in the current period as a result of the introduction of, or improvement to, retirement benefits.

Precepts

Sums levied by District/Borough, County and Parish Councils and police authorities on the Collection Funds of billing authorities (Districts and Boroughs) and forming part of the overall demand for Council Tax.

Prior Period Adjustments

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.

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

A government agency established to provide long term loans to local authorities to finance part of their capital expenditure.

Rateable Value

A value on all non-domestic properties subject to Non-Domestic Rates (NDR). The value is based on a notional rent that the property could be expected to yield and revaluations take place every five years.

Related Parties

A related party is a person or entity that is related to the entity that is preparing its financial statements.

A person or a close member of that person's family is related to a reporting entity if that person:

- has control or joint control over the reporting entity,
- has significant influence over the reporting entity, or

- is a member of the key management personnel of the reporting entity or of a parent of the reporting entity.

An entity is related to a reporting entity if any of the following conditions applies:

- The entity and the reporting entity are members of the same group (which means that each parent, subsidiary and fellow subsidiary is related to the others),
- One entity is an associate or joint venture of the other entity (or an associate or joint venture of a member of a group of which the other entity is a member),
- Both entities are joint ventures of the same third party,
- One entity is a joint venture of a third entity and the other entity is an associate of the third entity,
- The entity is a post-employment benefit plan for the benefit of employees of either the reporting entity or an entity related to the reporting entity. If the reporting entity is itself such a plan, the sponsoring employers are also related to the reporting entity,
- The entity is controlled or jointly controlled by the person identified,
- The person identified has significant influence over the entity or is a member of the key management personnel of the entity (or of a parent of the entity).

Related Party Transactions

A related party transaction is the transfer of resources or obligations between a reporting entity and a related party, regardless of whether a price is charged.

It should be noted that the definition of related party should be read both ways – i.e., considering the local authority as both a controller/influencer and a controlled/influenced entity.

Remeasurement on the Net Defined Benefit Liability (Pensions)

Comprises Actuarial Gains and Losses and Return on Plan Assets.

Retirement Benefits

All forms of consideration given by an employer in exchange for services rendered by employees that are payable after the completion of employment. Retirement benefits do not include termination benefits payable as a result of either:

- an employer's decision to terminate an employee's employment before the normal retirement date, or
- an employee's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits, because these are not given in exchange for services rendered by employees.

Revenue Expenditure

The day to day running costs incurred by the Council in providing its services.

Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)

Capital expenditure which does not create or add to the value of an item of property, plant or equipment belonging to the authority. For instance, capital grants given to external bodies, or loans awarded for capital purchases.

Scheme Liabilities (Pensions)

The liabilities of a defined benefit scheme for outgoings due after the valuation date. Scheme liabilities measured using the projected unit method reflects the benefits that the employer is committed to provide for service up to the valuation date.

Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP)

SeRCOP establishes proper practices with regard to consistent financial reporting for services. It is an official CIPFA statement – all local authorities in the United Kingdom are expected to adopt its mandatory requirements and detailed recommendations.

Settlement (Pensions)

An irrevocable action that relieves the employer (or the defined benefit scheme) of the primary responsibilities for a pension obligation and eliminates significant risks relating to the obligation and the assets used to effect the settlement. Settlements include:

- a lump-sum cash payment to scheme members in exchange for their rights to receive specified pension benefits,
- the purchase of an irrevocable annuity contract sufficient to cover vested benefits, and
- the transfer of scheme assets and liabilities relating to a group of employees leaving the scheme.

UK GAAP

The body of accounting standards and other guidance which make up the current set of guidance (Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) followed by the local authority.

Useful Life

The period over which the local authority will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset.