

Supplementary Committee Agenda



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Audit & Governance Committee Thursday 27th February 2025

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices

Time: 7.00 pm

Democratic Services: Laura Kirman
Tel: 01992 564243 Email:
democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

7. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24 (Pages 2 - 165)

To consider the Ernst & Young completion report and audited Statement of Accounts 2023/24.

Agenda Item 7

Report to the Audit & Governance Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: AGC-~~XXX~~-2024/25

Date of meeting: 27th February 2025

Portfolio: Finance & Economic Development

Subject: (Audited) Statement of Accounts 2023/24

Responsible Officer: Andrew Small (01992 564278)

Democratic Services: Laura Kirman (01992 564273)

Recommendations/Decisions Required

- (1) To consider the Ernst & Young (EY) (audit) Completion Report setting out the findings from their audit of the Statement of Accounts 2023/24 and providing their Audit Opinion (**Appendix A**); and
- (2) To approve the audited Statement of Accounts 2023/24 in the context of the EY audit report for the year ended 31st March 2024 presented elsewhere on this agenda (**Appendix B**).

Executive Summary

The audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts 2023/24 has now concluded, and the findings of the external auditors are attached as an **Appendix A** to this report.

The auditors will present their findings to the Committee, as contained in their detailed conclusion presented as **Appendix A**, and subject to the Committee being satisfied, the Committee is asked to consider the Final Statement of Accounts at **Appendix B** and approve them.

The draft Statements for 2023/24 were published on 28th May 2024, ahead of the statutory publication deadline of 31st May 2024; this is a major achievement which compares favourably to the majority of councils nationally.

Following long delays (a widely reported national problem in the sector), the outstanding audits for 2021/22 and 2022/23 conducted by the Council's previous auditors (Deloitte) were eventually concluded, with unqualified audit opinions being issued on the final (audited) Statements on 2nd and 12th December 2024 respectively (in accordance with the statutory "backstop" deadline of 13th December 2024).

However, the relatively late issue of the opinions for 2021/22 and 2022/23, in the context of a statutory “backstop” deadline for the publication of audited financial statements for 2023/24 of 28th February 2025, has left insufficient time for the Council’s current auditors (Ernst & Young) to complete the detailed audit procedures required to issue an unqualified opinion; on that basis a “disclaimed” opinion is proposed for 2023/24, with the intent to rebuild the ‘assurance gap’ as part of the future audit process (in 2024/25 and beyond).

Furthermore, I wish to once again reassure the Committee that the Council has had a fully resourced professional Finance function in place since early 2022, which has enabled the improvement journey in financial reporting to continue, including the publication of the draft Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 and 2023/24 on 2nd June 2023 and 28th May 2024 respectively, as well as receiving unqualified opinions on all sets of Accounts up to, and including, 2022/23.

Epping Forest District Council is now in a minority of district councils nationally that is able to produce and publish its draft Statement of Accounts within tight statutory deadlines and, although regrettable (but due to factors beyond its control), it will also be in a minority of councils with just one disclaimed opinion; this will assist in the restoration of full audit assurance from 2024/25.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

To ensure that the Committee maintains robust oversight of the Council’s duty to prepare annual financial statements that comply with proper accounting practice as defined by Section 21(2) of the Local Government Act 2003.

To ensure that an opinion is issued on the financial statements by 28th February 2025 in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2024/907 “The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (“SI 2024/907”).

Legal and Governance Implications

The local government financial reporting and audit regime exists within in a tightly regulated framework.

For the accounting period 2023/24, this included the:

- Local Government Act 1972 (Section 151)
- Local Government Act 2003 (Section 21(2))
- Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (various); and
- Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) Amendment Regulations 2020; and
- Statutory Instrument 2024/907 “The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (“SI 2024/907”).

Safer, Cleaner and Greener (SCG) Implications

None.

Background Papers

Epping Forest District Council "*Statement of Accounts 2023/24*" (draft) published 28th May 2024.

CIPFA/LASAAC "*Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23*" (Guidance Notes).

Risk Management

There are a range of risks associated with local authority accounting and audit ranging from reputational damage to the Council through to the loss of public funds through fraud and error and a lack of accountability; the accounting and audit regime acts as a key mitigating control.

Epping Forest District Council Completion Report for Those Charged with Governance

Year ended 31 March 2024

Report issued - 4 February 2025

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Building a Better
working world



Audit & Governance Committee
Epping Forest District Council
323 High Street
Epping
CM16 4BZ

4 February 2025

Dear Audit & Governance Committee

2023/24 Completion Report

We are pleased to attach our Completion Report, summarising the status of our audit for the forthcoming meeting of the Audit & Governance Committee. We will update the Audit Committee at its meeting scheduled for 27 February 2025 on further progress to that date and explain the remaining steps to the issue of our final opinion.

The audit is designed to express an opinion on the 2023/24 financial statements and address current statutory and regulatory requirements. This report contains our findings related to the areas of audit emphasis, our views on Epping Forest District Council (the Council's) accounting policies and judgements and material internal control findings. Each year sees further enhancements to the level of audit challenge, the exercise of professional judgement and the quality of evidence required to achieve the robust professional scepticism that society expects. We thank the management team for supporting this process.

This report considers the impact of Government proposals, which have now been enacted through secondary legislation, to clear the backlog in local audit and put the local audit system on a sustainable footing. The proposals recognise that timely, high-quality financial reporting and audit of local bodies is a vital part of our democratic system. Not only does it support good decision making by local bodies, by enabling them to plan effectively, make informed decisions and manage their services, it ensures transparency and accountability to local taxpayers. All stakeholders have a critical role to play in addressing the audit backlog.

The Audit & Governance Committee, as the Council's body charged with governance, has an essential role in ensuring that it has assurance over both the quality of the draft financial statements prepared by management and the Council's wider arrangements to support the delivery of a timely and efficient audit. We will consider and report on the adequacy of the Council's external financial reporting arrangements and the effectiveness of the audit committee in fulfilling its role in those arrangements as part of our assessment of Value for Money arrangements and consider the use of other statutory reporting powers to draw attention to weaknesses in those arrangements where we consider it necessary to do so.

Given that Statutory Instrument 2024/907 "The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 ("SI 2024/907") imposes a backstop date of 28 February 2025 by which date we are required to issue our opinion on the financial statements, we have considered whether the time constraints imposed by the backstop date mean that we cannot complete all necessary procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion and fulfil all the objectives of all relevant ISAs (UK).

We have also taken into account SI 2024/907 and Local Authority Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance Notes issued by the National Audit Office and endorsed by the Financial Reporting Council, together with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements.

Although we had planned to undertake limited work to rebuild assurance ahead of the 2023/24 backstop date, due to the fact that the Council's predecessor auditor did not issue their opinions on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial statements until 2 December 2024 and 12 December 2024 respectively, there was insufficient time and resources available to complete any audit work on your 2023/24 financial statements. Taking this into account, for the year ended 31 March 2024, we have determined that we cannot meet the objectives of the ISAs(UK) and we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit report

We draw the attention of Audit & Governance Committee members and officers to the Public Sector Audit Appointment Limited's Statement of Responsibilities (paragraphs 26-28) which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements (see Appendix F).

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit & Governance Committee, and Management, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 27 February 2024.

Yours faithfully

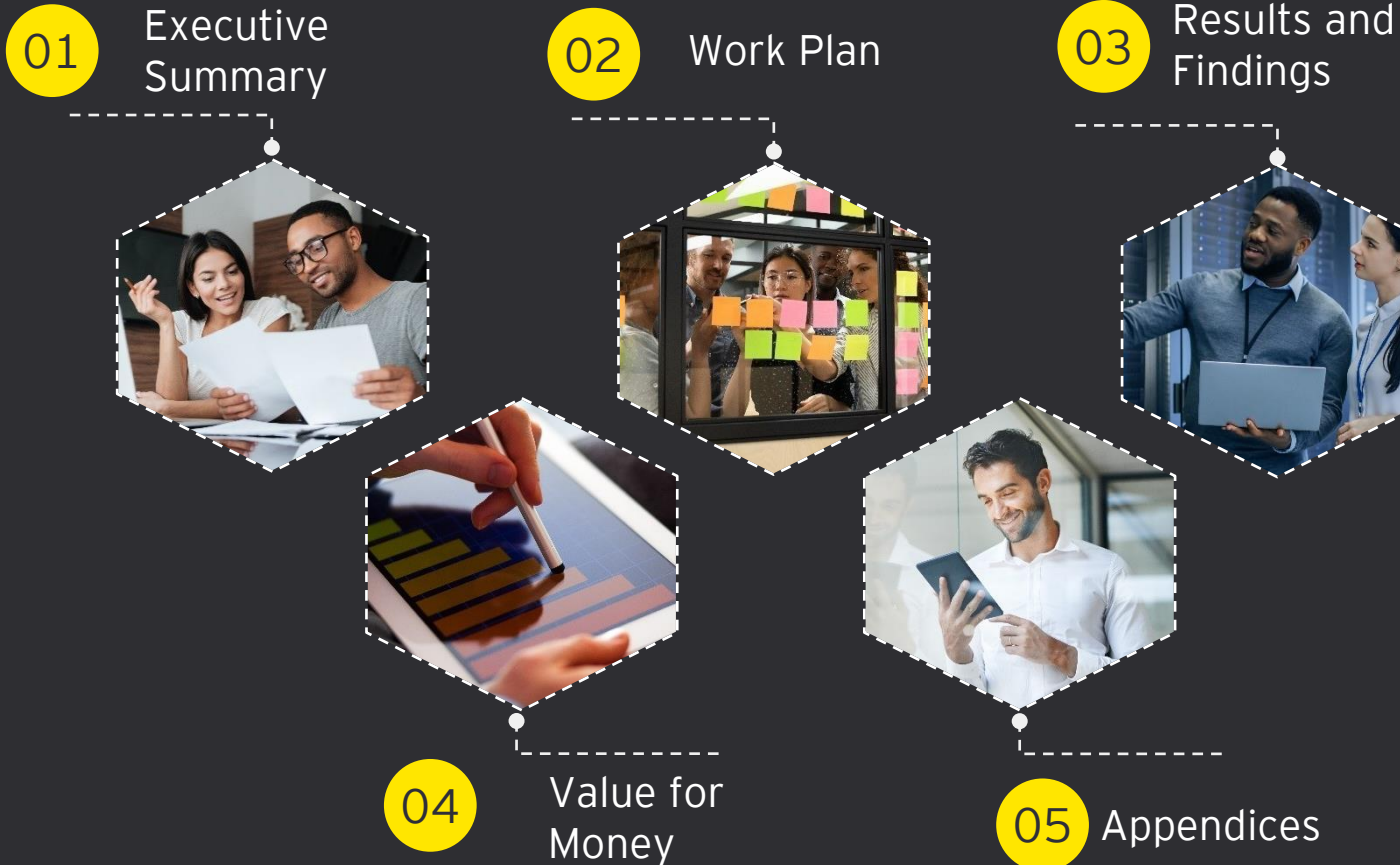
Debbie Hanson

Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the “Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies”. It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The “Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)” issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code), and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Audit & Governance Committee and management of Epping Forest District Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit & Governance Committee and management of Epping Forest District Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit & Governance Committee and management of Epping Forest District Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01

Executive Summary

Executive Summary - Context for the audit

Context for the audit - Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) measures to address local audit delays

Timely, high-quality financial reporting and audit of local bodies is a vital part of our democratic system. It supports good decision making by local bodies and ensures transparency and accountability to local taxpayers. There is general agreement that the backlog in the publication of audited financial statements by local bodies has grown to an unacceptable level and there is a clear recognition that all stakeholders in the sector need to work together to address this. Reasons for the backlog across the system have been widely reported and include:

- ▶ Lack of capacity within the local authority financial accounting profession
- ▶ Increased complexity of reporting requirements within the sector
- ▶ Lack of capacity within audit firms with public sector experience
- ▶ Increased regulatory pressure on auditors, which in turn has increased the scope and extent of audit procedures performed.

MHCLG (formerly DLUHC) has worked collaboratively with the FRC, as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop and implement measures to clear the backlog. SI 2024/907, together with the updated National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice 2024 and the Local Authority Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance, have all been developed to ensure auditor compliance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)). The approach to addressing the backlog consists of three phases:

Phase 1: Reset involving clearing the backlog of historic audit opinions up to and including financial year 2022/23 by 13 December 2024.

Phase 2: Recovery from Phase 1, starting from 2023/24, in a way that does not cause a recurrence of the backlog by using backstop dates to allow assurance to be rebuilt over multiple audit cycles. The backstop date for audit of the 2023/24 financial statements is 28 February 2025.

- ▶ Phase 3: Reform involving addressing systemic challenges in the system and embedding timely financial reporting and audit.

EY's Head of UK Government and Public Sector Audit wrote to the Section 151 officer at the Council on 21 August 2024 to set out that we would be prioritising those 2023/24 audits that we considered met the following criteria:

- ▶ draft unaudited financial statements were published by 31 May 2024;
- ▶ there was evidence that finance teams could effectively and efficiently support the audit process; and
- ▶ have high-quality audit evidence and supporting information that is delivered in accordance with our agreed timetable and in advance of the commencement of the audit.

We concluded that, as the Council's predecessor auditors had not completed their audits for 2021/22 or 2022/23 at that time and were not anticipating completing their audit work until close to the December 2024 backstop date, there was insufficient time and capacity, for the 2023/24 audit to be completed by the February 2025 backstop date. We therefore did not undertake our planned procedures on the 2023/24 financial statements and have not been able to start rebuilding assurance ahead of the planned backstop date of 28 February 2025.



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02 Work Plan

Work Plan – Audit Scope

Audit scope

This Completion report covers the work that we performed in relation to:

- ▶ Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of the Council give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2024 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- ▶ Our commentary on your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources for the relevant period. We include further details on VFM in Section 04.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO), to the extent and in the form required by them, on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- The quality of systems and processes;
- ▶ Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and,
- ▶ Management's views on all of the above.

Given that SI 2024/907 imposes a backstop date of 28 February 2025 by which date we are required to issue our opinion on the financial statements, we have considered whether the time constraints imposed by the backstop date mean that we cannot complete all necessary procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion and fulfil all the objectives of all relevant ISAs (UK).

This decision is in line with ISA 200: Failure to Achieve an Objective 24.

If an objective in a relevant ISA (UK) cannot be achieved, the auditor shall evaluate whether this prevents the auditor from achieving the overall objectives of the auditor and thereby requires the auditor, in accordance with the ISAs (UK), to modify the auditor's opinion or withdraw from the engagement (where withdrawal is possible under applicable law or regulation). Failure to achieve an objective represents a significant matter requiring documentation in accordance with ISA (UK) 230 (Revised June 2016).4 (Ref: Para. A77&A78)

Taking the above into account, for the year ended 31 March 2024 we have determined that we cannot meet the objectives of the ISAs(UK) and we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit report.

Work Plan - Materiality

Materiality

Planning materiality

£2.39m

Materiality for y/e 31 March 2024 has been set at £2.39 million, which represents 2% of 2024 gross expenditure on provision of services.

Performance materiality

£1.19m

Performance materiality for y/e 31 March 2024 has been set at £1.19 million, which represents 50% of planning materiality.

Audit differences

£0.059m

We will report all uncorrected misstatements relating to the primary statements greater than £0.059 million for y/e 31 March 2024. Other misstatements identified will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Audit & Governance Committee.

In order to ascertain the significance of issues in the draft financial statements we have set materiality based on the draft financial statements for 2023/24. We determined that our audit procedures would be performed using the materiality level noted above. This level of materiality remains appropriate for the actual results for the financial year.

The outcome of consultation on the planned measures to address local audit delays and the likely issue of the disclaimers on the Council's 2023/24 financial statements and any guidance subsequently issued may continue to impact on our assessment of materiality for the 2024/25 audit. We will keep the Audit & Governance Committee updated on any changes to materiality levels as the audit progresses.

These materiality levels have been set based on the main Council financial statements - we have not considered group materiality. These levels are being used to assess our response to any issues identified in the Council's financial statements.

Work Plan – Significant, inherent and other risk areas

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters identified as part of our planning work. It seeks to provide Those Charged with Governance with an overview of our initial risk identification for the year

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk/area of focus	Applicable year	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Misstatement due to fraud or error	31 March 2024	Fraud risk	First year of audit	There is a risk that the financial statements as a whole are not free from material misstatement whether caused by fraud or error. We perform mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks.
Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure including Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)	31 March 2024	Fraud risk	First year of audit	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition. We have assessed the risk is most likely to occur through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure to understate revenue expenditure reported in the financial statements, given the extent of the Council's capital programme and Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute.
Valuation of Property, Plant & Equipment and Investment Properties	31 March 2024	Significant risk	First year of audit	The fair value of Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) and Investment Property represents a significant balance in the Council's accounts and is subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end land & buildings balances recorded in the Balance Sheet.

Work Plan – Significant, inherent and other risk areas

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters identified as part of our planning work. It seeks to provide Those Charged with Governance with an overview of our initial risk identification for the year

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk/area of focus	Applicable year	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Pension Liability Valuation	31 March 2024	Inherent risk	First year of audit	<p>The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme.</p> <p>Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.</p>
Preparation of Group accounts.	31 March 2024	Inherent risk	First year of audit	<p>The Council has a number of subsidiaries, we need to consider the need to consolidate these subsidiaries into the Council's group accounts.</p> <p>There is a risk that the consolidation of any subsidiaries within the Group Boundary is not undertaken in line with the relevant accounting standards and in line with the Code of Practice.</p>

Work Plan - Independence

The FRC Ethical Standard 2019 and ISA (UK) 260 'Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance', requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications

Planning stage

- ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;
- ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;
- ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;
- ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence

Final stage

- ▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;
- ▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;
- ▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;
- ▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner
- ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;
- ▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and
- ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

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In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

Work Plan - Independence

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Debbie Hanson, your audit engagement partner and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in your company. Examples include where we have an investment in your company; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

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One of the services are prohibited under the FRC's ES. In addition, when the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

At the time of writing, we do not provide any non audit services and so the current ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees is approximately nil. No additional safeguards are therefore required.

A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4. There are no other self interest threats at the date of this report

Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of your company. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.



03 Results and findings

Results and findings

Status of the audit

Our audit work in respect of the Council opinion is substantially complete. The following items relating to the completion of our audit procedures were outstanding at the date of this report.

- ▶ Completion of subsequent events procedures to the date of the audit report;
- ▶ Receipt of a signed management representation letter and financial statements.

Given that the audit process is still ongoing, we will continue to consider existing and new information which could influence our final audit opinion

Value for Money

Our value for money (VFM) work is complete and reported in Section 04 of this report. We have identified no risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements. Having updated and completed the planned procedures in these areas we did not identify a significant weakness. See Section 04 of the report for further details.

Audit differences

We did not identify any differences which we need to bring to your attention based on our limited procedures on the financial statements. We identified some minor presentational issues which management have corrected.

Other Reporting Issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement for consistency with our knowledge of the Council. We have no matters to report as a result of this work.

We will complete the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts on the completion of our audit. Until the NAO has confirmed whether they require us to undertake any additional procedures we are not able to issue our audit certificate.

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Council to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. "a report in the public interest").

We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.



Results and findings

Areas of audit focus

In our Audit Plan we identified a number of key areas of focus for our audit of the financial report of the Council. We concluded we would disclaim the audit and therefore have not completed detailed audit testing on these areas but instead have reported any matters that came to light from the work we did complete.

We request that you review these and other matters set out in this report to ensure:

- ▶ There are no further considerations or matters that could impact these issues
- ▶ You concur with the resolution of the issue
- ▶ There are no further significant issues you are aware of to be considered before the financial report is finalised

There are no matters, other than those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Audit & Governance Committee or Board of Directors.

Control observations

During the audit, we did not identify any significant deficiencies in internal control:

Independence

Further to our review of independence in Section 02 of this report we have not identified any issues to bring to your attention..



Results and findings

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Authority's financial reporting process. They include the following:

- ▶ Significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;
- ▶ Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit;
- ▶ Any significant matters arising from the audit that were discussed with management;
- ▶ Written representations we have requested;
- ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report;
- ▶ Any other matters significant to overseeing the financial reporting process;

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Findings and issues around the opening balance on initial audits (if applicable);

Related parties;

External confirmations;

Going concern;

- ▶ Consideration of laws and regulations; and
- ▶ Group audits

We have no other matters to report

Expected modification to the audit report

As set out within this report, due to the fact that the Council's predecessor auditor did not issue their opinions on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial statements until 2 December 2024 and 12 December 2024 respectively, there was insufficient time and resources available to complete any audit work on your 2023/24 financial statements. Taking this into account, for the year ended 31 March 2024, we have determined that we cannot meet the objectives of the ISAs(UK) and we anticipate issuing a disclaimed audit report.

The form and content of the Audit Report will be shared with the Section 151 officer to enable you to formally authorise the 2023/24 financial statements for issue.



04 Value for Money



VFM - Executive Summary

Purpose

Auditors are required to be satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We do not issue a 'conclusion' or 'opinion', but where significant weaknesses are identified we will report by exception in the auditor's opinion on the financial statements. In addition, auditors provide an annual commentary on arrangements published as part of the Auditor's Annual Report. In doing so, we comply with the requirements of the 2020 Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03).

The purpose of this commentary is to explain the work we have undertaken during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and highlight any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement. The commentary covers our findings for audit year 2023/24.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has worked collaboratively with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop measures to address the delay in local audit. As part of the NAO consultation issued on 8 February 2024, there is a proposal to reduce the scope of the VFM reporting up to and including the 2023/24 financial year. However, the consultation states that where auditors have begun or already undertaken work that no longer falls under the reduced scope (if agreed once the consultation closes), they may still report on it in accordance with Schedule 4. We are continuing to report VFM in line with our existing responsibilities as set out in the 2020 Code to ensure a smooth transition to the 2023/24 audit year when auditors are required to meet the full Code reporting responsibilities.

The report sets out the following areas which have been assessed up to the point of issuing this interim report:

- Any identified risks of significant weakness, having regard to the three specified reporting criteria;
- An explanation of the planned responsive audit procedures to the significant risks identified;
- Findings to date from our planned procedures; and
- Summary of arrangements over the period covered by this report (Appendix E).

VFM - Executive Summary (continued)

Risks of Significant Weakness

In undertaking our procedures to understand the Council's arrangements against the specified reporting criteria, we identify whether there are risks of significant weakness which require us to complete additional risk-based procedures. AGN 03 sets out considerations for auditors in completing and documenting their work and includes consideration of:

- our cumulative audit knowledge and experience as your auditor;
- reports from internal audit which may provide an indication of arrangements that are not operating effectively;
- our review of Council committee reports;
- meetings with the Management and key officers;
- information from external sources; and
- evaluation of associated documentation through our regular engagement with Council management and the finance team.

We have completed our VFM planning and identified a risk of significant risk related to 'Governance' as part of our risk assessment procedures. We set out our planned response to address this risk in the table below.

Description of risk identified	Work planned to address the risk of significant weakness
<p>The Council has created a new wholly owned subsidiary Terra Verde Services Ltd to provide waste collection services. It is important that the Council has appropriate governance arrangements on place for establishment and oversight of the company as well as sufficient knowledge and experience to run the service internally. We have therefore identified a risk of significant weakness around these arrangements.</p> <p>This represents a potential weaknesses in proper arrangements for governance over the Council's new subsidiary, Terra Verde.</p>	<p>We will review the Councils approval process for establishing the subsidiary and review the business plan for the subsidiary. We will specifically consider the due diligence and commercial viability assessments and any external advice the Council received in establishing the entity, such as legal tax and commercial and whether this advice was followed.</p>

VFM - Executive Summary (continued)

Reporting

Our final commentary for 2023/24 is set out in this report. The commentary on these pages summarises our understanding of the arrangements at the Council based on our evaluation of the evidence obtained in relation to the three reporting criteria (see table below) throughout 2023/24.

Appendix E includes the detailed arrangements and processes underpinning the reporting criteria.

In accordance with the NAO's 2020 Code, we are required to report a commentary against the three specified reporting criteria. The table below sets out the three reporting criteria, whether we identified a risk of significant weakness as part of our planning procedures, and whether, at the time of this report, we have concluded that there is a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements.

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Reporting Criteria	Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?	Actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?
Financial sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks	Significant risk identified	No significant weakness identified
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified

Value for Money Commentary

Financial Sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services

No significant weakness identified

During 2023/24, the Council continued to manage the impact on its finances from a number of sources or pressure, such as general inflation and uncertainties in relation to the amount of funding to be received in the future.

The final outturn on the Council's General Fund for the year was a surplus of £0.918 million. This was an improved position compared to the projected deficit of £0.584 million reported to Cabinet in quarter 3. The surplus is spread across a number of individual services and was due to a variety of reasons, the most significant being the land disposal at North Weald Airfield, lower costs of financing debt and some smaller positive budget variances.

A total of £39.98 million of planned and approved capital projects were underspent at the year-end, due to slippages or delays in the capital programme. The vast majority of the slippage were due to three projects; one for planned waste vehicle fleet replacement which did not go ahead, delays in the Epping Leisure Centre and another delay in the construction of a new waste management depot. The underspent budgets have been rolled forward into the 2024/25 capital programme.

During the year, the Council has continued to revisit and monitor medium term financial plans to ensure they have sufficient resources to deliver services. A balanced budget has been set for the financial year 2024/25. This is an improvement from the position reported in the October 2023 MTFP, when a deficit of £3.720 million reported. The improvement is the product of a range of movements and required the assumed delivery of substantial savings. The Council forecasts funding gaps in subsequent years, totalling £5.528 million by the end of 2028/29. The Council continues to monitor programmes that will help them achieve balanced budgets in the long term.

At the 31 March 2024, the Council held a General Fund balance of £4.0 million, which is in line with the Council's adopted minimum contingency level. Together with further earmarked General Fund reserves of £4.667 million, this provides a level of resources if future savings are not identified or achieved in each of the five financial years of the Medium Term Financial Plan. This allows the Council to continue to deliver the current level of services. However, given that earmarked reserves are set aside for a specific purpose which are Council priority areas, the Council may need to revisit these priorities and reserves if required savings are not achieved.

The Council should therefore continue its assessment of the annual savings requirements and identify relevant schemes to achieve the required annual savings. This must go alongside the monitoring of the delivery of identified schemes, to ensure that the planned savings are achieved in line with projections. Together, this approach should minimise the further use of reserves where possible.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2023/24 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.

Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

No significant weakness identified

The development of the Council's Budget is integrated with the production of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). In regard to achieving savings and producing the budget, officers, in consultation with members, produce budget proposals. These are then communicated to Cabinet. The Council monitors its budget quarterly and performance indicators are also monitored.

The Council's Annual Governance Statement sets out the underpinning governance arrangements for the year and areas for improving or monitoring. The AGS identified the governance over Terra Verde Services Ltd as a risk and hence we have also identified the governance over the establishment of this company as a risk of significant weakness in our planning. Having assessed the arrangements for the set up of the Company, we can see that the Council has used extensive external advice (consultants and legal advisors) in the creation of this subsidiary and that all options have been scrutinised by Cabinet before being approved. The company has been created with a clear purpose of providing statutory waste management services and there is sufficient oversight from the Council regarding the executive management of the company. The appointments to the Board of directors and management positions have experience in similar organisations and sector specific experience in the creation and management of local authority trading companies. We are therefore satisfied that there is sufficient oversight and governance in relation to the establishment of the company and there is no evidence of a significant weakness in governance arrangements regarding the subsidiary.

The Head of Internal Audit's overall opinion for 2023/24 was that the Council has adequate and effective governance, risk management arrangements and control processes. The Council has risk management strategy and policy in place which is reviewed for the effectiveness of risk management. Members are responsible for ensuring that there are appropriate processes in place for effective risk management. The Audit and Governance committee is empowered to challenge the effective operation of internal controls. The Committee receives a quarterly Internal Audit report which provide outcomes of completed internal audit work, progress made by management against previously identified risks and a summary of proactive and reactive Counter Fraud work. The Council also has an Anti- fraud and Corruption strategy of which its key objectives is to protect the Council's resources and assets, ensuring they are used as intended, maintain a culture where fraud or corruption is not tolerated and ensure staff and Members demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity at all times.

The Council published its 2023/24 Statement of Accounts by the 31 May 2024 deadline as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (the A&A Regulations). Although the public Inspection period did not include the first 10 working days of June, as required by the regulations, a valid inspection period was held for a 30-day continuous period from 21 October 2024.

We confirmed that the 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts were arithmetically correct, agreed to the data in the general ledger, and were prepared in line with the content required by the CIPFA Code. The Council has also performed bank reconciliations during the 2023/24 financial year.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2023/24 to ensure that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

No significant weakness identified

Performance indicators and performance monitoring information is incorporated into Council and Cabinet meetings. The Council assesses whether the key priorities have been achieved through review of performance indicators on a quarterly basis.

As for all Local Government entities, the Council is required to set an annual balanced budget which is approved by Council. Management measures and reviews financial performance against the budget for each of its departments through its Cabinet meetings. Each department also have a more detailed review on each of its expenditure streams against the proposed budgets.

The Council maintains key performance indicators which are actively monitored and published in its accounts as part of the Narrative Statement.

The Council has an Overview & Scrutiny Committee which helps ensure that local public services are delivered effectively, efficiently and in the best interests of residents and people that live within the Borough.

The Council has a procurement strategy in place which assists in delivering the Council's strategic objectives and statutory responsibilities. It is informed by the Council's objectives and strategy as well as its MTFS, which sets the framework for a balanced budget, and takes into account key legislative requirements.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2023/24 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.



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05 Appendices

Appendix A - Management representation letter - Draft

Management representation letter

This is the draft management letter template which Management will tailor and send back signed and dated prior to the opinion being issued.

Management Rep Letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

[Date]

Ernst & Young

[Address]

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of *[name of entity]* ("the [Council/Authority]") for the year ended *[balance sheet date]*. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the [Council/Authority] financial position of *[name of entity]* as of *[balance sheet date]* and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 20xx/xx (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)).

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records (See Note B.)

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with [the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 20xx/xx (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022))].
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the [Council/Authority], our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the [Council/Authority] in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 20xx/xx (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)), and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.

Appendix A - Management representation letter

Management representation letter

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Management Rep Letter

3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.
4. As members of management of the [Council/Authority], we believe that the [Council/Authority] has a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with [the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 20xx/xx (as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022)], that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
5. ***[When there are unadjusted audit differences in the current year.*** We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences identified by and brought to the attention from the auditor because [specify reasons for not correcting misstatement].

6. ***[When there are no unadjusted audit differences in either the current year or in the prior year or there are no unadjusted audit differences in the current year, and we determine that the current year effects of correcting prior year differences are not significant to the current year..*** There are no unadjusted audit differences identified during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented.
7. We confirm the [Council/Authority] does not have securities (debt or equity) listed on a recognized exchange [other than...].

Appendix A - Management representation letter

Management representation letter

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Management Rep Letter

B. Non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the [Council/Authority]'s activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible to identify and address any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. *[When management is aware of the occurrence of non-compliance with laws or regulations, or has received allegations of non-compliance with laws and regulations.]* We have disclosed to you, and provided you full access to information and any internal investigations relating to, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud, known to us that may have affected the [Council/Authority] (regardless of the source or form and including, without limitation, allegations by "whistleblowers") including non-compliance matters:

- involving financial improprieties;
- related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the [Council/Authority]'s financial statements;
- related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the [Council/Authority]'s activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;
- involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or
- in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

Appendix A – Management representation letter

Management representation letter

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Management Rep Letter

5. *[When management is not aware of the occurrence of non-compliance with laws and regulations, and has not received allegations of non-compliance with laws and regulations]* We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the [Council/Authority] (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by “whistleblowers”), including non-compliance matters:

- involving financial improprieties;
- related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the [Council/Authority]’s financial statements;
- related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the [Council/Authority]’s activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;
- involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or
- in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
 - Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
 - Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

Appendix A - Management representation letter

Management representation letter

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Management Rep Letter

3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the [Council/Authority] and committees *[add the full title of the relevant committees]* (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the *[period]* to the most recent meeting on the following date: *[list date]*.

4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the [Council/Authority]'s related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the *[period]* end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.

5. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with *[applicable financial reporting framework]*.

6. We have disclosed to you, and the [Council/Authority] has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

7. From *[the date of our last management representation letter or the beginning of the current period for initial audits]* through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you, to the extent that we are aware, any (1) unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants) , to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate, and (2) ransomware attacks when we paid or are contemplating paying a ransom, regardless of the amount

8. *[When management is aware of unauthorized access to information technology systems that has a material effect on the financial statements.]* We have disclosed to you and provided you full access to information and any internal investigations relating to, unauthorized access to our information technology systems that has a material effect on the financial statements, including disclosures.

Appendix A - Management representation letter

Management representation letter

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Management Rep Letter

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Note [X] to the financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.
4. The claim by *[name of claimant]* have been settled for the total sum of XXX which has been properly accrued in the financial statements. No other claims in connection with litigation have been or are expected to be received.

E. Ownership of Assets

1. Except for assets capitalised under finance leases, the [Council/Authority] has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheet(s), and there are no liens or encumbrances on the [Council/Authority]'s assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral, other than those that are disclosed in Note [X] to the financial statements. All assets to which the [Council/Authority] has satisfactory title appear in the balance sheet(s).
2. All agreements and options to buy back assets previously sold have been properly recorded and adequately disclosed in the financial statements.
3. We have no plans to abandon lines of product or other plans or intentions that will result in any excess or obsolete inventory, and no inventory is stated at an amount in excess of net realisable value.
4. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts. Except as disclosed in Note [X] to the financial statements, we have no other line of credit arrangements.

Appendix A – Management representation letter

Management representation letter

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Management Rep Letter

F. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the *[describe assertion]* and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

G. Estimates

When we have identified a higher risk estimate, we include the following representation(s)

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the *[insert name of the accounting estimate]* have taken into account all relevant information [and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on XXX] of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the *[insert name of the accounting estimate]*.

3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the *[insert name of the accounting estimate]* appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out *[describe the specific courses of action]* on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate(s), including those describing estimation uncertainty [and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on XXX], are complete and are reasonable in the context of *[the applicable financial reporting framework]*.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the *[insert name of the accounting estimate]*.
6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate(s) and disclosures in the financial statements, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic].

Appendix A - Management representation letter

Management representation letter

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Management Rep Letter

H. Retirement benefits

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

I. Reserves

1. We have properly recorded or disclosed in the financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

J. Contingent Liabilities

1. We are unaware of any violations or possible violations of laws or regulations the effects of which should be considered for disclosure in the financial statements or as the basis of recording a contingent loss (other than those disclosed or accrued in the financial statements).
2. We are unaware of any known or probable instances of non-compliance with the requirements of regulatory or governmental authorities, including their financial reporting requirements, and there have been no communications from regulatory agencies or government representatives concerning investigations or allegations of non-compliance, except as follows:

1. Matters of routine, normal, recurring nature (e.g., examinations by bank and insurance examiners, examinations by taxing authorities, [continue listing as appropriate]) none of which involves any allegations of noncompliance with laws or regulations that should be considered for disclosure in the financial statements or as a basis for recording a loss contingency.
2. Matters referred to in the letters dated [date] issued to you by the [Council/Authority]'s Monitoring Officer and the [Council/Authority]'s legal advisor.
3. Matters referred to in the letter of comments received from the [name of regulator] regarding
4.

K. Going Concern

1. Note [X] to the financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the [Council/Authority]'s ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

Appendix A - Management representation letter

Management representation letter

This is the draft management letter template which Management will tailor and send back signed and dated prior to the opinion being issued.

Management Rep Letter

L. Subsequent Events

1. Other than..... described in Note [X] to the financial statements, there have been no events subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

M. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises [describe the other information applicable to the entity].
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.
3. We confirm that the Annual Governance Statement for 20xx/xx is a true reflection, in all material respects, of the governance arrangements and the effectiveness of those arrangements in 20xx/xx and includes disclosure of all significant governance issues and findings relating to that financial year, through to the date of this letter.

N. Climate-related matters

1. We confirm that to the best of our knowledge all information that is relevant to the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of climate-related matters has been considered [*include the following language when climate-related commitments have been made:*, including the impact resulting from the commitments made by the [Council/Authority],] and reflected in the financial statements.

Yours faithfully,

(Chief Financial Officer/Finance Director)

(Chairman of the Audit Committee)

Appendix A - Management representation letter

Management representation letter

This is the draft management letter template which Management will tailor and send back signed and dated prior to the opinion being issued.

Management Rep Letter

L. Subsequent Events

1. Other than..... described in Note [X] to the financial statements, there have been no events subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

M. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises [describe the other information applicable to the entity].
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.
3. We confirm that the Annual Governance Statement for 20xx/xx is a true reflection, in all material respects, of the governance arrangements and the effectiveness of those arrangements in 20xx/xx and includes disclosure of all significant governance issues and findings relating to that financial year, through to the date of this letter.

ISA (UK) 560.9

Other information is financial and non-financial information (other than the financial statements and the auditor's report thereon) included in an entity's annual report.

N. Climate-related matters

1. We confirm that to the best of our knowledge all information that is relevant to the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of climate-related matters has been considered [*include the following language when climate-related commitments have been made:*, including the impact resulting from the commitments made by the [Council/Authority],] and reflected in the financial statements.

Yours faithfully,

(Chief Financial Officer/Finance Director)

(Chairman of the Audit Committee)

Appendix B – Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

The original fees for these years were based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ Our accounts opinion and value for money conclusion being unqualified;
- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Council; and
- ▶ The Council has an effective control environment
- ▶ The Council complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26 - 28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly sets out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. These are set out in full on the previous page.

Due to the reset, the above clearly will not be achieved and we will be liaising with PSAA Ltd to discuss and agree fees.

	Current Year 2023/34	Prior Year 2022/23 (Note 2)
	£	£
Total Fee - Code Work	185,828	49,797
Other - Scale fee variation (Note 1)	TBC	TBC
Total audit	TBC	TBC
Other non-audit services not covered above	0	TBC
Total other non-audit services	0	TBC
Total fees	TBC	TBC

All fees exclude VAT

As set out in the joint statement on update to proposals to clear the backlog and embed timely audit issued by DHLUC, PSAA will use its fee variation process to determine the final fee the Council have to pay for the 2023/24 audit.

Note 1 - PSAA Ltd, in line with the joint statement issued DLUHC (as at that date) and the FRC is responsible for the determination of the final audit fee in respect of 2023/24.

In doing so, PSAA Ltd will apply the principles that where auditors have worked in good faith to meet the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice in place at the time the work was conducted (and have reported on work that is no longer required), then they are due the appropriate fee for the work done, including where their procedures were necessary to conclude the audit by the legislatively imposed backstop date by way of a modified or disclaimed opinion and the body is due to pay the applicable fee.

Note 2 - EY were not the Council's auditors for 2022/23. The figures included in the above table are the scale fees from the PSAA website. The fee for non audit services such as claims certification is therefore not known.

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee

We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the audit committee.

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the audit committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	<p>Communication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The planned scope and timing of the audit ▶ Any limitations on the planned work to be undertaken ▶ The planned use of internal audit ▶ The significant risks identified <p>When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team</p>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process ▶ Findings and issues regarding the opening balance on initial audits (delete if not an initial audit) 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Matters, if any, to communicate regarding management's process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit Committee responsibility 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, integrity, objectivity and independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communication whenever significant judgements are made about threats to integrity, objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the audit committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the audit committee may be aware of 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Group audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ An overview of the type of work to be performed on the financial information of the components ▶ An overview of the nature of the group audit team's planned involvement in the work to be performed by the component auditors on the financial information of significant components ▶ Instances where the group audit team's evaluation of the work of a component auditor gave rise to a concern about the quality of that auditor's work ▶ Any limitations on the group audit, for example, where the group engagement team's access to information may have been restricted ▶ Fraud or suspected fraud involving group management, component management, employees who have significant roles in group-wide controls or others where the fraud resulted in a material misstatement of the group financial statements 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Representations	Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
System of quality management	How the system of quality management (SQM) supports the consistent performance of a quality audit	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key audit matters that we will include in our auditor's report ▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	This Completion report for Those Charged with Governance

Appendix D - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations includes:

Any act or suspected act of omission or commission (intentional or otherwise) by the entity (including any third parties under the control of the entity such as subsidiaries, those charged with governance or management or an employee acting on behalf of the company), either intentional or unintentional, which are contrary to the prevailing laws or regulations

Management Responsibilities:

"It is the responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations, including compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations that determine the reported amounts and disclosures in an entity's financial statements."

ISA 250A, para 3

"The directors' report must contain a statement to the effect that... so far as the director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware, and he has taken all the steps that he ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditor is aware of that information."

ISA 250A, para 3

"Management is responsible for communicating to us on a timely basis, to the extent that management or those charged with governance are aware, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations ..."

Audit Engagement Letter

Management's responsibilities are also set out in the International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants' International Code of Ethics (IESBA Code) Para 360.08

Auditor Responsibilities

[The International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants' International Code of Ethics \(IESBA Code\)](#) section 360 sets out the scope and procedures in relation to responding to actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.

Professional accountancy organisations who are members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) are required to adopt the IESBA Code of Ethics.

We as your auditor are required to comply with the Code by virtue of our registration with ICAEW.

"If the auditor becomes aware of information concerning an instance of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, the auditor shall obtain:

An understanding of the nature of the act and the circumstances in which it has occurred; and Further information to evaluate the possible effect on the financial statements

The auditor shall evaluate the implications of the identified or suspected non-compliance in relation to other aspects of the audit, including the auditor's risk assessment and the reliability of written representations, and take appropriate action."

ISA 250A, paras 19 and 22

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Examples of Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

Matter

- ▶ Suspected or known fraud or bribery
- ▶ Health and Safety incident
- ▶ Payment of an unlawful dividend
- ▶ Loss of personal data
- ▶ Allegation of discrimination in dismissal
- ▶ HMRC or other regulatory investigation
- ▶ Deliberate journal mis-posting or allegations of financial impropriety
- ▶ Transacting business with sanctioned individuals

Implication

- ▶ Potential fraud/breach of anti-bribery legislation
- ▶ Potential breach of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- ▶ Potential breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential GDPR breach
- ▶ Potential non-compliance with employment laws
- ▶ Suspicion of non-compliance with laws/regulations
- ▶ Potential fraud / breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential breach of sanctions regulations

Appendix D - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR) (cont'd)

What are the implications of NOCLAR matters arising?

Depending on the nature and significance of the NOCLAR matter the following steps are likely to be required, involving additional input from both management and audit.

This can have an impact on overall achievability of audit timeline and fees.

Across our portfolio of audits we have seen a steady increase in NOCLAR matters that need to be addressed as part of the audit over the past 3 years



Management response:

Timely communication of the matter to auditors (within a couple of days)

Determine who will carry out any investigation into the matter - in-house or external specialists or mix of both

Scope the investigation, in discussion with the auditors

Evaluate findings and agree next steps

Determine effect on financial statements including disclosures

Prepare a paper, summarising the outcome of the investigation and management's conclusions

Communicate the outcome to Those Charged With Governance (TCWG) and to us as your auditors. Report to regulators where required.

Key Reminders:

- ▶ Make sure that all areas of the business are aware of what constitutes actual or potential non-compliance and associated requirements
- ▶ Communicate with us as your auditors on a timely basis - do not wait for scheduled audit catch-ups
- ▶ Engage external specialists where needed
- ▶ Ensure that your investigation assesses any wider potential impacts arising from the matter, not just the matter itself.
- ▶ Plan upfront and consider any impact on overall accounts preparation and audit timeline - discuss the implications with us as your auditor

Audit response:

Initial assessment of the NOCLAR matter and its potential impact

Initial consultation with risk team to determine responsive procedures and the involvement of specialists

Understand and agree scope of management's investigation with support from specialists as needed

Evaluate findings and undertake appropriate audit procedures

Determine audit related impact including accounting and disclosure and audit opinion implications

Document and consult on the outcome of our procedures

Communicate the outcome with management, TCWG and where necessary other auditors within the group or regulators

Appendix E – VFM - Summary of arrangements

Financial Sustainability

We set out below the arrangements for the financial sustainability criteria covering the year 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations

Arrangements in place

How the body ensures that it identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds these into them

Regarding financial planning, the Council is working to refine budgets and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to respond to cost pressures as they emerge. Through inspection of minutes of meetings to date, starting from the first iteration of the MTFS in the 2024/25 budget cycle, the forward looking report provides details of the Council General Fund financial picture of the next five years. The February 2023 MTFS noted a projected deficit of £2.389 million in 2024/25. In the initial MTFS, the Council assumed no savings. The MTFP was subsequently updated to reflect savings and a balanced budget was set for 2024/24 as a result.

How the body plans to bridge its funding gaps and identifies achievable savings

As noted above, In the initial MTFS, the Council assumed no savings but has subsequently included significant savings to bridge the budget gap. Each year officers, in consultation with members, produce budget proposals. The revenue proposals include both growth and savings depending on the needs of the service and the need for savings to balance the budget. Savings plan for 2024/25 were approved by Cabinet.

How the body plans finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities

The Council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS) forecasts future resources and levels of reserves to deliver sustainable services that are in line with priorities. Government resource allocation provides an indication of the Government's priorities both statutory and discretionary and is built into the MTFS.

How the body ensures that its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment, and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system

This is built into the business planning process. The Capital Strategy is developed alongside the MTFS. The Council also monitors its budget quarterly and performance indicators are also assessed as part of this process.

Appendix E - VFM - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Financial Sustainability (continued)

We set out below the arrangements for the financial sustainability criteria covering the year 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations

How the body identifies and manages risks to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions underlying its plans

Arrangements in place

The Council has set a minimum General Fund Reserve contingency balance level of £4 million. The intent behind this is for the contingency budget to be maintained on an ongoing basis and allocated, if necessary, as one-off funding in an individual year where an issue arises. This balance fell below this level in February 2023, reducing to £3.2 million. The Council therefore committed to annually contributing £0.262 million to towards replenishing the General Fund Reserve from 2023/24. The Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring Report for 2023/24 projected a further significant overspend on the 2023/24 General Fund revenue budget, which, if it materialised would further deplete the General Fund Reserve balance.

The provisional 2024/25 budget reported in December 2023 noted a shortfall in the budget of £3.72 million, which was to be bridged by savings. Ensuring these savings are supported by robust plans to ensure these are delivered without recourse to the use of either earmarked or general fund reserves is therefore critical to the Council.

We note that the 2023/24 outturn was actually an underspend of £0.9 million and the General Fund Reserve increased to £5.09 million. The Council has put the additional £1.09 million of this into a specific reserve to manage risks and respond to corporate priorities. This improved performance was due to significant one-off capital receipt of £88.2 million in relation to the sale of land at North Weald Airfield, and associated savings in capital financing costs of £1.3 million compared to budget. Although the Council will continue to benefit from reduced financing costs linked to this receipt in future years, there remain overspends and reduced income in other areas which the Council still needs to take action to address.

The Council also has risk management strategy in place which is reviewed for the effectiveness of risk management. Any financial risks identified are also reported in the risk register.

Appendix E - VFM - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Governance

We set out below the arrangements for the governance criteria covering the year 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations

Arrangements in place

How the body monitors and assesses risk and how the body gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud

The Council has a risk management strategy and policy in place, which is reviewed regularly for the effectiveness of risk management. Members are responsible for ensuring there are appropriate processes in place for effective risk management.

The Audit and Governance Committee are empowered to challenge the effective operation of internal controls. The Committee receives a quarterly Internal Audit reports which provides outcomes of completed internal audit work, progress made by management against previously identified red risks and a summary of proactive and reactive Counter Fraud work. Over the past three years (2023/24, 2022/23 and 2021/22), reasonable opinions were issued. The control environment is therefore assessed as operating effectively.

The Council also has an Anti- fraud and Corruption strategy, the key objective of which is to protect the Council's resources and assets, ensuring they are used as intended, maintain a culture where fraud or corruption is not tolerated; and ensure staff and Members demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity at all times.

In this strategy, the Council has identified its key fraud and corruption risks and has described its approach to combatting fraud and corruption. The Council's stated approach includes being proactive and applying reactive responses.

How the body approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process

Councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are generally open to the public. Councillors decide the Council's overall policy framework and the budget each year. The Annual Budget process including the responsibilities and procedures in the annual budget process is set out within the Constitution. The Council has published its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The process is priority-led to ensure resources are aligned to The Council's Strategic Delivery Plan.

How the body ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; to communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information (including non-financial information where appropriate); supports its statutory financial reporting requirements; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed

Within the Council Constitution, there are processes and procedures in place to ensure the Council has effective processes and systems in place to ensure budgetary control, to communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information, to support its statutory financial reporting requirements and to ensure it is taking corrective action where needed.

Recent financial outturn reports have been focused on trying to achieve a balanced budgets, which has been a challenge in light of the cost pressures and reductions in funding being faced by the Council.

Appendix E - VFM - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Governance (continued)

We set out below the arrangements for the governance criteria covering the year 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations

How the body ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency. This includes arrangements for effective challenge from those charged with governance/audit committee

Arrangements in place

All Cabinet, Audit and Governance, Planning and Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings are webcast for transparency. Agendas and minutes of Council meetings are publicly available.

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How the body monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of officer or member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declarations/conflicts of interests)

The Council has a Constitution in place which set out principles, rules and protocols for the way in which the Council conducts its business and complies with the provisions of the Local Government Act.

Codes of Conduct for members and officers are contained within the Constitution to ensure high standards of conduct. Breaches of the Member Code are investigated by the Monitoring Officer and reported to the Standards Committee.

Members and officers must register any interests and declare any gifts or hospitality in the appropriate registers in line with their codes of conduct. The processes for this will be reviewed in 2024/25.

The Antifraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) policy have been reviewed and updated in February 2024 and promote a zero-tolerance approach.

Appendix E - VFM - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

We set out below the arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness criteria covering the year 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations

Arrangements in place

How financial and performance information has been used to assess performance to identify areas for improvement

Performance indicators and performance monitoring information is incorporated into Council and Cabinet meetings. The Council assess whether the key priorities have been achieved on a quarterly basis.

As for all local government entities, the Council is required to set an annual balanced budget which is approved by Council. Management measures and reviews financial performance against the budget for each department through its Cabinet meetings. Each department also has a more detailed review on each of its expenditure streams against the proposed budgets.

How the body evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement

Similar to the above processes, performance indicators and performance monitoring information is incorporated into Council and Cabinet meetings. The Council assess whether the key priorities have been achieved on a quarterly basis.

How the body ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships, engages with stakeholders it has identified, monitors performance against expectations, and ensures action is taken where necessary to improve

The Council maintains KPIs which are actively monitored and published in its accounts as part of the Narrative Statement.

In terms of engaging with stakeholders and monitoring performance, the Council has an Overview & Scrutiny Committee which helps ensure that local public services are delivered effectively, efficiently and in the best interests of residents and people that live within the Council.

How the body ensures that commissioning and procuring services is done in accordance with relevant legislation, professional standards and internal policies, and how the body assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits

The Council has a procurement strategy, which helps in delivering the Council's strategic objectives and statutory responsibilities. It is influenced by the Council's objectives and strategy as well as its MTFs which sets the framework for a balanced budget.

The procurement strategy has regard to key legislative requirements including:

- Public Contract Regulations
- Equalities Duty Act
- Localism Act, including Community Right to Bid and Community Right to Challenge
- Public Services (Social Value) Act
- National Procurement Strategy

Appendix F – PSAA Statement of Responsibilities

As set out on the next page our fee is based on the assumption that the Council complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. In particular the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26-28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. We set out these paragraphs in full below:

Preparation of the statement of accounts

26. Audited bodies are expected to follow Good Industry Practice and applicable recommendations and guidance from CIPFA and, as applicable, other relevant organisations as to proper accounting procedures and controls, including in the preparation and review of working papers and financial statements.

27. In preparing their statement of accounts, audited bodies are expected to:

- prepare realistic plans that include clear targets and achievable timetables for the production of the financial statements;
- ensure that finance staff have access to appropriate resources to enable compliance with the requirements of the applicable financial framework, including having access to the current copy of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code, applicable disclosure checklists, and any other relevant CIPFA Codes.
- assign responsibilities clearly to staff with the appropriate expertise and experience;
- provide necessary resources to enable delivery of the plan;
- maintain adequate documentation in support of the financial statements and, at the start of the audit, providing a complete set of working papers that provide an adequate explanation of the entries in those financial statements including the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the judgements and estimates made by management;
- ensure that senior management monitors, supervises and reviews work to meet agreed standards and deadlines;
- ensure that a senior individual at top management level personally reviews and approves the financial statements before presentation to the auditor; and
- during the course of the audit provide responses to auditor queries on a timely basis.

28. If draft financial statements and supporting working papers of appropriate quality are not available at the agreed start date of the audit, the auditor may be unable to meet the planned audit timetable and the start date of the audit will be delayed.

Appendix G – Other Communications

EY Transparency Report 2024

EY has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained. Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the period ended 30 June 2024 and can be found here: [EY UK 2024 Transparency Report | EY - UK](#).

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STATEMENT 2023/2024 OF ACCOUNTS

Epping Forest District Council
www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk





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1. INTRODUCING EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Epping Forest is a district in Essex. It takes its name from the forest which runs from the Greater London border in the south through the district northwards. Covering an area of 131 square miles, Epping Forest shares boundaries with Hertfordshire and four other Essex districts. It is a mixture of rural and urban areas and over a quarter of the population live in rural and rural-related areas.

The district has an estimated resident population of 135,000 (2021 Census), representing an increase of 8.3% in the last decade. Key population centres are the commuter towns in the south of the district - Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, and Loughton. These towns have a combined population of over 50,000 but cover less than 10% of the total area of the district. There are also the market towns of Epping, Waltham Abbey and Ongar and numerous villages and hamlets situated in attractive countryside. The district has good transport links, with both the M25 and M11 running through it and crossing at Theydon Garnon. The area is served by the London Underground Central Line and over ground railway.

Most of the district is designated within the protective status of the Metropolitan Green Belt with both Epping Forest and Roding Valley Meadows being sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSI). This brings visitors to the district and tourism generates a substantial amount of income for the local economy each year.

The residents of the district are relatively affluent with gross weekly full time pay higher than the East of England (2020) average. Young people are considered successful with their education, with over 80% achieving NVQ Level 2 and above (2020) which is higher than the East of England average. The percentage of the population (aged 16-64) qualified to NVQ Level 4 or above is also higher than the East of England (2020) average.

Epping Forest is in the upper 40% of least deprived Lower-Tier Local Authorities (LTLAs) nationally, although there are areas of deprivation and 13% of children (aged 0-15) live in families with a relatively low income. Life expectancy in the district is higher than the national average (2017-19), but an aging population puts pressure on both NHS and local government services. It is estimated that over 30% of the district's population will be aged 60 or over by 2041. Additional properties will be built over the coming years to assist in accommodating the anticipated rise in the population.

Within the district, local government services are provided at three levels; by Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council and local Town and Parish Councils.

- District Council services – Housing, Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Recycling, Sports and Recreation, Planning Applications, Electoral Registration, Benefit Administration, Council Tax and Business Rates Collection, and Environmental Health.
- County Council services – Education, Social Care, and Highways and Transportation; and
- Parish and Town Council services – Allotments, Burial Grounds and Cemeteries, Public Halls, and Playgrounds and Sports Grounds.

2. PERFORMANCE AGAINST CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

A new Corporate Plan for 2023 - 2027 (“Your Epping Forest”) was adopted in December 2022. As a local council, Epping Forest District Council is afforded a unique opportunity to oversee the wellbeing of the district and its residents. With its custodial role comes the responsibility of making sure that everything the Council does is for the benefit of the district and its residents. The new Corporate Plan sets out how the Council intends to do that over the three-year timeframe.

All of the Council’s plans were brought together under the three broad headings of Community, Place and Council but in reality, these are all inter-related. As part of that responsibility a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relevant to the Council’s service priorities and key objectives are adopted each year.

The Year 1 Action Plan covering (2023/2024) represents the first phase of the new Plan.

Performance against all KPIs is reviewed quarterly and key corporate programmes are reported monthly through an internal governance process. The quarterly governance process has now been consolidated into a single Overview and Scrutiny function, bringing together all strategic objectives (covering three corporate themes) and ensuring their continued achievability and relevance, and to identify proposals for appropriate corrective action in areas of under-performance.

Stronger Communities

The “Stronger Communities” theme has three strategic aims, supported by three key objectives. In turn the objectives are delivered through three corporate programmes – Customer Excellence, Community Data Insights, and Community Health & Wellbeing. Programme delivery is measured through seven KPI’s.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The outturn for the seven Stronger Communities KPIs in 2023/24 was as follows:

- 3 met their target.
- 1 did not meet its target (but was within a 10% tolerance).
- 1 did not meet its target.
- 2 were for information only (no target set).

Service Area	KPI	Target	Overall Actual
Customer	Overall Customer Satisfaction	80%	61.92%
Customer	First Point Resolution	45%	66.61%
Customer	Complaints resolved within SLA	85%	82.25%
Community Health and Wellbeing	Engagement in community, physical or cultural activity	3500	4798
Community Health and Wellbeing	Number of families in B&B accommodation for 6 weeks+	0	0
Community Health and Wellbeing	Number of homelessness approaches	N/A	970
Community Health and Wellbeing	Number of households in Temporary Accommodation	N/A	452

“First Point Resolution” performed well against its target for 2023/24, with 66% of customer queries resolved at the first point of contact, compared to a target of 45%. A new Telephony System rolled out during 2023/24 is having a positive impact on the statistics.

“Engagement in Community, Physical or Cultural Activity” also exceeded target in 2023/24 with an average of 4,798 recorded attendances and/or incidents of engagement with services against a target of 3,500. This is very positive considering the current cost of living crisis and has been boosted by key events including RideLondon 2023 and the Ninefields Playground launch event. Secondary school pupil engagement was at a record high for the 2024 Youth Council elections.

“Number of families in B&B accommodation for 6 weeks+” remained at zero throughout the year in accordance with statutory requirements.

“Complaints resolved within SLA” did not achieve target but was within a 10% tolerance with 82% resolved as required against a target of 85%. Most complaints received have been for the Waste and Planning services. Additional support is being provided to affected service areas in order to improve performance against this KPI.

“Overall Customer Satisfaction” fell short of target in 2023/24, which is disappointing. However, a recent review of the KPI methodology, which included benchmarking with other organisations, has suggested that, whilst the process attracts negative feedback, positive feedback (which exists) is not adequately captured so is under-represented in the statistics. The KPI approach for 2024/25 is being amended with a view to recording customer feedback in a more balanced way; and

“Number of Homelessness Approaches” and the “Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation” do not have targets set. A total of 970 Homelessness Approaches were made in 2023/24 (a noticeable increase of 43%) compared to 2022/23, reflecting the ongoing ‘cost-of-living crisis’.

Stronger Place

The “Stronger Place” theme has three strategic aims, supported by three key objectives.

In turn the objectives are focused on five corporate programmes – Council Housebuilding, District Sustainability, Economic Development, Planning Development, and Town Centre Development. Programme delivery is measured through ten KPI’s.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The outturn for the ten Stronger Place KPIs in 2023/24 was as follows:

- 1 met its target.
- 5 did not meet their target (but were within a 10% tolerance).
- 1 did not meet its target.
- 3 were for information only (no target set).

Service Area	KPI	Target	Overall Actual
Contracts	Club Live membership - (Fitness Membership)	N/A	37401
Contracts	Club Live membership - (Swimming Membership)	N/A	4157
Contracts	No. of people on Learn to Swim Programme (Swimming Lessons)	N/A	20894
Contracts Waste	Recycling rate	60%	58.52%
Contracts Waste	Reduction in household waste	0.100kg/household	0.22
Housing Management	Rent Arrears	<1.55%	1.79%
Planning and Development	Percentage of applications determined within agreed timelines: Major	80%	100%
Planning and Development	Percentage of applications determined within agreed timelines: Minor	90%	80.48%
Planning and Development	Percentage of applications determined within agreed timelines: Other	90%	83.90%
Planning and Development	Housing Delivery Test Progress	95%	91.00%

“Percentage of Major Planning Applications Determined Within Agreed Timelines” was a notable success in 2023/24, with 100% delivered on time, compared to the 80% target.

“Percentage of Minor and Other Planning Applications Determined Within Agreed Timelines” were off target as follows:

- Minor Planning Applications – 80.48% (compared to target of 90%); and
- Other Planning Applications – 83.90% (compared to target of 90%).

Overall performance (for all Planning Application types) was 88.13%.

A shortage of staff resources proved challenging in 2023/24 and the Council are now committed to service transformation and performance improvement in partnership with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) in 2024/25.

“Recycling Rates” were slightly off target with an average rate of 58% achieved against the 60% target and “Household Waste” was also off target with an average of 0.220kg per household recorded against a target of 0.100kg, largely due to waste contractor issues and higher than anticipated missed collections.

Work is now underway to understand the reasons for increased Household Waste and re-evaluate the waste KPI’s in terms of relevance and targets. New KPI’s are also being developed as part of the Council’s new Waste Company and will be aligned with the Waste Strategy for Essex.

“Rent Arrears” were slightly off target with an actual of 1.79%. There has subsequently been a large focus on ensuring tenant/s are paying rent in advance and in accordance with their Tenancy Agreement. Additional Direct Debit options to pay weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, including advance payments have now been introduced to further encourage prompt payment, both of which are having a positive impact on performance.

“Housing Delivery Test” did not meet its 95% target with an actual outturn of 91%. This is a measurement of Housing Delivery, calculated by using the number of homes delivered over the three-year period divided by the total number of homes required for the same three-year period.

Targets are not set for the three leisure focused KPIs for club memberships, but in general, numbers have increased across all three in an upward trend which is exceeding pre-Covid levels.

Stronger Council

The “Stronger Council” theme has three strategic aims, supported by three key objectives.

In turn the objectives are focused on three corporate programmes – Accommodation, IT Strategy, and the People Programme. Programme delivery is measured through four KPI’s.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The outturn for the four Stronger Council KPIs in 2023/24 was as follows:

- 1 met its target.
- 1 did not meet its target.
- 2 were for information only (no target set).

Service Area	KPI	Target	Overall Actual
People	Diversity & Inclusion – % of workforce by Ethnicity	N/A	N/A
People	Diversity & Inclusion – % of workforce with Disability	N/A	N/A
People	Staff Turnover	<11%	18.44%
People	Sickness Absence – average number of days per employee	2.15 Days	1.77

“Sickness Absence” had an average rate of 1.77 Days in 2023/24, which was within target and represents a reduction from the 1.95 days recorded in 2022/23. However, “Staff Turnover” was off target, with a total turnover rate of 18.44% against the national average target of 11%.

The recording of ethnicity and disability information is voluntary information from staff and there are no targets set or performance publicly disclosed. Work continues to try to encourage the submission of data from staff.

3. FINANCIAL REVIEW 2023/24

The 2023/24 financial year was an unusual one for the Council, with the first half of the year proving especially challenging, as external factors in the wider economy, such as high Interest Rates and a demand shortfall from developers for Planning Applications (affecting a major income stream) conspiring to drive a large anticipated General Fund budget overspend. However, the Council's financial fortunes began to turn for the better as the year progressed with a land sale, triggering a substantial capital receipt, received in December 2023. This immediately turned the previously anticipated overspend into a forecast underspend at the Quarter 3 stage, with Quarter 4 continuing in that positive vein with the revenue impact (in terms of reduced financing costs) of the capital receipt added to by improvements across a range of budget headings, eventually leading to a substantial General Fund budget underspend. This provided a timely boost to the General Fund Reserve, in which the balance had fallen below the Council's adopted minimum contingency level.

Turning to the Financial Statements, the Consolidated Income & Expenditure Statement (CIES) on Page 21 shows that the Net Cost of Services for 2023/24 was £21.084 million (compared to £27.604 million in 2022/23); after other factors such as the impact of Taxation and other Gains and Losses, including those from the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account, are adjusted for, Total Comprehensive Net Income of £69.423 million (compared to £80.623 million in 2022/23).

The presentation of individual services ("Continuing Operations") on the face of the CIES follows the principles established in CIPFA's "Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities (2023/24)" (SERCOP); consistency of reporting is achieved with the internal management accounts, which reflect how services are delivered and organised within the Council.

Elsewhere on the CIES, there are substantial fluctuations (both up and down). However, the CIES reflects a vast range of adjustments required by both statute and accounting standards. Underlying the figures, is the performance of the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account in the year.

General Fund Management Accounts

The table below reflects the Month 12 (year-end) General Fund Management Accounts for 2023/24.

General Fund 2023/24	Net Expenditure		Variance £000's
	Budget £000's	Outturn £000's	
Chief Executive	655	570	(85)
Commercial & Technical Services	2,060	1,966	(94)
Community & Wellbeing	1,478	1,484	6
Corporate Services	9,085	8,036	(1,049)
Customer Services	2,158	2,750	592
Finance & Audit	2,069	2,384	315
Housing & Property	1,846	1,604	(242)
Place	280	219	(61)
Planning & Development	723	1,558	835
Strategy, Delivery & Performance	821	528	(293)
Qualis Income	(2,852)	(2,494)	358
HRA Recharges	(4,984)	(4,778)	206
Financing (inc. Contingencies)	4,302	2,896	(1,406)
Totals	17,641	16,723	(918)

The Month 12 Management Accounts show that the General Fund budget was in surplus at year end. It is a very positive outcome, and contrasts sharply with the projected deficits that were reported at both the Quarter 1 (£1.523 million) and Quarter 2 (£1.307 million) stages. The corner was eventually turned in December 2023, as the Council received a capital receipt of £88.2 million following a land disposal at North Weald Airfield. The revenue impact was immediate as the Council's capital financing costs reduced significantly, leading to a forecast underspend of £0.584 million at the Quarter 3 stage, which subsequently strengthened further during Quarter 4, resulting in an eventual underspend of £0.918 million.

The most notable positive variance related to capital financing costs, with Net Borrowing Costs in particular being £1.309 million lower than the budget, predominantly driven by additional Interest Receivable on the capital receipt, although Interest Payable as the Council's need for cash was increasingly met from internal resources, rather than external borrowing.

In contrast, the substantial budget pressure on Planning Applications continued throughout the year, with income eventually falling short of budget by £965,080 (49% of budget). Additional income from Planning Applications was expected to follow from the adoption of the Local Plan in March 2023, but it would appear that the economic situation has depressed the number of Planning Applications coming forward.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Management Accounts

The table below reflects the Month 12 (year-end) HRA Management Accounts for 2023/24.

Housing Revenue Account 2023/24	Budget £000's	Outturn £000's	Variance £000's
Total Income	(40,205)	(40,640)	(435)
Total Expenditure	33,187	35,529	2,342
Net Cost of Services	(7,018)	(5,111)	1,907
Net Interest (Receivable) / Payable	5,608	4,865	(743)
Net Operating Income	(1,410)	(246)	1,164
Direct Revenue Contribution to Capital	1,364	0	(1,364)
(Surplus)/Deficit for the Year	(46)	(246)	(200)

The HRA outturn shows a surplus of £0.246 million which was £0.200 million above a planned surplus of £0.046 million. The most significant variance related to Repairs and Maintenance which overspent by £2.029 million during the year (£13.261 million outturn, compared to £11.232 million budget).

HRA capital spending was significantly lower than the profiled budget for 2023/24, with total spending of £18.293 million, compared to an allocated budget for the year of £70.731 million, leading to an underspend (available for roll forward) of £52.438 million. This was primarily due to slippage in the Housing Development Programme and, as a consequence, a revenue contribution to capital was not required, resulting in a positive variance of £1.364 million.

The £0.200 million budget surplus generated in the year, has been added to the HRA General Reserve, increasing the balance to £4.797 million at the end of 2023/24 (compared to £4.552 million in 2022/23).

Collection Fund

The Collection Fund is a ring-fenced account for the management of Council Tax and Business Rates income. The Fund performed well in 2023/24, with significant in-year surpluses recorded on both Council Tax and Business Rates. This was especially encouraging news for Business Rates, with the surplus achieved without the aid of accumulated pandemic-driven Section 31 receipts for the first time since the Covid-19 outbreak. Council Tax recovered from the deficit balance recorded at the end of 2022/23 to end the year with a positive balance.

The Council also continued to benefit from the Essex Council Tax Sharing Agreement this year (although down from £531,111 in 2022/23 to £462,620 in 2023/24) and the Essex Business Rates Pool (with an *estimated* Levy saving of £967,336). Thus:

- Council Tax (2023/24 Surplus £1.365 million) – the Epping share of the recorded (in-year) Surplus is £162,510. The Surplus was primarily driven by the need to make a lower Provision for Non-Payment at year end (down from £3.349 million in 2022/23, to £0.868 million in 2023/24) in the light of a change of profile on the Arrears List (with substantial inroads now made into debt outstanding from the pandemic); and
- Business Rates (2023/24 Surplus £0.734 million) – the Epping share of the recorded (in-year) Surplus is £293,421. There were several factors that contributed to the Surplus on Business Rates, including – as with Council Tax – the need to make a lower Provision for Non-Payment at year end (down from £1.556 million in 2022/23, to £0.073 million in 2023/24) in the light of a change of profile on the Arrears List. Transitional Protection Payments (TPPs) from central Government of £4.147 million, helped underpin the additional Business Rates receivable in the light of the 2023 Revaluation.

The Collection Fund carried an overall Surplus as at 31st March 2024 of £3.351 million (Council Tax £0.031 million Surplus, Business Rates £3.320 million Surplus).

Balance Sheet

The Council's Balance Sheet value increased by £69.422 million (10.6%) in 2023/24, resulting in a net position of £908.871 million as at 31st March 2024 (£839.449 million as at 31st March 2023). Notable differences (excluding the Pensions balance) include the following:

- Property, Plant & Equipment (up £7.629 million) – property values have again proved resilient this year despite continued economic turbulence. The overall value of PPE has increased by less than 1%; the only item of note is a rise in the value of Assets Under Construction (up £11.827 million), which reflects the progression of Housing Developments in the district, and increasingly, the new Epping Leisure Centre.
- Investment Properties (up £7.741 million) – the value of Investment Properties increased by 5.2% this year. The value of the Council's portfolio has been boosted by new lettings, increases in market rent or yield movements and the continuation of the strategy to buy back long leases for ground rent, which can then be remarketed at full market rent. The commercial property market generally has demonstrated improved performance since mid-2023.
- Long-Term Debtors (up £24.392 million) – the rise in long-term debtors primarily relates to an increase in the principal outstanding on loans made to Qualis (long-term balance outstanding £90.529 million as at 31st March 2024).
- Short-Term Investments (up £19.156 million) – this is the first time for several years that the Council has had sufficient available cash for the purposes of Short-Term Investment, due to the North Weald Airfield capital receipt received in December 2023. The total balance of £19.156 million as at 31st March 2024, represents £19.0 million in short-term loans to Other Local Authorities (plus accrued interest of £156,000).
- Debtors (up £1.811 million) – the increase in Debtors has mainly been due to an increase Qualis loan repayments due to the Council within 12 months (including accrued interest); these have risen from £2.181 million to £4.059 million (i.e. up £1.878 million) between the two Balance Sheet dates.
- Cash & Cash Equivalents (up £4.163 million) – as with Short-Term Investments, the North Weald Airfield capital receipt has also triggered an upturn in Cash & Cash Equivalents. Most notably, the total funds held in Money Market Funds (MMFs) as at 31st March 2024 was £21.5 million, compared to £10.0 million as at 31st March 2023 (i.e. up £11.5 million).
- Creditors (down £4.212 million) – there has been a significant reduction in the year-end Creditors balance following the winding up of the various Covid Grant schemes, with outstanding balances being systematically 'settled' with central Government during 2023/24. The Creditor balance for Covid Grants as at 31st March 2024 was £0.788 million, compared to £6.856 million as at 31st March 2023 (i.e. down £6.068 million). This was the dominant factor in the reduction in Creditors.

- Short-Term Loans (down £33.085 million) – again due to the North Weald Airfield capital receipt, the increased availability of Cash has allowed the repayment of a number of Short-Term Loans from internal resources as they have become repayable without the need to take out replacement borrowing; and
- Long-Term Loans (up £3.896 million) – the net increase represents a small (1.6%) increase in the balance outstanding on PWLB Loans. It should be noted that the total amount outstanding with the PWLB is well below the Council’s Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) presented in Note 29 (Page 61), due to the increased availability of Cash as explained above.

Usable Reserves

The overall balance on Usable Reserves increased substantially from £34.005 million to £119.978 million over the year. The headline behind the increase was the major capital receipt of £88.2 million received from the sale of land at North Weald Airfield.

The General Fund (unallocated) balance began the year at £3.219 million and ended the year at £4.0 million, with the increase reflecting an increased contribution to the Reserve of £1.190 million, which resulted from the Budget underspend of £0.918 million (noted within the Management Accounts summary above), combining with a net Funding surplus of £0.272 million mostly enabled by strong Business Rates returns. The General Fund Reserve was further boosted by the transfer of £0.605 million (the remaining balance) from the “Commuted Sums” earmarked reserve, which was identified as available for reallocation as part of an in-year review. This enabled the allocation of £1.095 million towards additional reserves earmarked for the mitigation of risk (“Capital Investment Risk Reserve” £0.287 million) and the funding of corporate priorities (“Transformation Revenue Reserve” £0.808 million). The £4.0 million now meets the Council’s adopted minimum contingency level.

Earmarked Reserves increased from £3.824 million to £4.677 million over the year. The dominant factors are the Capital Investment Risk Reserve and the Transformation Revenue Reserve, which ended with closing balances of £1.0 million and £0.808 million respectively.

Unusable Reserves

The Council is required to maintain substantial Unusable Reserves, primarily for technical accounting purposes. The overall balance marginally reduced from £805.444 million to £788.893 million over the year.

Despite the relatively stable balance, there are two major variances to report compared to 2022/23. Firstly, the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve increased by £26.680 million in the year. This reflects the increase in Qualis loans in the year, which are temporarily financed from Deferred Capital Receipts until repayments are received (at which point, the principal is moved to Usable Capital Receipts). However, this was offset by a reduction of £29.805 million on the Pension Reserve (with the previous Net Asset of £25.912 million, becoming a Net Liability of £3.893 million), due to a technical actuarial “Asset Ceiling” adjustment of £52.122 million (to recognize that, in accordance with CIPFA Bulletin 15 issued in November 2023, where a surplus position arises out of an actuarial valuation, there is no unconditional right to a refund from the Fund and therefore an economic benefit to the Council should not be reflected in the Balance Sheet).

Capital

The table below summarises the Capital Expenditure outturn for 2023/24.

Description	2022/23 £000’s	2023/24 £000’s
General Fund	11,949	36,869
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	15,875	18,293
Total Capital Programme	27,824	55,162

General Fund Capital

Expenditure on the General Fund Capital Programme increased by £24.920 million this year. The updated priorities in the new Corporate Plan 2023-2027 (“Your Epping Forest”) was the focus in 2023/24, with two particularly notable expenditure items as follows:

- *Qualis Loans* – £28.275 million in capital loans were granted to Qualis in 2023/24 compared to just £8.0 million granted in 2022/23. The Council makes a revenue return on the loans, thus contributing to “maintaining a low Council Tax” (as part of the “Stronger Council” key objective, included in the new corporate plan). The increase in on-lending in 2023/24 reflected the accelerated pace of Qualis developments in the district including the Cottis Lane Multi-Storey Car Park, Springwood Grove (housing) and the enabling works for the new Epping Leisure Centre.
- *Epping Leisure Centre* – following the recent completion of the new Multi-Storey Car Park in nearby Cottis Lane, Epping, the construction of the new Epping Leisure is now underway and gathering pace. Capital expenditure of £3.787 million was incurred in 2023/24.

HRA Capital

There was also an increase in spending on the HRA Capital Programme this year, with an increase in expenditure of £2.418 compared to 2022/23. The increase was most notably driven by the Limes Avenue (major refurbishment) project with spending of £5.162 million recorded in 2023/24 compared to £0.791 million in 2022/23 (i.e. up £4.371 million). Slightly lower spending in other areas of the Programme (e.g. spending on Housebuilding was down £1.357 million year-on-year) dampened the overall increase.

Group Accounts

The Council has been required to prepare Group Accounts since 2020/21 following the formation of the Council’s wholly owned arms-length company “Qualis” in October 2019; the Qualis group comprises four companies focusing on development, investment and service delivery.

The Group Accounts – which can be found on pages 80 to 87 – present a full picture of the Council’s financial position and its exposure to risk. Transactional volumes have continued to grow since Qualis became active in 2020/21, so likewise the Group Accounts continue to grow in their importance.

4. PRINCIPAL RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

An updated Risk Management Policy & Strategy is in place, which was approved by Cabinet on 4th December 2023. This details the Council's approach to risk management, supporting Officers understanding of the consistent and robust identification, evaluation and management of opportunities and risks at all levels of the Council.

Risk management practices are incorporated within our decision-making process.

Annually, the Head of Internal Audit gives their opinion of assurance and for 2023/2024 the overall opinion of the Head of Internal Audit is that the Council has adequate and effective governance, risk management arrangements and control processes.

The Audit and Governance Committee receive regular updates on the Corporate Risk Register and given the opportunity to provide independent challenge and suggest changes.

The top risks from the Council's Corporate Risk Register as at March 2024 are detailed in the table below:

Top Risks Identified		
Risk	Impact	Mitigation
1 - Major Cyber Incident	If the Council were to experience a serious cyber incident, the disruption to our services, reputational damage and financial cost could be significant.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Information Security, Security Breach, ICT Remote Access, and ICT Security policies have been reviewed and are in place. 2) Data is backed-up off-site. 3) Mandatory cybersecurity training for staff, run in conjunction with Essex Police has been undertaken. 4) Single sign-on and/or multi-factor authentication applied wherever possible. 5) Mystery Phishing campaigns are run on a regular basis. 6) Public Sector Network compliance, with penetration testing has been completed. 7) Network firewalls in place to protect network; device firewalls and anti-virus software deployed. 8) Microsoft audit has been undertaken across Epping and Colchester and a prioritised action plan is being created to increase our security posture. 9) Additional information sharing and best practice across Essex Councils is on-going; and 10) Continued emphasis on educating and supporting colleagues, as human mistakes remain a significant threat.
2 - Quality of Major Planning Applications	<p>Inability to achieve national KPIs in respect of Quality of Decisions on Major Planning Applications could result in decision making of Major Applications being taken from us. Applicants having the option of submitting major applications direct to the Planning Inspectorate for determination.</p> <p>This would result in loss of local decision making and financial loss of income.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Restructure of Planning Services 2) Additional resourcing for defending appeals, including external professional input; and 3) Review of decision-making following PAS Committee Review response and thereafter report to Place Scrutiny Committee on transformation.

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
3 - Delivering a balanced budget and sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	Failure to maintain a Balanced Budget and Sustainable Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) would breach a legal duty to maintain a balanced budget and could potentially result in the Central Government imposing measures.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The active monitoring and reporting on internal and external factors affecting the MTFP, including the 2025/26 Budget through the established Financial Planning Framework 2) Regular communication of financial position and future prospects to Members (through the Cabinet and Scrutiny process) and senior management. 3) Continue the further development and delivery of “Fit for the Future” Transformation Plan (including Shared Services), ensuring key milestones, deadlines and financial targets are met.
4 - Waste Service Delivery Failure	Failure to implement future waste services project by November 2024 or current provider fails to continue to deliver service.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A Wholly owned company Terra Verde Services Ltd as subsidiary of EFDC has been created following Cabinet approval on 10th July 2023 to deliver waste services at expiry of Biffa contract on 4th November 2024. 2) Planning permission approved at DDMC 13/02/2024 for operations hub at NWA. Project workstream with external consultants is in place and contract has been awarded. 3) Contract has been awarded for the contract hire of the fleet vehicles. 4) Waste Management Partnership Board and Project Steering Group is in place; and 5) Contingency Plans are in place.
5 - Data/information breach	Breach of the 2018 Data Protection Act (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) could lead to significant fines and/or intervention by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) resulting in reputational damage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Council continues to have a designated SIRO, Data Protection Officer, and FOI Officer. 2) A Strategic Information Governance Group and an Information Asset Owner Group is in place. 3) The Information Governance Group has put together a work programme and is updated quarterly. 4) GDPR & Cyber security e-learning training is on Litmos. 5) Training was delivered to SLT throughout 2023/24.
6 - Increase in demand for the Homelessness service.	Increase in numbers of homeless households and lack of supply of suitable accommodation could result in adverse financial impact directly affecting the general fund.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Project to improve tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector has been included in the Service Plan for 2023/4. The purpose being to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage. 2) Entered into a block booking arrangement with a local provider at a reduced cost.

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
7 - Failure to ensure continued financial viability of Qualis.	Failure to ensure the continued financial viability of Qualis represents a major financial and reputational risk to the Council.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Quarterly monitoring and reporting on progress against Qualis Business Plan through the established Governance Framework. 2) Quarterly reporting on Council budget position (including Qualis loan margins and other transactions) through Cabinet and Scrutiny process. 3) Enhanced reporting (with effect from 2023/24 in compliance with December 2021 codes) through Audit & Governance Committee re Capital and Treasury Management strategies (especially on Qualis-related Service and Commercial Investments); and 4) Monitoring and reporting on monthly Cash Flow Statement from Qualis.
8 - Future Proofing the Workforce.	Failure to ensure we have the right skills, behaviours, productivity, and capacity in place could result in inability to deliver services to residents and deliver the Corporate Plan 2023-27.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Shared Services work is underway.
9 - Climate Change.	Failure to achieve carbon emission targets will result in not achieving our targets contained within our Corporate Plan and will result in increased costs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy & Air Quality Action Plan in place. 2) Climate Change Steering Group with senior representatives from the relevant service areas to drive cross cutting initiatives. 3) Carbon Literacy training has been undertaken for Officers. 4) Net zero training has been given to planning officers; and 5) Energy efficiency investment in Housing Asset Management Strategy Plan and construction of the waste depot to be part of asset management strategy.
10 - Lack of and/or inadequate Business Continuity Plans.	Failure to ensure robust plans are in place for critical services and regularly tested could result in an event occurring having adverse impact on service delivery.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All managers were involved in a desktop exercise December 2023 and subsequent action plan is being worked through; and 2) Service BC Plans and BIAs in place for majority of Council.
11 - Failure to comply with social housing regulation.	If the Council, is unable to demonstrate compliance with numerous statutory H&S requirements it could face a Regulatory Notice and/or heavy fines. There is also a need to meet Consumer Standards as laid out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill (2023). If the Council is unprepared, it will face serious reputational damage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Specialist compliance IT solution has started to be implemented. 2) Weekly oversight of compliance by Executive Leadership Team; and 3) HRA Asset Management Strategy ensuring that structural and compliance needs for the council's council housing are given priority and are fully resourced.

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
12 - Failure to maintain and improve VFM.	A failure to maintain and improve Value for Money (VFM) in the commissioning and delivery of services would potentially jeopardise public funds and cause the Council significant reputational damage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Quarterly performance monitoring and reporting through established Cabinet and Scrutiny progress. 2) Ad hoc scrutiny of Qualis service-delivery performance; and 3) We have got ongoing monthly benchmarking with Housemark -a sector specialist in benchmarking.
13 - Council House Build Programme.	If the Council fails to deliver new build housing, we are unable to provide housing to our most vulnerable residents who remain on the waiting list. RTB impact on the level of stock and without new build delivery we are unable to increase stock.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Involve Planning staff at early stages and throughout; and 2) Project management of all schemes to ensure effective delivery of time, budget, and quality.

5. THE ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS EXPLAINED

The Statement of Accounts shows the financial performance for 2023/24 and the financial position as at 31st March 2024. They present the income and expenditure for the year and highlight any significant changes in the Council's financial position during the year.

The document comprises Core and Supplementary Financial Statements, together with Disclosure Notes. The format and content of the financial statements is prescribed by the *CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24* ("the Code"), which is underpinned by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs).

The Code requires that the Statement of Accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and are prepared on the basis that the Council is a going concern.

In line with the Code, suitable accounting policies have been applied, and where necessary, prudent judgements and estimates have been made.

The Statement of Accounts can be 'technical' and complex, but wherever possible, information is presented as simply and clearly as possible to assist the understanding of users.

Core Financial Statements

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)

This statement brings together all Council functions and reports on income and expenditure in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) rather than just the amount to be funded from local taxes, rents, and government grants. The difference is accounted for by a series of adjustments made in accordance with regulations. The cost of services within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) follows the reporting structure used by the Council.

Movement in Reserves Statement (MIRS)

This statement provides a summary of the movement on the different reserves held by the Council over the course of the financial year. These reserves represent the Council's net worth and are divided into 'unusable', and 'usable' (i.e. those that can currently be used to fund expenditure or support local taxation).

Balance Sheet

This is a "snapshot" of the Council's assets, liabilities, cash balances and reserves at the year-end date. The net assets (assets less liabilities) of the Council are matched by the reserves held by the Council.

Cash Flow Statement

A summary of cash inflows and outflows arising from revenue and capital transactions with third parties.

Notes to the Financial Statements

The notes provide a better understanding of the financial statements and give further detail about the items contained in the core financial statements along with details of accounting policies used by the Council.

Supplementary Financial Statements

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

This account records the Council's statutory obligation to separately account for the cost of the ring-fenced landlord function in respect of the provision of Council Housing.

Collection Fund

This summarises the collection of council tax and business rates, and the redistribution of that money to other local authorities and central Government.

Group Accounts

The Council has a material interest in Qualis. The Group Accounts show the consolidated position of the activities of the Council and Qualis.

Annual Governance Statement

This sets out the governance structures of the Council and its key internal controls.

The other notes to these statements provide more detail about accounting policies and transactions.

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 (the Section 151 Officer) has responsibility for the administration of those affairs
- Manage its affairs to secure the economic, efficient, and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets; and
- Approve the Statement of Accounts.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse
Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee

27th February 2025

THE SECTION 151 OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Section 151 Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the *CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom* ("the Code").

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Section 151 Officer has:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently
- Made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent; and
- Complied with the Code of Practice.

The Section 151 Officer has also:

- Kept proper accounting records which were up to date; and
- Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that the accounts set out on pages 3 to 87 give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31st March 2024 and the income and expenditure for the year then ended.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Small', written over a horizontal line.

Andrew Small CPFA
Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer

27th February 2025



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Disclaimer of Opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements of Epping Forest District Council ('the Council') and its subsidiaries (the 'Group') for the year ended 31 March 2024. The financial statements comprise the:

- Council and Group Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Council and Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Council and Group Balance Sheet,
- Council and Group Cash Flow Statement,
- the related notes 1 to 33 of the Council financial statements and the related notes of G1 to G6 of the Group financial statements, including material accounting policy information,
- Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement, the Movement on the Housing Revenue Account Statement, and the related notes 1 to 9,
- Collection Fund and the related notes 1 to 3.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24.

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

Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 required any outstanding accountability statements for years ended 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2023 to be approved not later than 13 December 2024 and the accountability statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 to be approved not later than 28 February 2025 ('the backstop date').

The audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 for Epping Forest District Council and Group were completed by the predecessor auditor on 2 December 2024 and 12 December 2024 respectively.

Due to the timing of the prior years' opinions, there was limited time between the backstop dates and we did not have the required resources available to complete the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the Council and Group financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Therefore, we are disclaiming our opinion on the financial statements.

Matters on which we report by exception

Notwithstanding our disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements we have nothing to report in respect of whether the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit, performed subject to the pervasive limitation described above, or our knowledge of the Council and Group.

We report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)

- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we are not satisfied that the Council and Group has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the Section 151 Officer

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Responsibilities set out on page 17, the Section 151 Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Council and Group financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, 2023/24, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Section 151 Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Section 151 Officer is responsible for assessing the Council and Group's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Council and Group either intends to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Council and Group financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report.

However, because of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

We are independent of the Council and Group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Code of Audit Practice 2024 and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2024, as to whether Epping Forest District Council had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in

satisfying ourselves whether Epping Forest District Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether Epping Forest District Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until the NAO, as group auditor, has confirmed that no further assurances will be required from us as component auditors of Epping Forest District Council.

Until we have completed these procedures, we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Epping Forest District Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 85 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Group and Council and the Group and Council members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Debbie Hanson (Key Audit Partner)

Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)

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Comprehensive income and expenditure statement



	2023/24			2022/23			
		Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure
	Note	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Chief Executive		605	(306)	299	711	(321)	390
Community & Wellbeing Services		3,442	(2,097)	1,345	3,864	(1,762)	2,102
Commercial & Technical Services		19,751	(9,490)	10,261	18,380	(8,138)	10,242
Corporate Services		9,030	(2,717)	6,313	10,569	(3,155)	7,414
Customer Services		26,235	(24,183)	2,052	26,859	(23,965)	2,894
Finance & Audit Services		2,186	(872)	1,314	2,310	(821)	1,489
Housing & Property Services		2,189	(802)	1,387	2,197	(529)	1,668
Place		616	(403)	213	472	(178)	294
Planning Development Services		4,616	(2,974)	1,642	5,642	(3,455)	2,187
Strategy, Delivery & Performance		656	(135)	521	690	(5)	685
Housing Revenue Account		36,696	(40,959)	(4,263)	36,208	(37,969)	(1,761)
Net Cost of Services		106,022	(84,938)	21,084	107,902	(80,298)	27,604
Other Operating (Income) /Expenditure	9			(83,522)			2,116
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	10			(14,112)			13,053
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	11			(24,538)			(21,402)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services				(101,088)			21,371
(Surplus) on Revaluation of Property Plant and Equipment	12			(768)			(27,122)
Actuarial (Gains)/Losses on Pension Assets/Liabilities				2,313			(44,752)
Heritage Assets							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				(99,543)			(50,503)

Movement in reserves statement



	General Fund Balance	Housing Revenue Account	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital Grants Applied	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves
Movements in 2023/24	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April 2023	3,219	4,552	3,820	12,218	8,487	1,709	34,005	775,324	809,329
Surplus / (Deficit) on Provision of Services	99,155	1,932	-	-	-	-	101,087	-	101,087
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1,585)	(1,585)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	99,155	1,932	-	-	-	-	101,087	(1,585)	99,502
Adjustment Between Accounting and Funding Basis Under Regulations	(97,517)	(1,686)	-	88,300	(4,130)	(81)	(15,114)	15,114	-
Net Increase / (Decrease) before Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	1,638	246	-	88,300	(4,130)	(81)	85,973	13,529	99,502
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	(857)	-	857	-	-	-	-	-	-
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	781	246	857	88,300	(4,130)	(81)	85,973	13,529	99,502
Other Adjustments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	40
Balance as at 31st March 2024	4,000	4,798	4,677	100,518	4,357	1,628	119,978	788,893	908,871

	General Fund Balance	Housing Revenue Account	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital Grants Applied	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves
Movements in 2022/23	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April 2022	4,070	4,164	6,628	11,910	9,365	1,607	37,744	721,122	758,866
Surplus / (Deficit) on Provision of Services	(20,448)	(923)	-	-	-	-	(21,371)	-	(21,371)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71,874	71,874
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(20,448)	(923)	-	-	-	-	(21,371)	71,874	50,503
Adjustment Between Accounting and Funding Basis Under Regulations	16,791	1,311	-	308	(878)	102	17,634	(17,634)	-
Net Increase / (Decrease) before Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	(3,657)	388	-	308	(878)	102	(3,737)	54,240	50,503
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	2,806	-	(2,806)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	(851)	388	(2,806)	308	(878)	102	(3,737)	54,240	50,503
Other Adjustments	-	-	(2)	-	-	-	(2)	(38)	(40)
Balance as at 31st March 2023	3,219	4,552	3,820	12,218	8,487	1,709	34,005	775,324	809,329

Balance sheet



	Note	31 March 2024		31 March 2023	
		£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Long Term Assets					
Property, Plant & Equipment	12	886,931		879,302	
Heritage Assets		620		620	
Investment Properties	13	156,224		148,483	
Intangible Assets		1,884		1,450	
Assets held for sale	16	-			
Long Term Debtors	14	90,837		66,445	
Pension Asset	31	-		-	
Total Long Term Assets			1,136,496		1,096,300
Current Assets					
Short-term investments		19,156		-	
Inventories		97		96	
Debtors	16	16,513		14,702	
Cash & Cash Equivalents	17	16,959		12,796	
			52,725		27,594
Current Liabilities					
Creditors	18	(22,357)		(26,569)	
Provisions	19	(608)		(1,106)	
Short-Term Loans		(5,090)		(38,175)	
			(28,055)		(65,851)
Long Term Liabilities					
Long-Term Loans	15	(248,402)		(244,506)	
Pensions Liability	31	(3,893)		(4,208)	
			(252,295)		(248,714)
Total Assets Less Liabilities			908,871		809,329
Usable Reserves		(119,978)		(34,005)	
Unusable Reserves	20	(788,893)		(775,324)	
			(908,871)		(809,329)

These Financial Statements replace the unaudited financial statements confirmed by the Strategic Director and Section 151 officer on the 11 October 2024.

Andrew Small CPFA
Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer

Dated: 27 February 2025

Cash flow statement



		2023/24 £000's	2022/23 £000's
	Note		
Net Surplus/(Deficit) on Provision of Services		101,088	(21,371)
Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	21	(534)	25,616
Adjustment for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	21	(121,219)	(14,037)
Net cash flows from Operating Activities		(20,665)	(9,792)
Investing Activities	22	52,864	(12,641)
Financing Activities	23	(28,036)	16,493
Net Increase or (Decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		4,163	(5,940)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the reporting		12,796	18,736
Cash and Cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	17	16,959	12,796



Notes to the Statement of Accounts

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1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Statement of Accounts summarises Epping Forest District Council's transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31st March 2024. The Council is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in accordance with proper accounting practices.

The Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices (under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2003). These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 (the Code), supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under Section 7 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

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

The accounts have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on the concept of the Council as a going concern whereby local authorities cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription.

The significant accounting policies are set out in alphabetical order (1.2 to 1.18) below:

1.2 ACCRUALS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Council can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and its probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with transaction will flow to the Council.

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 based on 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 a specified period of no more than three months 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 CHARGES TO REVENUE FOR NON-CURRENT ASSETS

Services, support services and trading accounts are charged with the following amounts to reflect the cost of holding non-current assets during the year:

- depreciation attributable to the asset 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; and
- amortisation of intangible 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 an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement (equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Council in accordance with statutory guidance).

Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are replaced by the contribution in the General Fund Balance by way of a Capital Adjustment transaction in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

Under the Item 8 Credit and Item 8 Debit (General) Determination issued 24th January 2017 depreciation is charged to the Housing Revenue Accounts. From 1st April 2017 impairment charges and revaluation losses on dwelling assets continue to be reversed out of the Housing Revenue Account post the transitional period and for non-dwelling assets prospectively only from this date. Revaluation gains which reverse a previous impairment and revaluation losses are adjusted for against the Housing Revenue Account Balance.

1.5 COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES

The Council as a billing authority acts as an agent, collecting Council Tax and non-domestic rates (NDR) on behalf of Essex County Council and Essex Police (i.e. the major preceptors, which also includes Essex Fire Authority and Central Government for NDR) and as principal, it collects Council Tax and NDR for itself. Billing authorities are 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.

Accounting for Council Tax and NDR

The Council Tax and NDR income included in the CIES is the Council's share of accrued income for the year. However, regulations determine the amount of Council Tax and NDR that must be included in the Council's General Fund. Therefore, the difference between the income included in the CIES and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the General Fund is taken to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account and included as a reconciling item in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The Balance Sheet includes the Council's share of the year-end balances in respect of Council Tax and NDR relating to arrears, impairment allowances for doubtful debts, overpayments, prepayments, and appeals.

1.6 EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

Events after the Balance Sheet date, 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 are of two types:

- 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; and
- Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period. The Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of 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.

1.7 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Financial assets and liabilities are carried at amortised cost. Credits are made to the CIES for Interest Receivable and are based on the carrying amount multiplied by the effective rate of interest. The amount appearing in the Balance Sheet relates to the principal outstanding plus accrued interest.

1.8 GOVERNMENT GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

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

- The Council will comply with the conditions attached to the payments; and
- The grants or contributions will be received.

Amounts recognised as due to the Council are not credited to the CIES until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied.

Where there are no conditions attached to a grant it should be recognised immediately as income in the CIES. This applies to both revenue and capital grants.

As capital grants and contributions credited to the CIES are not proper income charges to either the General Fund or HRA they must be reversed out through the MIRS to ultimately end up in the Capital Adjustment Account. If there are no conditions attached and the expenditure to which the grant relates has been incurred, then the reversal can be made directly to the Capital Adjustment Account. However, if there are conditions attached then the grant will be recognised in the Capital Grants Receipts in Advance Account until the conditions are met.

Further to this, if the conditions of a capital grant have been met, but the expenditure to be financed from the grant has not been incurred at the Balance Sheet date, then the grant should be reversed out of the CIES through the MIRS to the Capital Grants Unapplied Account. By doing this there is a recognition that the capital grant is not proper income to the General Fund nor HRA and that the capital resources have yet to be applied.

1.9 INVESTMENT PROPERTY

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

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, based on the highest and best use value of the asset. Investment properties are not depreciated but are re-valued annually according to market conditions to ensure that they are held at the highest and best use value on the Balance Sheet date. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal. Under statute, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to impact on the General Fund balance and therefore such gains and losses are reversed out of the General Fund balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement to the Capital Adjustment Account; sale proceeds greater than £10,000 are posted to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line and result in a gain for the General Fund balance.

1.10 LEASES

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

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

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

The Council 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 Council 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, or equipment – applied to write down the lease liability, and
- A financing charge (debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES).

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 asset's estimated useful life (where ownership of the asset does not transfer to the Council at the end of the lease period).

The Council is not required to raise Council Tax to cover depreciation or revaluation and impairment losses arising on leased assets. Instead, a prudent annual contribution (minimum revenue provision - MRP) is made from revenue funds towards the deemed capital investment in accordance with statutory requirements. Depreciation and revaluation and impairment losses are therefore substituted by the MRP in the General Fund balance, by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

Operating Leases

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

The Council as Lessor:

Finance Leases

Where the Council 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 is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the CIES as part of the gain and loss on disposal. A gain, representing the Council's net investment in the lease, is credited to the same line in the CIES 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 long-term lease debtor 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 CIES).

The gain credited to the CIES 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, it is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Receipt Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the amount due in relation to the leased 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.

1.11 OVERHEADS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The cost of overheads and support services are not recharged to General Fund service segments. This maintains clearer financial accountability and performance and – especially – ensures consistency with the Council's management accounts, which are reported to councillors throughout the financial year.

However, the cost of overheads and support services are recharged to the Housing Revenue Account, which ensures that a ring-fenced account is maintained, as required by statute.

1.12 PRIOR YEAR ADJUSTMENTS, CHANGES IN ACCOUNTING POLICIES, ESTIMATES AND ERRORS

Prior period adjustments may arise because 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 prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are 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 Council's financial position or financial performance. Where 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.

1.13 PROPERTY PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

Assets that have a 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, provided that it is probable that future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

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

The Council does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred whilst assets are under construction.

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

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

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historic cost
- Dwellings – current value, determined using the basis of existing use value for social housing (EUV-SH)
- Investment properties and surplus assets – the current value measurement base is fair value, estimated at highest and best use from a market participant's perspective; and
- All other assets – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).

Where there is no market-based evidence of current value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost (DRC) is used as an estimate of current value.

For non-property assets that have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for current value.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current 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. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

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

- Where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains); or
- 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 in the CIES.

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

Impairment

Assets are reviewed at each year-end for evidence of reductions in value i.e. impairment. Where impairment is identified, 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.

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

- Where there is a balance in the 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; or
- 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 CIES.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant service line in the CIES, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all Property, Plant and Equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives on a straight-line basis. An exception is made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land and certain Community Assets) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction). Subsequent expenditure on a fixed asset that maintains or enhances the previously assessed standard of performance of the asset does not negate the need to charge depreciation.

Depreciation is calculated on the following basis:

- Dwellings and other buildings – straight line allocation over the useful life of the property as estimated by a qualified valuer.
- Vehicles, plant, furniture, and equipment – straight line allocation over the useful life of the asset as advised by a suitably qualified officer; and
- Infrastructure – straight line allocation over a useful life.

The following asset lives have been used in the calculation of depreciation:

Council Dwellings and Garages	Up to 60 years
Other Land and Buildings (buildings element only)	Up to 50 years
Infrastructure Assets	Up to 40 years
Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	Between 5 and 20 years

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

Where an asset is material and has major components, whose cost is significant to the total cost of the asset and have markedly different useful lives, the components are depreciated separately. Only assets with a gross book value of £1 million and over will be considered for componentisation. Of those assets, and for the for the purpose of determining what is 'significant', components with a value of 25% in relation to the overall value of the asset, or over £500,000, will be considered and then only if the component has a significantly different useful life for depreciation purposes so as to result in depreciation charges that differ materially from the depreciation charges had the asset not been componentised.

Disposal 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. These should be:

- Immediately available for sale
- Sale is highly probable
- Actively marketed; and
- Expected to be sold within 12 months.

The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Any loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the CIES. Gains in fair value are recognised up to the amount of any previous losses recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on assets held for sale.

If an asset no longer meets the criteria to be classified as an asset held for sale it is reclassified again as a non-current asset and valued at the lower of:

- Its carrying amount before it was classified as held for sale; adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had it not been classified as held for sale; and
- Its recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell.

When an asset is disposed of or decommissioned the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether property, plant and equipment or asset held for sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the CIES as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from the disposal (if any) are credited to the same line in the CIES also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts received for a disposal above £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. A proportion of capital receipts relating to housing disposals is payable to central government. The balance of receipts remains within the Capital Receipts' Reserve and then can be used for new capital investment (or set aside to reduce the Council's underlying need to borrow). Receipts are appropriated to the Reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written off value of disposals is not a charge against Council Tax as the cost of 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.

1.14 PROVISIONS, CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS

Provisions

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

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

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year. Where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will not now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

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

Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Council a possible obligation the existence of which will be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events which are not wholly within the control of the Council. Contingent liabilities may arise in circumstances also 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 with sufficient reliability.

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

Contingent Assets

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Council a possible asset the existence of which will be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events which are not wholly within the control of the Council.

Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed by way of a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits or service potential.

1.15 RESERVES

The Council has set aside certain revenue and capital amounts as earmarked reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. All other fund balances represent working balances for the purpose of the specific fund and are made up of accumulated surpluses and deficits derived over time. All earmarked fund balances and reserves are reviewed periodically as to their size and appropriateness.

Reserves are created by transferring amounts out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are unusable and are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments, local taxation, retirement, and employee benefits are explained in the relevant policies.

1.16 REVENUE EXPENDITURE FUNDED FROM CAPITAL UNDER STATUTE

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions, but which does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the CIES in the year.

Where the Council has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or by borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves' Statement from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account ensures the accounting principle does not impact on the General Fund Balance.

1.17 VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT)

VAT is included in the accounts only to the extent that it is irrecoverable from HM Revenue and Customs. VAT can only be recovered on partially exempt activities where all such activities account for less than 5% of total VAT on all the Council's activities. VAT receivable is excluded from income.

1.18 FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENT

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

The fair value measurement assumes that the transaction to sell the asset or transfer the liability takes place either:

- 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.

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

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

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

2. ACCOUNTING STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN ISSUED BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED

The Council is required to disclose known or reasonably estimated information relevant to assessing the possible impact on the financial statements of an accounting change that will be required by the application of a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted in the period of application.

The most significant forthcoming standard which applies for this Council is IFRS 16 ("Leases"). IFRS16 was issued in January 2016 and became effective for the private sector on 1st January 2019. It removes the existing classifications of operating and finance leases for lessees, requiring a lessee to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases with a term of more than 12 months (unless the underlying asset is of low value) on their Balance Sheet.

After a series of delays (including the impact of the pandemic), the CIPFA/LASAAC proposal to implement IFRS 16 in local government with effect from 1st April 2024 has been approved by the FRAB and is now to be incorporated into the 2024/25 Code. The impact on this Council is not expected to be material, although Finance officers are currently reviewing leasing activity in preparation for full disclosure and technical compliance within the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts.

3. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying accounting policies set out in Note 1, the Council has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions in the current economic climate of the high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government. The Council has determined, however, that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that its assets might be impaired due to a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.

4. ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

The Accounts contain numerous figures that are estimated based on historical experience, current trends or other factors that are relevant. As these figures cannot be ascertained with certainty it is possible that actual results could be materially different from those estimated. The items in the Balance Sheet where there is a risk of material adjustment are as follows:

Pensions Liability

Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a range of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, life expectancy rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. Actuaries are engaged to provide advice about assumptions to be applied. The actuary has provided a sensitivity analysis on the assumptions, which is contained in the Pensions Note 31. The value of the Pensions Liability is (£3.893 million).

Fair Value Measurement

The use of the discounted cash flow model to measure the fair value of some of the Council's investment properties and financial instruments are dependent upon significant assumptions for rent growth, void properties and discount rates adjusted for regional factors. Significant changes in any of the inputs would result in a significantly different fair value measurement. The Council's fund manager has provided a sensitivity analysis around a 1% increase in the discount rate used for measuring the fair value of the Council's financial assets and liabilities which is disclosed within the Financial Instruments **Note 15**.

There have been a series of major events – “Brexit”, “Coronavirus”, the “War in Ukraine” and most recently the “Israel-Hamas War” – in recent years that have been reported as having the potential to have a significant financial impact on the assumptions and estimates made in the Statement of Accounts. Whilst concerning at the time, the subsequent effects of Brexit and Coronavirus were either not as seismic as initially feared (Brexit) or have settled to the extent that they are no longer a cause for concern (Coronavirus), although there are some legacy issues that continue to prove challenging for this Council, and local authorities in general, caused by long-lasting/permanent behavioural changes in society following the pandemic (e.g. changes in working habits have reduced the level of commuter-driven income received from Car Parking fees).

The War in Ukraine (including the worldwide “cost of living crisis”)

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine continues and was widely attributed as the primary cause of major worldwide inflationary pressure (initially triggered by a spike in fuel and energy prices) and sharply rising interest rates.

Inflation (as measured by “CPI”) peaked at 11.1% in October 2022, which was very concerning at the time. However, a relative degree of stability has returned to markets with substantial reductions in fuel and energy prices along with, at the time of publishing this Statement of Accounts, a CPI inflation rate that has fallen to just 2.3% (April 2024) i.e. just short of the Bank of England's long-term target inflation rate of 2.0%.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised the (interest) Base Rate on 14 consecutive occasions from December 2012 to August 2023, to reach a peak of 5.25%, resulting in significant increases in borrowing and investment rates. The Base Rate has since remained unchanged at 5.25% and, in the light of the substantial and continued decrease in inflation, the next move is firmly expected to be downwards.

Despite the – currently – relatively positive outlook, the “Cost of Living Crisis” has nevertheless had a direct impact on both the Council and Qualis and has threatened the viability of a range of capital schemes.

The economy has also proved challenging for the local community and has increased the demand for Council services in some areas (e.g. Homelessness) as well exerting pressure on core income sources Council funding streams such as Council Tax and Business Rates.

With regard to this Statement of Accounts, a degree of Balance Sheet volatility persists, especially on the value of the Council's – relatively large – Commercial Property portfolio. As at 31st March 2023, a fall in value of the portfolio of £13.523 million was recorded (with industrial units being the hardest hit). This year, as at 31st March 2024, the Commercial Property portfolio has increased by £7.741 million, an encouraging step in the right direction (see discussion in Narrative Report above).

And finally, there is still some nervousness as to the potential impact of the "Israel-Hamas War" and the potential impact on the worldwide economy, which could be potentially undermine the recent progress in containing inflation.

5. EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

The draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts were authorised (*uncertified*) for issue on 28th May 2024 by Andrew Small (Executive Director & Section 151 Officer).

Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31st March 2024, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information (e.g. the anticipated collectability of outstanding debt at 31st March 2024 is reflected in a further increase to the provision for bad debts).

6. EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

The objective of the Expenditure and Funding Analysis is to demonstrate to Council Tax and Rent Payers how the funding available to the Council (i.e., Government Grants, Rents, Council Tax and Business Rates) for the year has been used in providing services in comparison with those resources consumed or earned in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. The Expenditure and Funding Analysis also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision-making purposes between the Council's service directorates. Income and Expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES).

2022/23			2023/24		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to General Fund & HRA Balances	Adjustments between the funding & Accounting Basis	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement	Net Expenditure Chargeable to General Fund & HRA Balances	Adjustments between the funding & Accounting Basis	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement
£000s	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
339	(51)	390	311	12	299
1,728	(374)	2,102	1,330	(16)	1,346
7,899	(2,343)	10,242	9,017	(1,244)	10,261
6,363	(1,051)	7,414	6,004	(309)	6,313
2,401	(493)	2,894	2,121	69	2,052
2,316	827	1,489	1,759	445	1,314
1,231	(437)	1,668	1,071	(315)	1,386
242	(52)	294	222	9	213
1,636	(551)	2,187	1,721	79	1,642
600	(85)	685	528	7	521
(15,863)	(14,102)	(1,761)	(16,117)	(11,854)	(4,263)
8,892	(18,712)	27,604	7,967	(13,117)	21,084
		Net Cost of Service			
(5,623)	610	(6,233)	(9,852)	112,320	(122,172)
3,269	(18,102)	21,371	(1,885)	99,203	(101,088)
		(Surplus) / Deficit			
(14,861)		Opening General Fund and HRA Balance	(11,592)		
		Other Transfers from Capital Funds	-		
(11,592)		Closing General Fund & HRA Balance at 31st March (For a split of this balance between the General Fund, HRA and Earmarked Reserves - see the Movement in Reserves Statement)	(13,477)		

Adjustments between Funding & Accounting Basis

	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments	Other Differences	Total
2023/24	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Chief Executive		11	1	12
Community & Wellbeing Services	(51)	32	3	(16)
Commercial & Technical Services	(1,354)	82	28	(1,244)
Corporate Services	(438)	121	8	(309)
Customer Services		72	(3)	69
Finance & Audit Services		462	(17)	445
Housing & Property Services Place	(333)	11	7	(315)
Planning Development Services		5	4	9
Strategy, Delivery & Performance		54	25	79
Housing Revenue Account	(11,948)	11	(4)	7
		8	86	(11,854)
Net Cost of Service	(14,124)	869	138	(13,117)
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	109,985	1,963	372	112,320
Difference between General Fund (Surplus)/Deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	95,861	2,832	510	99,203

	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments	Other Differences	Total
2022/23	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Chief Executive		(89)	38	(51)
Community & Wellbeing Services	(87)	(349)	62	(374)
Contract & Technical Services	(1,441)	(972)	70	(2,343)
Corporate Services	(413)	(797)	159	(1,051)
Customer Services	4	(518)	21	(493)
Finance & Audit Services	-	704	123	827
Housing & Property Services Place	(330)	(162)	55	(437)
Planning Development Services	-	(63)	11	(52)
Strategy, Delivery & Performance	-	(613)	62	(551)
Housing Revenue Account	(13,628)	(94)	9	(85)
		(725)	251	(14,102)
Net Cost of Service	(15,895)	(3,678)	861	(18,712)
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	(862)	(1,117)	2,589	610
Difference between General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(16,757)	(4,795)	3,450	(18,102)

Income & Expenditure Analysed by Nature

	Chief Executive	Community & Wellbeing Services	Commercial & Technical Services	Corporate Services	Customer Services	Finance & Audit Services	Housing & Property Services	Place	Planning Development Services	Strategy, Delivery & Performance	Housing Revenue Account	Total
2023/24	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Fees, Charges & Other Service Income	(306)	(1,051)	(8,432)	(2,618)	(1,664)	(846)	(802)	(90)	(2,543)	(135)	(40,940)	(59,427)
Government Grants	-	(1,046)	(1,058)	(99)	(22,519)	(26)	-	(313)	(431)	-	(19)	(25,511)
Total Income	(306)	(2,097)	(9,490)	(2,717)	(24,183)	(872)	(802)	(403)	(2,974)	(135)	(40,959)	(84,938)
Employee Expenses	547	1,719	4,381	4,407	3,848	1,289	779	259	3,249	655	4,972	26,105
Other Service Expenses	58	1,672	12,959	4,185	771	897	1,077	164	1,367	1	19,780	42,931
Asset Charges	-	51	2,411	438	-	-	333	193	-	-	11,944	15,370
Benefit Payments	-	-	-	-	21,616	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,616
Total Expenditure	605	3,442	19,751	9,030	26,235	2,186	2,189	616	4,616	656	36,696	106,022
Net Cost of Service	299	1,345	10,261	6,313	2,052	1,314	1,387	213	1,642	521	(4,263)	21,084

	Chief Executive	Community & Wellbeing Services	Contract & Technical Services	Corporate Services	Customer Services	Finance & Audit Services	Housing & Property Services	Place	Planning Development Services	Strategy, Delivery & Performance	Housing Revenue Account	Total
2022/23	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Fees, Charges & Other Service Income	(321)	(1,027)	(8,124)	(3,091)	(1,189)	(799)	(529)	(95)	(2,455)	(5)	(37,950)	(55,585)
Government Grants	-	(735)	(14)	(64)	(22,776)	(22)	-	(83)	(1,000)	-	(19)	(24,713)
Total Income	(321)	(1,762)	(8,138)	(3,155)	(23,965)	(821)	(529)	(178)	(3,455)	(5)	(37,969)	(80,298)
Employee Expenses	639	2,267	5,861	5,774	4,440	1,571	950	365	4,265	688	5,360	32,180
Other Service Expenses	72	1,510	10,378	4,381	836	739	917	107	1,377	2	17,122	37,441
Asset Charges	-	87	2,141	414	-	-	330	-	-	-	13,726	16,698
Benefit Payments	-	-	-	-	21,583	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,583
Total Expenditure	711	3,864	18,380	10,569	26,859	2,310	2,197	472	5,642	690	36,208	107,902
Net Cost of Service	390	2,102	10,242	7,414	2,894	1,489	1,668	294	2,187	685	(1,761)	27,604

7. ADJUSTMENTS 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 Council in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice, to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Council to meet future revenue and capital expenditure.

	Usable Reserves					
	General Fund	Housing Revenue Account	Capital Receipts Reserve	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Movements in Unusable Reserves
2023/24	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Adjustments Involving the Capital Adjustment Account: Exclusions						
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,967)	(11,006)	-	-	-	12,973
Upward/(Downward) revaluation of non-current assets	335	(790)	-	-	-	455
Movements in the fair value of Investment Properties	7,878	5	-	-	-	(7,883)
Amortisation of intangible assets	(159)	(147)	-	-	-	306
Capital Grants and contributions applied	1,248	1,956	-	-	-	(3,204)
Revenue expenditure funded from Capital under statute	(1,332)	-	-	-	-	1,332
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	(3,248)	(1,224)	-	-	-	4,472
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund and HRA	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	178	-	-	-	-	(178)
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	1,164	-	1,071	-	-	(2,235)
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Grants Unapplied						
Transferred from Capital Grants Unapplied	-	-	-	-	81	(81)
Adjustments Involving the Capital Receipts Reserve						
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES and other contributions	88,290	2,054	(90,344)	-	-	-
Transfer from Deferred Capital Receipts on receipt of cash	-	32	(1,631)	-	-	1,599
Used to finance new Capital Expenditure	-	-	2,012	-	-	(2,012)
Contribution towards administrative costs of non-current asset disposals	(598)	(12)	610	-	-	-
Contribution to finance the payments to the Government Capital Receipts pool	18	-	(18)	-	-	-
Adjustments Involving the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve						
Transfer of deferred sale proceeds credited/debited as part of the gain / loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	2,379	-	-	-	-	(2,379)
Adjustments relating to the Major Repairs Reserve						
Depreciation transferred from HRA	-	11,006	-	(11,006)	-	-
Use of the Major Repairs Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	-	-	-	15,136	-	(15,136)
Adjustments involving the Pensions Reserve						
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the CIES.	2,824	(196)	-	-	-	(2,628)
Adjustments involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account						
Amount by which council tax and business rate income credited to the CIES is different from that calculated in accordance with statutory requirements.	452	-	-	-	-	(452)
Adjustments Involving the Accumulated Absences Account						
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements.	55	8	-	-	-	(63)
Total Adjustments	97,517	1,686	(88,300)	4,130	81	(15,114)

	Usable Reserves					
	General Fund	Housing Revenue Account	Capital Receipts Reserve	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Movements in Unusable Reserves
2022/23	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Adjustments Involving the Capital Adjustment Account: Exclusions						
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,951)	(10,422)	-	-	-	12,373
Upward/(Downward) revaluation of non-current assets	(152)	(3,323)	-	-	-	3,475
Movements in the fair value of Investment Properties	(14,654)	(5)	-	-	-	14,659
Amortisation of intangible assets	(166)	(69)	-	-	-	235
Capital Grants and contributions applied	940	437	-	-	-	(1,377)
Revenue expenditure funded from Capital under statute	(949)	88	-	-	-	861
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	(347)	(2,225)	-	-	-	2,572
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund and HRA balances	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	(1,128)	-	-	-	-	1,128
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	1,125	-	-	-	-	(1,125)
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account						
Transferred from Capital Grants Receipt in Advance	102	-	-	-	(102)	-
Adjustments Involving the Capital Receipts Reserve						
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES and other contributions	71	4,336	(4,407)	-	-	-
Transfer from Deferred Capital Receipts on receipt of cash	-	-	(1,002)	-	-	1,002
Used to finance new Capital Expenditure	-	-	5,080	-	-	(5,080)
Contribution towards administrative costs of non-current asset disposals	-	(21)	21	-	-	-
Contribution to finance the payments to the Government Capital Receipts pool	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adjustments Involving the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve						
Transfer to Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve upon revaluation of rents to mortgages.	114	97	-	-	-	(211)
Adjustments relating to the Major Repairs Reserve						
Depreciation transferred from HRA	-	10,422	-	(10,422)	-	-
Use of the Major Repairs Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	-	-	-	11,300	-	(11,300)
Adjustments involving the Pensions Reserve						
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the CIES.	(3,920)	(877)	-	-	-	4,797
Adjustments involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account						
Amount by which council tax and business rate income credited to the CIES is different from that calculated in accordance with statutory requirements.	3,650	-	-	-	-	(3,650)
Adjustments Involving the Accumulated Absences Account						
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements.	474	251	-	-	-	(725)
Total Adjustments	(16,791)	(1,311)	(308)	878	(102)	17,634

8. MOVEMENTS IN EARMARKED RESERVES

A summary of balances on Earmarked Reserves is set out below.

	Balance 31st March 2022	Transfers Out	Transfers In	Balance 31st March 2023	Transfers Out	Transfers In	Balance 31st March 2024
General Fund	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
All Weather Pitch	119	-	18	137	-	14	151
Building Control	195	(115)	-	80	(80)	-	-
Capital Investment Risk Reserve						1,000	1,000
Collection Fund Deficit Reserve	2,710	(2,710)	-	-	-	-	-
Community Projects	597	(515)	353	435	(517)	486	404
Deferred Revenue Income	605			605	(605)		-
Digital Innovation Zone	-	(77)	204	127	(85)	90	132
District Development Fund	612	(396)	8	224	(9)	-	215
Garden Town	82	(265)	593	410	(606)	602	406
Homelessness	-	(167)	423	256	(51)	310	515
Insurance Reserve	150	-	-	150	-	-	150
Invest to Save Reserve	203	(89)	-	114	-	-	114
Museum Fund	110	-	-	110	-	-	110
New Burdens	-	-	112	112	(100)	-	12
North Weald Inland Port	660	(193)	150	617	(482)	100	235
Staff Benefits	39	(21)	13	31	(17)	13	27
Prosperity Fund	-	(50)	83	33	(119)	120	34
Rental Loans	378	(378)	-	-	-	-	-
S106 Revenue Contributions	53	(13)	-	40	(28)	18	30
Transformation Revenue Reserve ("Fit for the Future")						808	808
Other Ongoing Projects	116	(67)	294	343	(183)	175	335
Total Earmarked Reserves	6,629	(5,056)	2,251	3,824	(2,882)	3,736	4,678

9. OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Parish Council Precepts	4,182	3,887
Payments to the Government Housing Pool	(18)	-
(Gains) / losses on the disposal of non-current assets	(87,686)	(1,771)
Total	(83,522)	2,116

10. FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Total Net Surplus from Investment Property	(8,256)	(8,774)
Interest payable and similar charges	9,386	9,258
Pensions interest cost	(1,668)	1,087
Interest receivable and similar income	(5,702)	(3,178)
Changes in Fair Value of Investment Properties	(7,883)	14,659
(Gains)/Losses on disposal of Investment Properties	48	-
Changes in Value of Deferred Capital Receipts	(37)	-
Total	(14,112)	13,053

11. TAXATION AND NON-SPECIFIC GRANT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Council Tax Income	(13,931)	(12,915)
Non Domestic Rate Income	(15,558)	(11,775)
Non Domestic Rate Section 31 Grants	(5,256)	(6,617)
Non Domestic Rate Tariff Payment and Levy	13,493	11,783
Non-ring fenced Government Grants	(1,330)	(1,328)
Capital Grants and Other Contributions	(1,956)	(550)
Total	(24,538)	(21,402)

12. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

In accordance with the Temporary Relief offered by the update to the Code on Infrastructure assets this note does not include disclosure of gross cost and accumulated depreciation for Infrastructure Assets because historical reporting practices and resultant information deficits mean that this would not faithfully represent the asset position to the users of the financial statements.

The Council has chosen not to disclose this information as the gross cost and accumulated depreciation are not measured accurately and would not provide a sound basis for the users of the financial statements to take economic or other decisions relating to Infrastructure Assets.

2023/24	Council Dwellings & Garages £000's	Other Land & Buildings £000's	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment £000's	Community Assets £000's	Surplus Assets £000's	Assets Under Construction £000's	Total £000's
Gross Book Value 1st April 2023	806,892	51,191	11,657	1,143	527	9,873	881,283
Additions	9,750	65	514	-	-	11,622	21,951
Disposals / Impairments	(1,186)	(905)	(638)	-	-	-	(2,729)
Reclassified in Year	150	(1,393)	136	-	-	1,257	150
Revaluation Applied to the CIES	(828)	444	-	-	33	(104)	(455)
Revaluation Credited to the Revaluation Reserve	(924)	2,432	-	-	168	(948)	728
Accumulated Depreciation & Impairment Written Off on Revaluation	(10,681)	(1,051)	-	-	(1)	-	(11,733)
Gross Book Value 31st March 2023	803,173	50,783	11,669	1,143	727	21,700	889,195
Depreciation 1st April 2023	-	(349)	(6,458)	-	(1)	-	(6,808)
Reclassified	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation in Year	(10,697)	(1,067)	(1,049)	-	-	-	(12,813)
Depreciation on Disposed Assets	16	108	595	-	-	-	719
Accumulated Depreciation & Impairment Written Off on Revaluation	10,681	1,051	-	-	1	-	11,733
Depreciation 31st March 2024	-	(257)	(6,912)	-	-	-	(7,169)
Net Book Value 31st March 2024	803,173	50,526	4,757	1,143	727	21,700	882,026

2022-23	Council Dwellings & Garages £000's	Other Land & Buildings £000's	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment £000's	Community Assets £000's	Surplus Assets £000's	Assets Under Construction £000's	Total £000's
Gross Book Value 1st April 2022	774,586	56,990	13,710	1,143	527	13,104	860,060
Additions	9,188	50	805	-	-	5,290	15,333
Disposals / Impairments	(2,022)	-	(2,858)	-	-	(184)	(5,064)
Reclassified in Year	8,984	(456)	-	-	-	(7,886)	642
Revaluation Applied to the CIES	(3,323)	(152)	-	-	-	-	(3,475)
Revaluation Credited to the Revaluation Reserve	29,591	(2,039)	-	-	-	(451)	27,101
Accumulated Depreciation & Impairment Written Off on Revaluation	(10,112)	(3,202)	-	-	-	-	(13,314)
Gross Book Value 31st March 2023	806,892	51,191	11,657	1,143	527	9,873	881,283
Depreciation 1st April 2022	-	(2,471)	(8,260)	-	(1)	-	(10,732)
Reclassified	(11)	29	-	-	-	-	18
Depreciation in Year	(10,127)	(1,109)	(993)	-	-	-	(12,229)
Depreciation on Disposed Assets	26	-	2,795	-	-	-	2,821
Accumulated Depreciation & Impairment Written Off on Revaluation	10,112	3,202	-	-	-	-	13,314
Depreciation 31st March 2023	-	(349)	(6,458)	-	(1)	-	(6,808)
Net Book Value 31st March 2023	806,892	50,842	5,199	1,143	526	9,873	874,475

Revaluations

The Council undertakes a rolling programme of valuation that ensures that all Property Plant and Equipment required to be measured at fair value is revalued at least every five years. Carter Jonas LLP undertook valuations on behalf of the Council in 2023/24 for operational and investment property. HRA stock was valued at 31 March 2024 by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

All valuations of land and buildings were carried out in accordance with methodologies and basis for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

	Council Dwellings & Garages £000's	Other Land & Buildings £000's	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment £000's	Infrastructure Assets £000's	Community Assets £000's	Surplus Assets £000's	Assets Under Construction £000's	Total £000's
Carried Historical Cost	-	-	11,669	8,082	1,143	-	21,700	42,594
Valued at Current Value as from:								
31st March 2024	803,173	35,680	-	-	-	250	-	839,103
31st March 2023	-	12,038	-	-	-	-	-	12,038
31st March 2022	-	2,128	-	-	-	477	-	2,605
31st March 2021	-	686	-	-	-	-	-	686
31st March 2020	-	251	-	-	-	-	-	251
Total Cost or Valuation	803,173	50,783	11,669	8,082	1,143	727	21,700	897,277

Infrastructure Assets

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Net Book Value 1st April 2023	4,827	5,240
Additions	238	110
De-Recognition/Disposals	-	(812)
Depreciation	(160)	(144)
Depreciation on disposed assets	-	433
Net Book Value 31st March 2024	4,905	4,827

The Council has determined in accordance with Regulation 30M of the Local Authorities Capital Finance and Accounting (England) Amendment Regulations 2022 that the carrying amounts to be derecognised for Infrastructure Assets when there is replacement expenditure is nil.

Reconciliation of Infrastructure and Other Assets Net Book Value at 31st March 2024

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Infrastructure assets	4,905	4,827
Other Property Plant and Equipment assets	882,026	874,475
Total Property Plant and Equipment assets	886,931	879,302

13. INVESTMENT PROPERTY

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

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Rental Income from Investment Property	10,266	10,473
Direct Operating Expenses Arising from Investment Property	(2,010)	(1,699)
Net Gain / (Loss)	8,256	8,774

The following table summarises the movement in fair value of investment properties over the year, which has shown an increase of around 6%. Market-wide, yield movement has been the main driver of commercial property capital value change in the current cycle, as the sharp upward movement in yields during 2023 resulted in a fall in all-property capital values. However, this fall is now well past its peak, resulting in the market demonstrating improved performance since mid-2023. The increases in the Council's portfolio value are largely due to new lettings, increases in market rent or yield movements and the continuation of the Council's strategy to buy back long leases for ground rent, which can then be remarketed at full market rent, leading to an increase in fair value of £7.883 million. All investment properties have been valued based on Level 3 unobservable inputs using an income approach and the assumption that their current use is their highest and best use. The valuations were carried out as at 31st March 2024 by Jason Sharman MRICS, RICS Registered Valuer and Partner of Carter Jonas LLP and Cecilia Fellows MRICS, RICS Registered Valuer and Partner of Carter Jonas LLP.

Properties Categorised within Level 3	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Balance as at 31 March	148,483	162,006
Balance as at 01 April	148,483	162,006
Reclassified in year	(150)	(661)
Acquisition	1,676	-
Repurchased leases	755	1,217
Enhancements to existing properties	(2,423)	580
Net Gains / (Losses) from fair value adjustments	7,883	(14,659)
Balance at end of the year	156,224	148,483

14. LONG TERM DEBTORS

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Capital Advances (B3 Living)	344	362
Rents to Mortgages	1,611	1,578
Home Assist Loans	203	224
Place Loan	-	100
S278 Bond	193	-
Qualis Loans	90,529	66,489
Provision for Credit losses	(2,042)	(2,308)
Net Carrying Amount at end of the year	90,838	66,445

The Council is required by accounting standards to make a provision for potential losses in respect of Qualis loans. A total provision of £2.042 million was required for 2023/24 (£2.308 million in 2022/23); this comprises £1.948 million in respect of capital loans and £0.094 million in respect of revenue loans. Provisions in respect of capital loans are reversed under statute out in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The Council is building a new Leisure Centre which under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980, required a bond payment to Essex Highways to enable the Council to make alterations and improvements to the public highway. The bond will be repaid after the works complete.

15. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

All of the Council's financial assets and liabilities held during the year are measured at amortised cost with the exception of 'Rent to Mortgage' loans which are held at fair value through profit and loss.

Qualis loans are shown gross. A loss allowance reflecting statistical likelihood that the debtor will be unable to meet their contractual commitments to the Council is shown in Note 14 Long-term Debtors.

Categories of Financial Instruments

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

	Long-term		Current	
	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Financial liabilities				
Borrowing	(248,402)	(244,506)	(5,090)	(38,175)
Trade Creditors	-	-	(5)	(20)
Total financial liabilities	(248,402)	(244,506)	(5,095)	(38,195)
Financial assets				
Short-term investments	-	-	19,156	-
Debtors	2,350	2,264	3,762	3,605
Cash	-	-	(7,541)	(204)
Cash equivalents MMF	-	-	21,500	10,000
Cash equivalents DMADF	-	-	3,000	3,000
Qualis loans	90,529	66,489	4,060	2,181
Total financial assets	92,879	68,753	43,937	18,582

The short-term borrowing includes £0.440 million representing accrued interest and principal repayments due within 12 months on long-term borrowing (2023: £1.042 million).

The Council issued short-term loans to four local authorities at the end of 2024. Together with accrued interest of £0.156 million, they have been categorised as short-term investments.

Short-term Qualis loans include £0.208 million representing accrued interest and principal repayments due within 12 months on long-term loans (2023: £0.199 million).

Income and Expense Gains and Losses

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

	Financial Liabilities		Financial Assets	
	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Interest expense	9,386	9,258	-	-
Fee expense	-	-	-	-
Total expense in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	9,386	9,258	-	-
Interest Income	-	-	(5,702)	(3,178)
Fee income	-	-	-	-
Total income in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	(5,702)	(3,178)
Net (Gain) / Loss for the year	9,386	9,258	(5,702)	(3,178)

Offsetting Financial Assets and Liabilities

Financial assets and liabilities are set off against each other where the Council has a legally enforceable right to set off and it intends either to settle on a net basis, or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously. The table below shows those instruments that have been offset on the balance sheet.

	31 March 2024			31 March 2023		
	Gross Assets (Liabilities)	(Liabilities) assets set off	Net position on balance sheet	Gross Assets (liabilities)	(Liabilities) assets set off	Net position on balance sheet
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bank Overdrafts	(1,689)	-		(2,500)	-	
Bank Accounts in Credit	-	9,230		-	2,291	
Total Financial Assets	(1,689)	9,230	7,541	(2,500)	2,291	(208)

Fair Values of Assets and Liabilities

The fair value of a financial instrument is the price that would be received when selling an asset, or the price that would be paid when transferring a liability, to another market participant in an arms'-length transaction. Where liabilities are held as an asset by another party, such as the Council's borrowing, the fair value is estimated from the holder's perspective.

Their fair values disclosed below have been estimated by calculating the net present value of the remaining contractual cash flows at 31st 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 31st March; and
- The fair value of short-term instruments, including trade payables and receivables, is assumed to approximate to the carrying amount.

The Council's outstanding debt at 31st March 2024 consists of loans from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb). Fair values are estimated as the price the lender would receive to sell the loans to another market participant on 31st March, based on observed market rates for similar transactions. The fair value of short-term financial liabilities held at amortised cost, including trade payables is assumed to approximate to the carrying amount.

During the year, the Council issued £28.275 million in loans to 100% owned subsidiary Qualis. Qualis' activities including developing commercial and residential property in the area and providing related services such as repairs and grounds maintenance.

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; and
- Level 2 – fair value is calculated from inputs that are observable for the asset or liability, other than quoted prices, e.g. interest rates or yields for similar instruments.

	Fair Value Level	31 March 2024		31 March 2023	
		Carrying Amount £000's	Fair Value £000's	Carrying Amount £000's	Fair Value £000's
Financial Liabilities held at Amortised Cost					
Long-Term Borrowing	2	(248,402)	(211,597)	(244,506)	(202,495)
Short-Term Borrowing		(5,090)	(5,090)	(38,175)	(38,175)
Trade Creditors		(5)	(5)	(20)	(20)
Total Financial Liabilities		(253,497)	(216,692)	(282,701)	(240,690)
Financial Assets					
Short-term investments		19,156	19,325	-	-
Qualis Loans	2	94,589	69,838	68,670	58,193
Cash and Cash equivalents Bank and Cash		(7,541)	(7,541)	(204)	(204)
Cash and Cash equivalents MMF	1	21,500	21,503	10,000	10,000
Cash and Cash equivalents DMADF		3,000	3,009	3,000	3,000
Long-Term Debtors	2	2,350	2,266	2,264	2,760
Short-Term Debtors		3,762	3,762	3,605	3,605
Total Financial Assets		136,816	112,162	87,335	77,354

The fair value of the Council's borrowing held at amortised cost is lower than their balance sheet carrying amount, because the authority's portfolio of loans includes a number of loans where the interest rate payable is lower than the current rates available for similar loans as at the balance sheet date.

The fair value of the Qualis loans held at amortised cost is lower than the carrying amount on the Balance Sheet because market interest rates have risen since these loans were made or agreed. A hypothetical buyer of the loans would thus expect a discount for receiving interest that is below current market rates because the interest rate on similar investments is now lower than that obtained when the investment was originally made.

The table below shows the effect of a 1% increase in the discount rate used to measure the fair values of the Council's financial assets and liabilities.

Fair Value Sensitivities

Impact of 1% increase on discount rate for fair values	31 March 2024		31 March 2023	
	Effect on Fair Values £000's	Effect on Income & Expenditure £000's	Effect on Fair Values £000's	Effect on Income & Expenditure £000's
PWLB	(19,455)	18	(19,446)	199
Qualis Loans	(3,615)	-	(3,541)	-
Total	(23,070)	18	(22,987)	199

16. DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Government Departments and Other Local Authorities	3,477	3,408
Council Tax Arrears	2,332	2,239
NDR Arrears	1,905	1,626
Housing Rent Arrears	959	954
Sundry Debtors	10,620	10,511
Prepayments & Deposits	772	1,341
Qualis Loan	4,059	2,181
Bad Debt Provision	(7,611)	(7,559)
Total	16,513	14,702

Council Tax and Business Rates arrears shown above, and the related Bad Debt Provisions represent the Council's share of the total debt. The remainder is shown as part of an amount due from major preceptors on the basis that the Council has paid over more in precepts than it has received and is net of prepayments.

17. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Petty Cash	0	4
Bank Current Accounts	(7,541)	(208)
Investment MMF	21,500	10,000
Investment DMADF	3,000	3,000
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	16,959	12,796

18. CREDITORS

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Government Departments and Other Local Authorities	(5,839)	(6,385)
Council Tax	(261)	(316)
Non Domestic Rates	(399)	(603)
Housing Rents	(648)	(521)
Sundry Creditors	(8,506)	(6,692)
Accruals and Deferred Income	(5,916)	(5,196)
Covid Grants	(788)	(5,908)
Energy and Fuel Support	-	(948)
Total Creditors	(22,357)	(26,569)

Council Tax and Business Rates prepayments shown above relate only to the Council's proportion of the total debt. The remainder is shown as being due to Government Departments and Other Local Authorities. This is shown net of arrears, Collection Fund balance and, in the case of Business Rates, the Provision for Appeals.

19. PROVISIONS

A provision for Business Rates Appeals is retained. This reflects the Council's share (40%) of the potential liability for successful appeals lodged by local businesses against the Rateable Value of the premises that they occupy, and therefore the potential need for the Council to refund Business Rates paid in 2022/23 and prior years.

The overall liability is shared with Central Government (50%), Essex County Council (9%) and Essex Fire Service (1%), and the movements in the year are presented in the table below.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Business Rates Appeals		
Opening Balance 1st April	1,106	2,381
Amounts Used in Year	(463)	(3,188)
Additional Provision Provided	(35)	1,913
Closing Balance	608	1,106

20. UNUSABLE RESERVES

Movements in Usable Reserves are shown in detail on the Movement in Reserves Statement.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Revaluation Reserve	289,766	293,620
Capital Adjustment Account	410,891	420,978
Pension Reserve	(3,893)	(4,208)
Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve	91,021	64,341
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	1,331	880
Accumulated Absences Account	(224)	(287)
Total Unusable Reserves	788,892	775,324

Revaluation Reserve

The revaluation reserve contains the gains made by the Council arising from increases in the value of Property, Plant and Equipment (and Intangible Assets). The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- Revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost
- Used in the provision of services and gains are consumed through depreciation; or
- Disposed of and the gains are realised.

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

Revaluation Reserve	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Balance as at 01 April	293,620	270,762
Opening Balance Adjustment		
Upward Revaluation of Assets	10,042	32,595
Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the surplus/deficit on the provision of services.	(9,314)	(5,473)
Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services	728	27,122
Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	(3,897)	(3,474)
Accumulated Gains on assets sold or scrapped	(685)	(790)
Amount written off to the capital adjustment account	(4,582)	(4,264)
Balance as at 31st March	289,766	293,620

Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction, or enhancement of those assets under statutory provision. The account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the CIES (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Council as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction, and enhancement.

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties.

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

Note 7 details the source of all of the transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve and Deferred Capital Receipts.

Capital Adjustment Account	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Balance as at 01 April	420,978	441,135
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	(12,973)	(12,373)
Revaluation Gains / (Losses) on Property, Plant and Equipment	(455)	(3,475)
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute	(1,332)	(862)
Amounts for non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of gain / loss on disposal to the CIES	(4,472)	(2,573)
Amortisation of Intangible Assets	(306)	(234)
	(19,538)	(19,517)
Adjusting Amounts Written Out of the Revaluation Reserve	4,582	4,264
Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	406,022	425,882
Capital Financing Applied in the Year		
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to Finance New Capital Expenditure HRA	1,052	3,238
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to Finance New Capital Expenditure General Fund	960	1,376
Use of the Major Repairs Reserve to Finance New Capital Expenditure	15,136	11,300
Capital Grants Credited to the CIES that have been applied to Capital Financing	3,204	1,377
Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied account.	81	-
Statutory Provision for the Financing of Capital Investments Charged against the General Fund and HRA Balances	(25,682)	(9,128)
Capital Expenditure Charged against the General Fund and HRA Balances	-	-
	(5,249)	8,163
Movement in the Market Value of Investment Properties debited or credited to the CIES	7,883	(14,659)
Statutory Provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund and HRA balances	1,164	1,125
Repayment of Capital Loan	1,071	467
Balance as at 31st March	410,891	420,978

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 Council accounts for post-employment benefits in the CIES 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 Council makes employers contributions to the pension fund or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance of the Pension Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by the past and current employees and the resources the Council have set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements ensure the funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

Pension Reserve	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Balance as at 01 April	(4,208)	(44,163)
Remeasurements of the net defined liability / (asset)	(32,478)	44,553
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES	(1,718)	(9,684)
Employers pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	4,391	5,086
Balance as at 31 March	(34,013)	(4,208)

Deferred Capital Receipts

The Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve holds the gains recognised on the disposal of non-current assets but for which cash settlement has yet to take place. Under statutory arrangements, the Council does not treat these gains as usable for financing new capital expenditure until they are backed by cash receipts. When the cash is eventually received, amounts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Deferred Capital Receipts	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Balance as at 01 April	64,341	57,172
Statutory Provision for the Financing of Capital Investments and I	28,281	8,000
Impairment Charges in Relation to advances charged to the CIES	30	171
Transfer to Capital Receipts Reserve upon receipt of cash	(1,631)	(1,002)
Balance as at 31 March	91,021	64,341

Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The Collection Fund Adjustment Account manages the differences arising from the recognition of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as it falls due from taxpayers compared with the statutory arrangements for paying across amounts to the General Fund from the Collection Fund.

Collection Fund Adjustment Account	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Balance as at 01 April	879	(2,770)
Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rates income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax and non-domestic rates income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	452	3,649
Balance as at 31 March	1,331	879

Accumulated Absences Account

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31st March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the account.

Accumulated absences account	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Balance as at 1st April	287	1,012
Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	(287)	(1,012)
Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	224	287
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(63)	(725)
Balance as at 31st March	224	287

21. CASH FLOW STATEMENT – OPERATING ACTIVITIES

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Interest Received	5,546	379
Interest Charge for the Year	(9,988)	(6,457)
Total	(4,442)	(6,078)

The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following non-cash items.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Depreciation	12,973	12,373
Amortisation	306	234
Impairment and upward/downward revaluations	455	3,475
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	(8,549)	(14,923)
(Increase) / decrease in debtors	1,085	2,406
(Increase) / decrease in inventories	(1)	61
Increase/(decrease) in impairment for bad debts	(266)	-
Pension Liability	(2,628)	4,797
Carrying amount of Non-Current Assets sold	4,472	2,573
Other Non-Cash Items Charged to the Net Surplus or deficit on the Provision of Services	(8,381)	14,620
Total	(534)	25,616

The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following items that are investing and financing activities.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Any other items for which the cash effects are investing or financing cash flows	(3,234)	(1,521)
Proceeds from the sale of property and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(117,985)	(12,516)
Total	(121,219)	(14,037)

22. CASH FLOW STATEMENT - INVESTING ACTIVITIES

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Property	(24,435)	(19,298)
Purchase of Short-term and Long-term Investments	(19,000)	-
Other Payments for Investing Activities	(193)	(2,058)
Proceeds from Sale of Property, Plant and Equipment, and Investment Property	91,335	5,347
Proceeds from Short-term and Long-term Investments	-	-
Other Receipts from Investing Activities	5,157	3,368
Total	52,864	(12,641)

23. CASH FLOW STATEMENT - FINANCING ACTIVITIES

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Cash receipts of short and long term borrowing	46,800	87,133
Repayments of short and long-term borrowing	(75,387)	(74,450)
Other payments for financing activities	551	3,810
Total	(28,036)	16,493

24. MEMBER ALLOWANCES

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Allowances	352	355
Expenses	-	1
Total Member Allowances	352	356

25. OFFICER REMUNERATION

	2023/24				
	Salary (including fees and allowances)	Benefits in Kind	Pension Contributions	Redundancy	Total Remuneration including Pension
	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
Chief Executive - Georgina Blakemore	152,319	-	33,568	-	185,887
Chief Operating Officer	119,906	-	26,485	-	146,392
Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer	123,227	-	27,233	-	150,460
Service Director - Planning & Development	86,031	-	19,013	-	105,044
Service Director - Regulatory Services	83,020	-	18,075	-	101,095
Service Director - Customer Services	86,031	-	19,013	-	105,044
Service Director - Contracts Partnerships and Procurement	81,787	-	18,075	-	99,862
Service Director - Corporate Services	86,031	-	-	-	86,031
Project Director - Housing Revenue Account	-	-	-	-	-
Project Director - Community & Wellbeing	77,978	-	17,177	-	95,155
Project Director - ICT & Transformation	78,723	-	17,101	-	95,824
Harlow & Gilston Garden Town Director	106,639	-	23,417	-	130,056
Total	1,081,691	-	219,157	-	1,300,848

	2022/23				
	Salary (including fees and allowances)	Benefits in Kind	Pension Contributions	Redundancy	Total Remuneration including Pension
	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
Chief Executive - Georgina Blakemore	137,436	1,447	29,079	-	167,962
Chief Operating Officer	111,924	-	-	-	111,924
Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer	119,060	-	25,241	-	144,301
Service Director - Planning & Development	100,205	-	21,136	-	121,341
Service Director - Contract & Technical Services	82,818	-	17,557	-	100,375
Service Director - Customer Services	-	-	-	-	-
Service Director - Corporate Services	82,818	-	17,557	-	100,375
Project Director - HRA	82,818	-	-	-	82,818
Project Director - Community & Wellbeing	52,526	-	10,889	-	63,415
Harlow & Gilston Garden Town Director	-	-	-	-	-
Service Director - Strategy, Delivery & Performance (Interim)	102,277	-	21,624	-	123,901
Total	871,882	1,447	143,083	-	1,016,412

There were no payments relating to bonuses in the year. The emoluments above include all taxable employee payments. Pension contributions relate to Employer's contributions of 22.1% (21.2% in 2022/23).

The number of employees whose remuneration, including benefits in kind, but excluding employer's pension contributions, was £50,000 or more, is summarised in bands of £5,000 in the table below. The bandings have remained unchanged for several years, which means that (ignoring all other factors), general pay inflation will result in a gradual increase in the number of employees captured over time. Over the last two years, there has been a significant increase in the number of employees in the lower bandings that have been captured by the disclosure requirement for the first time, partly as a consequence of consecutive national (and local) fixed pay awards for 2022/23 and 2023/24 (of £1,925), which has been the highest for several years.

Remuneration Band	31 March 2024	31 March 2023
£50,000 - £54,999	46	39
£55,000 - £59,999	16	18
£60,000 - £64,999	10	7
£65,000 - £69,999	5	5
£70,000 - £74,999	2	2
£75,000 - £79,999	2	5
£80,000 - £84,999	4	3
£85,000 - £89,999	3	-
£90,000 - £94,999	-	-
£95,000 - £99,999	-	-
£100,000 - £104,999	-	2
£105,000 - £109,999	1	-
£110,000 - £114,999	-	1
£115,000 - £119,999	1	1
£120,000 - £124,999	1	-
£125,000 - £129,999	-	-
£130,000 - £134,999	-	-
£135,000 - £139,999	-	1
£140,000 - £144,999	-	-
£145,000 - £149,999	-	-
£150,000 - £154,999	1	-
£155,000 - £159,999	-	-
£160,000 - £164,999	-	-
£165,000 - £169,999	-	-
£170,000 - £174,999	-	-
£175,000 - £179,999	-	-
£180,000 - £184,999	-	-
£185,000 - £189,999	-	-
£190,000 - £194,999	-	-
£195,000 - £199,999	-	-
Total	92	84

The table above includes those officers listed in the tables on Page 57 above. Employee contracts terminated in 2023/24, are summarised in the table below.

	2023/24			
	No of Compulsory Redundancies	No of Other Departures	Total No of Exit Packages	Total Cost of Exit Packages in Each Band £'s
Termination Benefits				
Exit Package Cost Band (including special payments)				
£0 - £20,000	5	1	6	26,752
£20,001 - £40,000	3	1	4	119,439
£40,001 - £60,000	-	-	-	-
£60,001 - £80,000	-	-	-	-
£80,001 - £100,000	-	-	-	-
above £100,000	-	-	-	-
Total Cost Included in Bandings and in the CIES	8	2	10	146,191

	2022/23			
	No of Compulsory Redundancies	No of Other Departures	Total No of Exit Packages	Total Cost of Exit Packages in Each Band £'s
Termination Benefits				
Exit Package Cost Band (including special payments)				
£0 - £20,000	14	5	19	159,202
£20,001 - £40,000	2	3	5	156,720
£40,001 - £60,000	1	-	1	57,120
£60,001 - £80,000	-	-	-	-
£80,001 - £100,000	-	-	-	-
above £100,000	-	-	-	-
Total Cost Included in Bandings and in the CIES	17	8	25	373,042

26. EXTERNAL AUDIT FEES

The following fees have been paid for services carried out by public sector appointed auditors for 2023/24.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
External Audit Services (Deloitte)	273	120
Certification of Grant Claims & Returns (BDO)	30	28
Other Services	3	6
Total External Audit Fees	306	154

27. GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Credited to Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income		
Non-ringfenced Government Grants		
New Homes Bonus	78	775
Funding Guarantee	924	-
Service Grant	135	382
Other	194	171
Total non-ring fenced Government Grants	1,330	1,328
Capital Grants and Other Contributions		
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	15	49
Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities	419	33
Department of Energy Security and Net Zero	152	-
Homes England (MHCLG)	-	105
Section 106 Contributions	-	171
Other Contributions	1,370	192
Total Capital Grants and Other Contributions	1,956	550

Credited to Services	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Active Essex Foundation	6	-
Arts Council	40	50
Biffa Municipal	809	-
Broxbourne Borough Council	10	10
Cambridge & Peterborough Comb Authority	-	4
CGI UK Ltd	-	5
DCLG	-	349
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	315	44
Department for Education	-	5
Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities	3,028	2,565
Department for Work and Pensions	22,054	22,260
Department of Energy Security and Net Zero	26	-
East Herts District Council	108	147
EFDC	-	100
Epping Forest North Pc Network	45	41
Essex Association of Local Councils	4	-
Essex County Council	2,397	713
Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner	274	64
Geoplace	3	3
Harlow Borough Council	108	153
Hertfordshire County Council	118	157
HMLR	33	30
HMRC	-	100
Homes England (MHCLG)	450	-
National Heritage	-	11
Nhs Hertfordshire & West Essex Icb	111	-
Norfolk County Council	-	7
Other	409	3
Recharge	444	-
Royal Opera House	-	-
Sainsbury Plc	-	-
Sports Council	-	-
The National Lottery Community Fund	41	-
Town and Parish Councils	36	158
UK Health Security Agency	75	-
Uttlesford Community Action Network	-	5
Uttlesford District Council	10	10
West Essex CCG	-	121
Total Grants and Contributions	30,953	27,115

28. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

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.

Epping Forest District Council holds a Register of Interests in which all members are required to declare any interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct which is open to public viewing.

Entities Controlled or Significantly Influenced by the Council

The Council has a 100% shareholding in four companies:

- Qualis Group Limited
- Qualis Commercial Limited
- Qualis Living Limited; and
- Qualis Property Solutions Limited.

The companies were incorporated in October 2019. The Council has issued 18 loans to the Qualis Group in 2023-24 with a combined value of £28.275 million, bringing the overall total of loans issued to the Group to £100.578 million up to, and including, 31st March 2024. The loans were issued at commercial rates of interest with a fixed repayment schedule. A total of £6.268 million (excluding interest) had been repaid by 31st March 2024, of which £2.437 million was repaid in 2023/24.

Qualis Property Solutions Limited has provided the Housing Repairs service to the Council since October 2020; the Council paid £16.675 million for this service in 2023/24 (£11.341 million Revenue, plus £5.234 million Capital) (£9.686 million 2022/23, comprising £8.723 million Revenue, plus £0.963 million Capital).

Qualis Commercial Limited managed the Council's Commercial Property portfolio under new Asset Management arrangements with effect from 1st April 2023. The Council paid Qualis a total of £451,142 under the new arrangements, which included £290,081 in commission payments, payable on generating additional rental returns for the Council.

Qualis Property Solutions Limited has also provided the Grounds Maintenance Service to the Council since May 2023; the Council paid £1.424 million for this service in 2023/24.

And finally, and in contrast, the Council is also paid by Qualis for the provision of seconded staff, accommodation, and support services. Group Accounts for the Council, including the Qualis companies, are shown later in this Statement of Accounts (pages 80 to 87).

Central Government

The Government has effective control over the general operations of the Council - it is responsible for providing the statutory framework, within which the Council operates, provides a significant amount 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. Council Tax bills, Housing Benefits).

29. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FINANCING

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below, together with the resources that have been used to finance it.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	313,563	305,522
Opening Balance Adjustment	(175)	-
Capital Investment		
Property, Plant and Equipment	22,575	15,443
Investment Properties	2,430	1,797
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute	1,332	949
Private Sector Housing Loans	6	-
Intangible Assets	394	735
Qualis Loans	25,900	8,000
Sources of Finance		
Capital Receipts	(2,012)	(4,614)
Government Grants and Other Contributions	(3,285)	(1,377)
Major Repairs Reserve	(15,136)	(11,300)
Direct Revenue Contributions	-	-
Minimum Revenue Provision	(1,164)	(1,125)
Repayment Capital Loans	(1,072)	(467)
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	343,356	313,563

30. LEASES

The Council has leases with third parties under operating leases with rental income from the lease being credited to trading operations.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Assets Leased to Third Parties		
Land and Buildings		
Shops (including shopping park)	5,419	5,383
Industrial Units	1,637	1,362
Other	1,425	1,369
Total Rental Receivable	8,481	8,113

The total of future minimum lease payments due after 1 year are as follows.

	31 March 2024		31 March 2023	
	Receipts Due between 2 and 5 Years £000's	Total Receipts Due Thereafter £000's	Receipts Due between 2 and 5 Years £000's	Total Receipts Due Thereafter £000's
Land and Buildings				
Shops (including shopping park)	15,308	9,998	16,820	11,157
Industrial Units	5,403	58,471	4,211	44,263
Other	4,417	32,433	4,028	31,564
Total	25,128	100,902	25,059	86,984

The gross amount of assets held for use in Operating Leases are as follows.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Gross Amount of Assets Held for Use in Operating Leases		
Land and Buildings		
Shops	96,060	93,479
Industrial Units	43,830	38,114
Other	16,334	16,890
Total Assets	156,224	148,483

There are no accumulated depreciation charges on the assets held for use in operating leases.

31. PENSIONS

Employees of Epping Forest District Council are admitted to the Essex County Council Pension Fund ("the Fund"), which is administered by Essex County Council under the Regulations governing the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), a defined benefit scheme. The Fund is a funded 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.

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of the Council's officers the authority offers retirement benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire the Council has a commitment to make the payments that need to be disclosed at the time employees earn their future entitlement.

The Council recognises cost of retirement benefits in the Net Cost of Services when they are earned by employees rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge made against Council Tax is based on contributions payable to the fund in respect of 2023/24, so the real cost of retirement benefits is reversed out of the Income and Expenditure Account through the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The transactions below have been made in the CFS during the year.

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Service Cost	3,241	8,477
Net Interest Charged	(1,668)	1,087
Administration Expenses	145	120
Net Charge made to the CIES	1,718	9,684
Re-Measurements in Other Comprehensive Income		
Return on Fund Assets in Excess of Interest	15,156	(4,687)
Other Actuarial Gains / (Losses)	-	-
Changes in Financial Assumptions	2,517	100,341
Change in Demographic Assumptions	2,540	-
Experience Gain / (Loss) on Defined	(569)	(20,981)
Changes in effect of asset ceiling	(52,122)	(30,120)
Re-Measurement of the Net Assets/(Defined Liability)	(32,478)	44,553
Pension Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet		
Present Value of the Funded Obligation	179,465	180,747
Present Value of the Unfunded Obligation	1,785	1,992
Fair Value of Scheme Assets	(229,479)	(208,651)
Impact of asset ceiling	52,122	30,120
Net Benefit Liability / (Asset) in the Balance Sheet	3,893	4,208

Reconciliation of the Fair Value of the Scheme Liabilities	Unfunded Liabilities		All Funded/Unfunded Liabilities LGS	
	31 March 2024 £000	31 March 2023 £000	31 March 2024 £000	31 March 2023 £000
Net Pensions Liability at 1st April	(1,992)	(2,358)	(182,739)	(253,389)
Current Service Cost	0	0	(3,038)	(7,883)
Interest Cost	(92)	(58)	(8,496)	(6,511)
Change in Financial Assumptions	12	377	2,517	100,341
Change in Demographic Assumptions	35	0	2,540	0
Experience Gain	(6)	(203)	(569)	(20,981)
Liabilities Assumed / (Extinguished) on Settlements	0	0	1,337	0
Estimated Benefits Paid	0	0	8,249	7,358
Past Service Cost Including Curtailments	0	0	(92)	(594)
Contributions by Scheme Participants	0	0	(1,217)	(1,330)
Unfunded Pension Payments	258	250	258	250
Net Pension Liability at 31 March	(1,785)	(1,992)	(181,250)	(182,739)

	31 March 2024 £000	31 March 2023 £000
Reconciliation of the Fair Value of the Scheme Assets		
Fair Value of the Plan Assets at 1 April	208,651	209,226
Interest on Assets	10,164	5,424
Return on Assets less Interest	15,156	(4,687)
Other Actuarial Gains / (Losses)	-	-
Administration Expenses	(145)	(120)
Employer Contributions including Unfunded	4,391	5,086
Contributions by Scheme Participants	1,217	1,330
Benefits Paid	(8,507)	(7,608)
Settlement Prices Received / (Paid)	(1,448)	-
Fair Value of the Plan Assets at 31 March	229,479	208,651

The expected return on scheme assets is determined by considering the expected returns available on the assets underlying the current investment policy. Expected yields on fixed interest investments are based on gross redemption yields as at the Balance Sheet date. Expected returns on equity investments reflect long-term real rates of return experienced in the respective markets. The actual gain on assets less interest in the year was £15.2 million (loss on assets less interest £4.7 million 2022/23).

Scheme History	2023/24 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2021/22 £000's	2020/21 £000's	2019/20 £000's
Present Value of Liabilities	(179,465)	(180,747)	(251,031)	(256,735)	(214,582)
Fair Value of Assets	229,479	208,651	209,226	190,210	153,616
Present Value of Unfunded Obligation	(1,785)	(1,992)	(2,358)	(2,583)	(2,671)
Impact of asset ceiling	(52,122)	(30,120)	-	-	-
Surplus / (Deficit) in the Scheme	(3,893)	(4,208)	(44,163)	(69,108)	(63,637)

The Council's actuary determined that the fair value of its pension plan assets outweighed the present value of the plan obligations at 31st March 2024. Under IAS19 (Employee Benefits), where the Council has an accounting surplus or asset, it should only be recognised to the extent that the Council is able to recover the surplus either through reduced contributions in the future, or through refunds. The present value of such economic benefits is referred to as the "Asset Ceiling". The Council's actuary has calculated the asset ceiling as £2.108 million in 2023/24, which has an impact of £52.122 million in actuarial losses over the life of the pension fund.

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Council has in the long run to pay retirement benefits. The total net liability on the Councils Balance sheet in 23/24 was £3.893 million (after the asset ceiling adjustment) compared to a net liability balance of £4.208 million in 2022/23.

The financial position of the Council remains healthy. Changes to the pension fund balances are eliminated through reductions/increases in the contributions made over the remaining working life of employees, as assessed by the scheme actuary.

The total employer contributions expected to be made to the scheme by the Council in the year to 31st March 2025 is £4.238 million. The Service Cost is expected to be £3.274 million for the year to 31st March 2025.

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about life expectancy rates, salary levels, and inflation rates. The District Council fund liabilities have been assessed by Barnett Waddingham, a firm of actuaries who provide the service for the Essex County Council Pension Fund, being based on the full Actuarial Valuation of the scheme as at 31st March 2022.

The principal assumptions used by the actuary have been as follows.

	2023/24	2022/23
Principal Assumptions		
Life Expectancy Assumptions		
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners in years:		
Men	21	21
Women	23	24
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners in years:		
Men	22	22
Women	25	25
Other Assumptions		
Rate of inflation RPI	3.25%	3.3%
Rate of inflation CPI	2.90%	2.9%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.90%	3.9%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.90%	2.9%
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	4.90%	4.8%

The Scheme assets consist of the following categories, by proportion of the total assets held.

Assets Held	31 March 2024		31 March 2023	
	£000's	%	£000	%
Equities	127,109	55%	120,462	58%
Government Bonds	4,100	2%	3,058	1%
Other Bonds	-	0%	-	0%
Property	15,839	7%	17,128	8%
Cash / Liquidity	5,661	2%	6,266	3%
Alternative Assets	34,889	15%	33,098	16%
Other Managed Funds	41,881	18%	28,639	14%
Total	229,479	100%	208,651	100%

The extent to which the expected future returns on assets are sufficient to cover the estimated net liabilities was considered by the actuaries in the 2022 actuarial review of the Pension Fund. The anticipated shortfall in the funding of the scheme has determined the future level of pension contributions which will be due in between triennial valuations.

Sensitivity Analysis as at 31 March 2024	Sensitivity 1b	Sensitivity 1a	Existing Assumptions	Sensitivity 2a	Sensitivity 2b
	£000's	£000's	£000	£000	£000's
Adjustment to Discount Rate	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present Value of Total Obligation	168,874	178,656	181,250	183,906	195,199
Projected Service Cost	2,775	3,168	3,274	3,384	3,861
Adjustment to Long Term Salary	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present Value of Total Obligation	182,009	181,399	181,250	181,101	180,514
Projected Service Cost	3,285	3,277	3,274	3,272	3,263
Adjustment to Pension Increases	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present Value of Total Obligation	194,655	183,805	181,250	178,753	169,325
Projected Service Cost	3,877	3,385	3,274	3,166	2,759
Adjustment to Mortality Age Rating		+ 1 Year	None	- 1 Year	
Present Value of Total Obligation		188,642	181,250	174,172	
Projected Service Cost		3,403	3,274	3,149	

Sensitivity Analysis as at 31 March 2023	Sensitivity 1b £000's	Sensitivity 1a £000's	Existing Assumptions £000	Sensitivity 2a £000	Sensitivity 2b £000's
Adjustment to Discount Rate	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present Value of Total Obligation	170,148	180,100	182,739	185,443	196,943
Projected Service Cost	2,899	3,307	3,417	3,531	4,026
Adjustment to Long Term Salary	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present Value of Total Obligation	183,548	182,899	182,739	182,580	181,956
Projected Service Cost	3,429	3,419	3,417	3,415	3,406
Adjustment to Pension Increases	+0.5%	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Present Value of Total Obligation	196,339	185,331	182,739	180,208	170,654
Projected Service Cost	4,042	3,532	3,417	3,305	2,883
Adjustment to Mortality Age Rating		+ 1 Year	None	- 1 Year	
Present Value of Total Obligation		190,082	182,739	175,710	
Projected Service Cost		3,540	3,417	3,297	

32. NATURE & EXTENT OF RISKS ARISING FROM FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The Council complies with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (both revised in December 2021).

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 risk associated with Financial Instruments. The Council also produces 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 Council's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks, the key risks 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; and
- *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

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

Credit Risk: Treasury Investments

The council manages credit risk through the Investment Strategy, which requires that deposits are made with the Government (Debt Management Office), other local authorities, and A- (as a minimum) credit-rated Banks, Building Societies, Registered Providers (e.g. Housing Associations) and Money Market Funds.

It should also be noted that although credit ratings remain a key source of information, the Council recognises that they have limitations and investment decisions are based on a range of market intelligence. A limit of £10 million is placed on the amount of money that can be invested with a single counterparty except the UK Government which is unlimited. The Council also sets a total group investment limit (£10 million) for institutions that are part of the same banking group.

The table below summaries the nominal value of the Council's investment portfolio at 31st March 2024, and confirms that all investments were made in line with the Council's approved rating criteria when investment placed.

31 March 2024							
	Credit Rating Criteria Met	Up to 1 Month £000's	1 - 3 Months £000's	4 - 6 Months £000's	7 - 12 Months £000's	Greater than 12 Months £000's	Total £000's
Banks UK	A+	(7,541)	-	-	-	-	(7,541)
Cash equivalents MMF	A+	21,500	-	-	-	-	21,500
Cash Equivalents DMADF	UKGOV	3,000	-	-	-	-	3,000
Local Government Loans	UKLA	5,000	14,000	-	-	-	19,000
Total		21,959	14,000	-	-	-	35,959

31 March 2023							
	Credit Rating Criteria Met	Up to 1 Month £000	1 - 3 Months £000	4 - 6 Months £000	7 - 12 Months £000	Greater than 12 Months £000	Total £000
Banks UK	A+	(208)	-	-	-	-	(208)
Cash equivalents MMF	A-	10,000	-	-	-	-	10,000
Cash Equivalents DMADF	UKGOV	3,000	-	-	-	-	3,000
Local Government Loans	UKLA	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		12,792	-	-	-	-	12,792

Credit Risk – Debtors

The following analysis summaries the Council's potential maximum exposure to credit risk, based on the experience gathered over the last five financial years on the level of default on trade.

31 March 2024			
	Amount £000's	Default Risk Judged %	Bad Debt Provision £000's
Trade Debtors	4,835	22.2%	1,073
Housing Arrears	959	86.1%	826

31 March 2023			
	Amount £000's	Default Risk Judged %	Bad Debt Provision £000's
Trade Debtors	4,618	21.9%	1,013
Housing Arrears	954	95.0%	907

The credit risk in relation to counterparty investments is relatively small as the likelihood of default is also small. A risk arises with Sundry Debtors, Housing and Taxation Debtors, because they represent amounts owed to the Council and there will always be a level of default inherent in such debts. A provision for non-payment of debts is provided within the overall Debtors' figure stated in the Accounts.

Credit Risk - Loans

In furthering the Council's strategic objectives, it provides loans to Qualis.

The amounts recognised on the Balance Sheet, and the Council's total exposure to credit risk from these instruments are presented below.

Borrower	Exposure Type	31 March 2024		
		Amount £000's	Default Risk Judged %	Expected Credit Loss £000's
Qualis Loans	Loan Commitment at market rate	94,309	2.2%	2,042

Borrower	Exposure Type	31 March 2023		
		Amount £000's	Default Risk Judged %	Expected Credit Loss £000's
Qualis Loans	Loan Commitment at market rate	68,670	3.0%	2,308

Liquidity Risk

The Council has access to borrowing facilities via the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), commercial banks, bond issues and other local authorities. There is no perceived risk that the Council will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments. The Council also manages the risk that it will not be exposed to replenishing a significant proportion of its borrowing at a time of unfavourable interest rates.

The Council would only borrow in advance of need where there is a clear business case for doing so and will only do so for the current Capital Programme or to finance future debt maturities.

The maturity analysis of the nominal value of the Council's debt at 31st March 2024 is as follows.

31 March 2024		Cash Flows Principal Only £000's	% of Total Debt Portfolio	Cash Flows including Interest £000's
Short-Term Borrowing	Less than 1 Year	4,275	2%	5,113
Long-Term Borrowing	Over 1 but not Over 2	4,275	2%	4,650
	Over 2 but not Over 5	12,824	5%	13,950
	Over 5 but not Over 10	51,374	20%	51,250
	Over 10 but not Over 15	41,159	16%	69,850
	Over 15 but not Over 20	128,092	51%	98,239
	Over 20 but not Over 25	4,436	2%	4,584
	Over 25	6,617	3%	5,879
Long-Term Borrowing		248,777	98%	248,402

The maturity analysis of the nominal value of the Council's debt at 31st March 2023 was as follows.

31 March 2023		Cash Flows Principal Only £000's	% of Total Debt Portfolio	Cash Flows including Interest £000's
Short-Term Borrowing	Less than 1 Year	32,276	11%	41,621
Long-Term Borrowing	Over 1 but not Over 2	9,276	3%	17,158
	Over 2 but not Over 5	12,829	5%	35,584
	Over 5 but not Over 10	51,381	18%	84,797
	Over 10 but not Over 15	41,321	15%	70,232
	Over 15 but not Over 20	126,906	45%	139,071
	Over 20 but not Over 25	3,250	1%	4,049
	Over 25	4,400	2%	5,017
Long-Term Borrowing		249,363	89%	355,908

Interest Rate Risk

The Council is exposed to risks arising from movements in interest rates. The Treasury Management Strategy aims to mitigate these risks by setting an upper limit of 25% on external debt that can be subject to variable rates. As at 31 March 2024, 100% of the debt portfolio was held in fixed rate instruments. The one-year impact on income and expenditure of 1% interest rate rise was in relation to EIP (equal instalment of principal) loans.

If all interest rates had been 1% higher (with all other variables held constant) the financial effect would be as presented in the table below.

	2023-24 £000's	2022-23 £000's
Increase in Interest Payable on Variable Rate Borrowing	18	210
Increase in Interest Receivable on Variable Rate Investments	(408)	(89)
Impact on Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(390)	121

The approximate impact of a 1% fall in interest rates would be as above but with the movements being reversed. Assumptions are based on the same methodology as used in the Fair Value disclosure note.

Price Risk

The Council does not invest in equity holdings or in financial instruments whose capital value is subject to market fluctuations. It therefore has no exposure to losses arising through price variations.

Foreign Exchange Risk

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

33. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

At 31st March 2024, the Council had entered into a number of contracts for the construction or enhancement of property plant and equipment in future years budgeted to cost £39.851 million. Similar commitments at 31st March 2023 were £10.687 million. The major commitments are:

Scheme	Commitment £'000
House Building Programme	9,315
Eon Net Zero Project	2,867
Epping Leisure Centre	27,669
Total	39,851

Housing revenue account income and expenditure statement



	Note	2023/24 £000's	2022/23 £000's
Income			
Dwelling Rents	4	(37,751)	(35,294)
Non Dwelling Rents		(791)	(764)
Charges for Services and Facilities		(1,922)	(1,484)
Contributions Towards Expenditure		(495)	(427)
Total Income		(40,959)	(37,969)
Expenditure			
Repairs and Maintenance		12,394	9,897
Supervision and Management		11,481	11,615
Revaluation of Fixed Assets		794	3,225
Rents, Rates, Taxes and Insurance		614	525
Depreciation and Amortisation	9	11,154	10,490
Debt Management		20	20
Provision for bad and doubtful debt		(20)	116
Total Expenditure		36,437	35,888
Net Cost of Services as Included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement			
		(4,522)	(2,081)
HRA services share of Corporate Expenses		259	320
Net Cost (Income) of HRA Services		(4,263)	(1,761)
HRA Share of the Income and Expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		(4,263)	(1,761)
Capital Grants and Contributions		(1,955)	(437)
Gain on Sale of HRA Non-Current Assets		(819)	(2,090)
Interest Payable and similar charges		5,389	5,348
Interest and Investment Income		(524)	(294)
Changes in Fair Value of Investment Properties		(5)	5
Changes in Fair Value of RTM Properties		(37)	-
Pensions Interest / Return on Assets		282	152
(Surplus) / Deficit for the Year on HRA Services		(1,932)	923

Movement on Housing Revenue Account Statement

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Income and Expenditure Statement shows the Council's actual financial performance for the year in managing its Housing Stock, measured in terms of the resources consumed and generated over the last twelve months. However:

- Capital investment is accounted for as it is financed, rather than when the fixed assets are consumed.
- The payment of a share of housing capital receipts to the Government is treated as a loss in the Income and Expenditure Account, but is met from the Usable Capital Receipts balance rather than Council Tax; and
- Retirement benefits are charged as amounts become payable to pension funds and pensioners rather than as future benefits earned.

The Housing Revenue Account Statement compares the Council's spending against the income that it raised for the year, taking account of the use of reserves built up in the past and contributions to reserves earmarked for the future.

This reconciliation statement summarises the differences between the outturn in the HRA Income and Expenditure Statement and the HRA balance.

Increase / Decrease in the Housing Revenue Account Balance	Note	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
(Surplus)/ deficit for the year on the Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement		(1,932)	923
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under statute (including to or from reserves)	1	1,686	(1,311)
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	1	-	-
(Increase) / decrease in the Housing Revenue Account Balance		(246)	(388)
Housing Revenue Account Surplus Brought Forward		(4,552)	(4,164)
Housing Revenue Account Surplus Carried Forward		(4,798)	(4,552)

1. NOTE OF RECONCILING ITEMS FOR THE STATEMENT OF MOVEMENT ON HRA BALANCE

Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under the legislative framework.

	2023/24 £000's	2022/23 £000's
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under the legislative framework.		
Difference between any other item of income and expenditure determined in accordance with the code and determined in accordance with statutory HRA requirements.	(745)	(2,979)
Gain / (Loss) on the sale of HRA non-current assets	819	2,089
HRA share of contributions to or from the pension reserve	(196)	(877)
Capital expenditure funded by the HRA	-	-
Transfer to/from the Major Repairs Reserve	11,006	10,422
Transfers to/from the Capital Adjustment Account	(9,198)	(9,966)
Net additional amount required by statute	1,686	(1,311)

2. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSET VALUATION

The balance sheet values of HRA assets were as follows:

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Dwellings	803,173	806,892
Plant, vehicles & equipment	1,173	1,135
Other operational property	22,188	13,351
Investment property	154	149
Total	826,688	821,527

The Dwellings valuation shown in the Balance Sheet represents the value of the Housing Stock to the Council in its existing use as social housing, occupied on the basis of secure tenancies. The corresponding value of those Dwellings if sold on the open market without tenants (i.e. vacant possession) is £2,099,760,050 at 31st March 2024. The difference between the two values represents the economic cost of providing Council Housing at less than open market rent.

3. HOUSING STOCK

The Council was responsible for managing on average 6,435 dwellings during 2023/24 (6,442 in 2023/23). Changes in the stock are summarised below. The figures include 54 units for the homeless at Norway House, North Weald.

	31 March 2024	31 March 2023
Stock as at 1 April	6,442	6,436
Less:		
Sales	1	(16)
Stock Transfers / Conversions	1	1
Other Movements	-	2
New Properties	19	19
Stock as at 31 March	6,463	6,442
Number of:		
Houses and Bungalows	3,503	3,508
Flats and Maisonettes	2,878	2,880
Other	54	54
Stock as at 31 March	6,435	6,442

4. GROSS DWELLING RENT INCOME

During 2023/24:

- 1.23% (1.22% in 2022/23) of all lettable dwellings were vacant.
- Average rents were £114.57 per week including affordable rents, an increase of £7.94 or 7.4%, on the previous year.
- On average 53% (33% in 2022/23) of Council tenants received some help through rent rebates in 2023/24.
- Rent arrears increased to £959,233 (£953,975 in 2022/23), which represents 2.4% (2.48% in 2022/23) of gross income.
- The provision for bad and doubtful debts on these arrears amounted to £651,436.42 (£739,609 in 2022/23).
- Amounts written off during the year totalled £59,575 (£54,092 in 2022/23). Dwelling rents are shown after allowing for voids.

5. PENSIONS

The Council recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the Net Cost of Services when they are earned by employees rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge made against the HRA is based on the contributions payable to the fund in respect of 2023/24; the real cost of retirement benefits is therefore reversed out of the Housing Revenue Account in the Movement on the HRA balance.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CAPITAL RECEIPTS

Capital Receipts received from the sale of non-current assets were as follows:

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Sale of Council Houses	2,031	3,626
Disposal of Land and other Property	23	659
Other Sales	-	51
Total	2,054	4,336

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

The HRA incurred the following capital expenditure:

Capital Expenditure	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Council Dwellings	13,406	8,630
House Building and Developments	3,289	5,533
Disabled Adaptations	1,107	1,051
Plant, Vehicles and Equipment	174	595
Environmental Works	317	66
Total Expenditure	18,293	15,875
Financed by:		
Major Repairs Reserve	15,136	11,300
Capital Receipts	1,052	3,238
Other Contributions	1,955	437
Borrowing	150	900
Stock as at 31 March	18,293	15,875

8. MAJOR REPAIRS RESERVE

The Council is required to maintain a Major Repairs Reserve. The Council transfers an amount annually into the reserve to support spending on council dwellings. The reserve is only available for funding repairs of a capital nature or to repay debt. Any sums unspent are carried forward for use in future years. The movement on the reserve is as follows:

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance as at 1st April	(8,486)	(9,365)
Amount Transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve During the Year	(11,006)	(10,422)
Financing in respect of capital expenditure on land, houses and other property within the Authority's HRA.	15,136	11,301
Total Expenditure	4,130	879
Balance as at 31st March	(4,356)	(8,486)

9. DEPRECIATION AND IMPAIRMENTS

Depreciation is charged on Housing Revenue Account assets in accordance with IAS 16 with reference to balance sheet values and the average life remaining on the housing stock and its major components. No depreciation is chargeable on the HRA investment assets. The depreciation charge made to the HRA during the year is detailed below.

	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2023 £000's
Council Dwellings	10,697	10,127
Plant, vehicles & equipment	163	176
Land and Buildings	24	26
Other assets	122	93
Total	11,006	10,422

Revaluation losses of £1.030 million (£4.785 million in 2022/23) have been charged to the HRA during the year. Revaluation gains of £0.240 million (£1.462 million in 2022/23) have also been credited to the HRA to reverse revaluation losses that had been charged in previous years. However, there is no impact on the HRA overall balances as these are reversed out in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Collection fund



	2023/24			2022/23			
	Note	Council Tax £000's	Non-Domestic Rates £000's	Collection Fund Total £000's	Council Tax £000's	Non-Domestic Rates £000's	Collection Fund Total £000's
Income							
Council Tax	1	(112,916)	-	(112,916)	(107,564)	-	(107,564)
Non-Domestic Rates	2	-	(33,569)	(33,569)	-	(30,120)	(30,120)
Total Income		(112,916)	(33,569)	(146,485)	(107,564)	(30,120)	(137,684)
Expenditure							
Precepts and Demands							
Central Government		-	18,299	18,299	-	15,771	15,771
Epping Forest District Council		13,081	14,639	27,720	12,526	12,617	25,143
Essex County Council		79,591	3,294	82,885	76,873	2,839	79,712
Essex Police		12,813	-	12,813	11,989	-	11,989
Essex Fire Authority		4,406	366	4,772	4,133	316	4,449
Distribution of Estimated Collection Fund Surplus/(Deficit)							
	3						
Central Government		-	689	689	-	(5,029)	(5,029)
Epping Forest District Council		94	551	645	165	(4,024)	(3,859)
Essex County Council		577	124	701	997	(905)	92
Essex Police		90	-	90	155	-	155
Essex Fire Authority		31	14	45	55	(101)	(46)
Other							
Transitional Protection (NDR)		-	(4,147)	(4,147)	-	178	178
Cost of Collection Allowance (NDR)		-	180	180	-	176	176
Provision for Appeals (NDR)		-	(1,247)	(1,247)	-	(3,188)	(3,188)
Provision for Non Payment		868	73	941	3,349	1,556	4,905
Total Expenditure		111,551	32,835	144,386	110,242	20,206	130,448
Deficit / (Surplus) for the Year		(1,365)	(734)	(2,099)	2,678	(9,914)	(7,236)
Balance Brought Forward		1,334	(2,586)	(1,252)	(1,344)	7,328	5,984
Balance Carried Forward		(31)	(3,320)	(3,351)	1,334	(2,586)	(1,252)

1. COUNCIL TAX

Council Tax income derives from charges raised according to the value of residential properties, which have been classified into eight valuation bands, estimating 1st April 1991 values for this specific purpose. Individual charges are calculated by estimating the amount of income required to be taken from the Collection Fund by Essex County Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire Authority and this Council for the forthcoming year and dividing this by the council tax base (the total number of properties in each band adjusted by a proportion to convert the number to a Band D equivalent and adjusted for discounts: 54,884 for 2023/24 (54,865 for 2022/23). The basic amount of Council Tax for a Band D property of £2,002.25 for 2023/24 (£1,923.28 for 2022/23) is multiplied by the proportion specified for the band to give an individual amount due.

Total income of £112,916,327 for 2023/24 was receivable from Council Taxpayers (£107,564,536 for 2022/23).

	Chargeable Dwellings	Chargeable Dwellings after Discount, Exemptions and Disabled Relief	Ratio to Band D	Band D Equivalents
Band A Disabled	-	5	5/9	3
Band A	2,061	1,671	2/3	1,114
Band B	5,182	4,406	7/9	3,427
Band C	11,868	10,910	8/9	9,698
Band D	14,200	13,480	9/9	12,967
Band E	10,073	9,630	11/9	11,292
Band F	7,075	6,891	13/9	9,449
Band G	6,245	6,142	15/9	9,667
Band H	1,225	1,193	18/9	2,252
Total Band D				59,867
Less Band D equivalents entitled to Council Tax Support				3,576
Total Band D Equivalents				56,290
Less: Adjustment for Collection Rate				1,406
Council Tax Base				54,884

2. NON-DOMESTIC RATES

Non-Domestic Rates are organised on a national basis. The Government specifies an amount, 49.9p (small business) and 51.2p (all others) in 2023/24 (49.9p and 51.2p in 2022/23) and, subject to the effects of transitional arrangements, local businesses pay rates calculated by multiplying their rateable value by that amount.

From 1st April 2013 Business Rates Retention was introduced whereby local authorities retain 50% of the Business Rates collected and pay the remainder over to Central government. The amount retained is shared between the Council (40%), Essex County Council (9%) and Essex Fire Authority (1%). In addition, the Government has set a level of Business Rates Funding deemed to be applicable to each area and every Council either receives a top up (where business rates are below this deemed level of funding) or pays a tariff (if business rates collected are above this deemed level of funding). In 2023/24 this Council paid a tariff of £12,773,587 (£10,880,558 in 2022/23). The business rates collected in 23.24 totalled £33,569 million (£30,120 million in 22.23).

If the Council increases its Business Rates base, and therefore its income, it's allowed to retain a proportion of the increased income whilst paying up to 50% to Central Government. This payment is known as a Levy payment.

If a reduction of Business Rates income of more than 7.5% of its funding baseline has occurred, then the Government will make up any difference between this and the actual loss in the form of a Safety Net Payment.

The Council is part of the Essex Business Rates Pool. A pool minimises the potential Levy on Business Rates growth that an individual authority might need to pay Central Government; authorities paying a Tariff to the Government, join a pool with an authority receiving a Top Up. In the case of the Essex Pool, the County Council are receiving a Top Up and the Districts are paying a Tariff, and by pooling their Business Rates can significantly reduce their Levy rates from the 50% they would face alone.

The total Non-Domestic Rateable Value at the year-end was £109,550,893 (£96,480,531 in 2022/23).

3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO COLLECTION FUND SURPLUSES AND DEFICITS

The surplus or deficit on the Collection Fund arising from Council Tax and Business Rates transactions relates to this Council, other major precepting authorities and Central Government. The surplus or deficit on the fund is estimated as at 15th January every year and paid over or recovered from the Council's General Fund and major precepting authorities in the following financial year. The balance on the Fund represents the difference between the estimated surplus or deficit and the actual position.



Introduction

In order to present a full picture of the Council's financial position and its exposure to risk, the Group Accounts show the combined position of the Council and its subsidiary companies.

The Qualis group of companies was incorporated in October 2019. The Council has owned 100% of the shares for the whole life of all of the companies. The Qualis group comprises four companies:

- Qualis Group Ltd
- Qualis Commercial Ltd
- Qualis Living Ltd; and
- Qualis Property Solutions Ltd.

With effect from 5th October 2020, Qualis Property Solutions Ltd has provided the main part of the Repairs and Maintenance service for the Council's housing stock.

Accounting Policies

The Qualis group of companies have a financial year from 1st October to 30th September. These Group Accounts have been prepared using the best estimates provided by the group of activities from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and of the financial position of the group as at 31st March 2024. It is expected that the financial year end of the Qualis Group Companies will be brought into line with the council's year end by 31st March 2025.

Qualis companies' policy is to classify some expenditure on preparation and planning for future contracts as "Work In Progress" and this expenditure is included in the Group Balance Sheet within Current Assets as Inventories.

The Qualis group of companies initially had a financial year from 1st November to 31st October, but this has now been amended to run from 1st October to 30th September. These Group Accounts have been prepared using the best estimates provided by the group of activities from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and of the financial position of the group as at 31st March 2024.

Qualis companies' policy is to classify some expenditure on preparation and planning for future contracts as "prepayments" and this expenditure is included in the Group Balance Sheet within Debtors and Prepayments.

Investment Properties

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

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, based on the highest and best use value of the asset. Investment properties are not depreciated but are re-valued annually according to market conditions to ensure that they are held at the highest and best use value on the Balance Sheet date. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the profit and loss. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal. These revaluations are then transferred from the profit and loss account in the balance sheet to the revaluation reserve. Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the profit and loss account as other operating income.

Basic Financial Assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors, and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Pension Costs

The companies operate a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the company's pension scheme are charged to profit or loss in the period to which they relate.

Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure 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 or rents. Authorities raise taxation and rents to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the expenditure and funding analysis and the Movement in Reserves Statement.

	2023/24			2022/23			
		Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure
	Note	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Chief Executive		605	(306)	299	711	(321)	390
Community & Wellbeing Services		3,442	(2,097)	1,345	3,864	(1,762)	2,102
Commercial & Technical Services		19,751	(9,490)	10,261	18,380	(8,138)	10,242
Corporate Services		9,030	(2,717)	6,313	10,569	(3,155)	7,414
Customer Services		26,235	(24,183)	2,052	26,859	(23,965)	2,894
Finance & Audit Services		2,186	(872)	1,314	2,310	(821)	1,489
Housing & Property Services		2,189	(802)	1,387	2,197	(529)	1,668
Place		616	(403)	213	472	(178)	294
Planning Development Services		4,616	(2,974)	1,642	5,642	(3,455)	2,187
Strategy, Delivery & Performance		656	(135)	521	690	(5)	685
Housing Revenue Account		36,696	(40,959)	(4,263)	36,208	(37,969)	(1,761)
Net Cost of Services		106,022	(84,938)	21,084	107,902	(80,298)	27,604
Other Operating (Income) /Expenditure				(80,821)			2,004
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure				(9,940)			20,094
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income				(24,538)			(21,402)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services				(94,215)			28,300
(Surplus) on Revaluation of Property Plant and Equipment				(768)			(27,122)
Actuarial (Gains)/Losses on Pension Assets/Liabilities				3,991			(49,188)
Heritage Assets							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	G1			(90,992)			(48,010)

Group Movement in Reserves Statement

	EFDC Single Entity									Qualis		Group		
	General Fund Balance	Housing Revenue Account	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital Grants Applied	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves	Qualis Usable	Qualis Unusable	Group Total Usable Reserves	Group Total Unusable Reserves	Group Total Reserves
Movements in 2023/24	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April 2023	3,219	4,552	3,820	12,218	8,487	1,709	34,005	775,324	809,329	(10,167)	1,677	23,838	777,001	800,839
Surplus / (Deficit) on Provision of Services	99,155	1,932	-	-	-	-	101,087	-	101,087	(6,873)	-	94,214	-	94,214
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1,585)	(1,585)	-	-	-	(1,585)	(1,585)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	99,155	1,932	-	-	-	-	101,087	(1,585)	99,502	(6,873)	-	94,214	(1,585)	92,629
Adjustment Between Accounting and Funding Basis Under Regulations	(97,517)	(1,886)	-	88,300	(4,130)	(81)	(15,114)	15,114	-	-	-	(15,114)	15,114	-
Net Increase / (Decrease) before Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	1,638	246	-	88,300	(4,130)	(81)	85,973	13,529	99,502	(6,873)	-	79,100	13,529	92,629
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	(857)	-	857	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	781	246	857	88,300	(4,130)	(81)	85,973	13,529	99,502	(6,873)	-	79,100	13,529	92,629
Other Adjustments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	40	-	(1,677)	-	(1,637)	(1,637)
Balance as at 31st March 2024	4,000	4,798	4,677	100,518	4,357	1,628	119,978	788,893	908,871	(17,040)	-	102,938	788,893	891,831

	EFDC Single Entity									Qualis		Group		
	General Fund Balance	Housing Revenue Account	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital Grants Applied	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves	Qualis Usable	Qualis Unusable	Group Total Usable Reserves	Group Total Unusable Reserves	Group Total Reserves
Movements in 2022/23	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April 2022	4,070	4,164	6,628	11,910	9,365	1,607	37,744	721,122	758,866	(3,338)	(2,659)	34,406	718,463	752,869
Surplus / (Deficit) on Provision of Services	(20,448)	(923)	-	-	-	-	(21,371)	-	(21,371)	(6,930)	-	(28,301)	-	(28,301)
Other Comprehensive Income and	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71,874	71,874	-	-	-	71,874	71,874
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(20,448)	(923)	-	-	-	-	(21,371)	71,874	50,503	(6,930)	-	(28,301)	71,874	43,573
Adjustment Between Accounting and Funding Basis Under Regulations	16,791	1,311	-	308	(878)	102	17,634	(17,634)	-	-	-	17,634	(17,634)	-
Net Increase / (Decrease) before Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	(3,657)	388	-	308	(878)	102	(3,737)	54,240	50,503	(6,930)	-	(10,667)	54,240	43,573
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	2,806	-	(2,806)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	(851)	388	(2,806)	308	(878)	102	(3,737)	54,240	50,503	(6,930)	-	(10,667)	54,240	43,573
Other Adjustments	-	-	(2)	-	-	-	(2)	(38)	(40)	101	4,336	99	4,298	4,397
Balance as at 31st March 2023	3,219	4,552	3,820	12,218	8,487	1,709	34,005	775,324	809,329	(10,167)	1,677	23,838	777,001	800,839

Group Balance Sheet

	31 March 2024		31 March 2023		
	Note	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Long Term Assets					
Property, Plant & Equipment		887,025		879,418	
Heritage Assets		620		620	
Investment Properties		191,947		177,286	
Intangible Assets		1,884		1,450	
Long Term Debtors	G2	308		(44)	
Pension Asset		-		1,677	
Total Long Term Assets		1,081,784		1,060,407	
Current Assets					
Short-term investments		19,156		-	
Inventories	G3	39,527		29,365	
Debtors	G4	17,494		13,575	
Cash & Cash Equivalents	G5	18,835		15,076	
			95,012		58,016
Current Liabilities					
Creditors		(26,112)		(27,900)	
Provisions		(608)		(1,106)	
Short-Term Loans		(5,090)		(38,175)	
			(31,810)		(67,181)
Long Term Liabilities					
Long-Term Loans		(248,402)		(244,506)	
Pensions Liability	G6	(3,893)		(4,208)	
Provision for Deferred tax		(860)		(1,689)	
			(253,155)		(250,403)
Total Assets Less Liabilities			891,831		800,839
Usable Reserves		(102,938)		(23,838)	
Unusable Reserves		(788,893)		(777,001)	
			(891,831)		(800,839)

The Group Balance Sheet presented above represents the issued final accounts and replaces the draft accounts.

Andrew Small CPFA
Strategic Director & Section 151 Officer
Date: xxxxxx

Group Cash Flow Statement

	2023/24 £000's	2022/23 £000's
	Note	
Net Surplus/(Deficit) on Provision of Services	94,741	(28,300)
Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	(11,153)	19,912
Adjustment for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	(121,219)	(14,037)
Net cash flows from Operating Activities	(37,631)	(22,425)
Investing Activities	45,944	(12,641)
Financing Activities	(4,554)	26,032
Net Increase or (Decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	3,759	(9,034)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	15,076	24,110
Cash and Cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	18,835	15,076

G1. OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE

Total comprehensive expenditure for all Qualis companies for 2023/24 was £6.873 million, which included a £5.415 million reduction on the revaluation of investment properties.

G2. LONG-TERM DEBTORS

	31 March 2024 EFDC (Single entity) Note 14 £000	31 March 2024 EFDC GROUP £000's	31 March 2023 EFDC (Single entity) Note 14 £000	31 March 2023 EFDC GROUP £000's
Capital Advances (B3 Living)	344	344	362	362
Rents to Mortgages	1,611	1,611	1,578	1,578
Home Assist Loans	203	203	224	224
Place Loan	-	-	100	100
S278 Bond	193	193	-	-
Qualis Loans	90,529	-	66,489	-
Provision for Credit losses	(2,042)	(2,042)	(2,308)	(2,308)
Net Carrying Amount at end of the year	90,838	309	66,445	(44)

G3. INVENTORIES

Inventories in Qualis companies are fixed assets that were reclassified to work-in-progress (WIP)/inventories as they were ready for sale.

G4. DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

	31 March 2024 EFDC (Single entity) Note 16 £000	31 March 2024 EFDC GROUP £000's	31 March 2023 EFDC (Single entity) Note 16 £000	31 March 2023 EFDC GROUP £000's
Government Departments and Other Local Authorities	3,477	3,477	3,408	3,408
Council Tax Arrears	2,332	2,332	2,239	2,239
NDR Arrears	1,905	1,905	1,626	1,626
Housing Rent Arrears	959	959	954	954
Sundry Debtors	10,620	15,660	10,511	11,566
Prepayments & Deposits	772	772	1,341	1,341
Qualis Loan	4,059	-	2,181	-
Bad Debt provision	(7,611)	(7,611)	(7,559)	(7,559)
Total	16,513	17,494	14,702	13,575

G5. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	31 March 2024 EFDC (Single entity) Note 17 £000	31 March 2024 EFDC GROUP £000's	31 March 2023 EFDC (Single entity) Note 17 £000	31 March 2023 EFDC GROUP £000's
Cash	-	-	4	4
Bank Current Accounts	(7,541)	(5,665)	(208)	2,072
Investment MMF	21,500	21,500	10,000	10,000
Investment DMADF	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	16,959	18,835	12,796	15,076

G6. PENSIONS

The Net Pension Liability in Qualis subsidiaries was calculated in respect of pension benefits provided by the Local Government Pension Scheme (the LGPS) to employees of Qualis Management (the Employer) as at 31st March 2024.

Further information about the LGPS can be found in Note 31 of the EFDC Single Entity Accounts.

Pension Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet	31 March 2024 EFDC (Single entity) Note 31 £000's	31 March 2023 EFDC (Single entity) Note 31 £000's
Present Value of Liabilities	(179,465)	(180,747)
Present Value of the Unfunded Obligation	229,479	208,651
Fair Value of Scheme Assets	(1,785)	(1,992)
Impact of asset ceiling	(52,122)	(30,120)
EFDC Net Asset /(Liability) in the Balance Sheet	(3,893)	(4,208)
Group - Net Liability in Qualis subsidiaries	-	1,677
EFDC GROUP Net Asset/ (Liability) in the Balance Sheet	(3,893)	(2,531)



Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

1. Scope of Responsibility

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Governance (last reviewed February 2024), which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government and forms part of the Council's Constitution.

This statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and meets the requirements of Regulation 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an annual governance statement (AGS).

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values for the direction and control of the Council and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the governance framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risks of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives. It is also responsible for evaluating the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.

The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).

3. Review of Effectiveness

The Council is responsible for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by various sources and concludes that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the Council's governance framework as set out below.

The tables below summarise the effectiveness of the Council’s Governance Framework for the year ending 31 March 2024 and up to the date of approval of this Statement and the Statement of Accounts which is achieved through the following seven CIPFA/SOLACE principles:

- (i) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- (ii) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- (iii) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- (iv) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.
- (v) Developing the Council’s capacity, including the capability of leadership and the individuals within it.
- (vi) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management; and
- (vii) Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

4. Overall opinion of Epping Forest District Council’s Governance Arrangements

The Corporate Governance Group has undertaken an assessment of the arrangements for governance during 2023/24 including a review of the assurance checklists and statements submitted by managers. It has concluded that arrangements are fit for purpose and working effectively.

This AGS demonstrates that the Council has sound governance arrangements in place which continued to work well in practice for the 2023/24 financial year. However, the Council is not complacent and areas for improvement or development are detailed in Section 5.

<p>Principle A</p> <p>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.</p>	<p>The Council’s Constitution sets out the principles, rules, and protocols for the way in which the Council conducts its business and complies with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. It includes the processes by which decisions are made and who is responsible for what. The role of the Head of Paid Service is discharged by the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer by the Strategic Director, and the Monitoring Officer by the Legal Services Manager. The Constitution is republished when updates are made. This was most recently carried out in January 2024.</p> <p>Financial Regulations are included within the Constitution and will be reviewed during 2024/25 to ensure they remain fit for purpose.</p> <p>Procurement arrangements demonstrate good practice, compliance with legislation, value for money and public accountability. The Council’s Procurement Rules are periodically reviewed, updated, and disseminated to staff.</p> <p>Codes of Conduct for members and officers are contained within the Constitution to ensure high standards of conduct. Breaches of the members code are investigated by the Monitoring Officer and reported to the Standards Committee.</p> <p>Members and officers must register any interests and declare any gifts or hospitality in the appropriate registers in line with their codes of conduct. The processes for this will be reviewed in 2024/25 to ensure they are robust.</p> <p>The Antifraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) policy have been reviewed and updated in February 2024 and promotes a zero-tolerance approach.</p>
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<p>Principle B</p> <p>Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>All Cabinet, Audit and Governance, Planning and Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings are webcast for transparency. Agendas and minutes of Council meetings are publicly available.</p> <p>The Council's website is regularly updated and contains information about the Council including contact details.</p> <p>The Council has a raft of key partnerships in place including its wholly owned subsidiary Qualis, Community Safety Partnership, North Essex Economic Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, and NHS to name but a few. The Council also shares service with other councils including payroll, Internal Audit, and legal services.</p> <p>The Council's <u>customer complaints policy</u> sets out how to make a complaint. If you believe your concerns have not been appropriately addressed, you can take your case to the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman who will independently review it.</p> <p>The Tenant's and Leaseholders' Panel is consulted regarding housing policies, most recently on the Condensation, Damp and Mold policy.</p> <p>A dedicated officer ensures Freedom of Information and data access requests are responded to in line with legal requirements, with technical advice and support provided by the Council's Data Protection Officer.</p>
<p>Principle C</p> <p>Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.</p>	<p>The <u>Corporate Plan 2023-27</u> sets out the Council's values, behaviours and priorities. It defines the goals to be achieved and is supported by service plans.</p> <p>The <u>Local Plan 2011-2033</u> was adopted by the Council in March 2023 and supports the Council's vision for the district.</p> <p>The Council's Economic Development Strategy, <u>Nurturing Growth 2022-2025</u>, sets out the priorities for the district. The Council is a key partner in the Essex and Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone.</p> <p>Demonstrated a collaborative approach to working through the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership.</p> <p>A <u>Health and Wellbeing Strategy</u> approved by partners.</p> <p>An EFDC Employee and Member Travel Plan which promotes sustainable travel.</p>
<p>Principle D</p> <p>Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.</p>	<p>The <u>Corporate Plan 2023-27</u> is subject to annual review and performance monitoring. Delivery of the Plan will be measured through Objectives and Key Results.</p> <p>Major projects are tracked through monthly Portfolio Steering Group meetings attended by members of the Senior Leadership Team in addition to Programme Management Office staff. Project Management processes are subject to ongoing improvements to work in the best interests of the Council.</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators and action plans for indicators that are out of tolerance are reported to members.</p> <p>Decision making processes receive objective and rigorous analysis including involvement of the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer.</p> <p>Robust budget preparation processes reflect the Council's objectives and the medium-term financial plan have been embedded.</p>

<p>Principle E</p> <p>Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.</p>	<p>The People Strategy 2023-27 ensures that the Council recruits and retains staff, develops skills, and ensures those skills are deployed effectively to improve resilience across the organisation.</p> <p>The Council is embarking on back office shared services with Colchester City and Braintree District Councils. This has been endorsed by the Senior leadership teams from across the three authorities.</p> <p>There are established induction and training programmes for both existing and new councilors and staff available through the Litmos eLearning platform and through external training opportunities. Mandatory training is tracked to ensure it is completed.</p> <p>A formal staff Personal Development Review (PDR) process and all staff have access to health and wellbeing support.</p> <p>Statutory Officers have the qualifications, skills, resources and support necessary to perform their roles effectively.</p>
<p>Principle F</p> <p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	<p>The Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy applies best practice to the identification, evaluation, and control of key risks that could impact on the achievement of the Council's objectives and service priorities. The Corporate Risk Register is owned by the Senior Leadership Team and is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee for comment and Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>Strategic risk management is supported by operational and project level risk registers, which are owned by each Service Director or project owner. Agreed actions to manage and reduce risk have been incorporated into the relevant service or project plans.</p> <p>Robust business continuity/emergency planning processes are in place to respond to and continue to provide services in an emergency or event. Business Continuity plans have been completed in the year and exercises undertaken to test these.</p> <p>The Council has an effective health and safety management framework which seeks to ensure compliance with the law. This includes regular training for staff.</p> <p>Counter fraud and anticorruption arrangements are in place, including an established Corporate Fraud Team. The Antifraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing policy are updated annually.</p> <p>There is a designated Data Protection Officer and arrangements are in place for the safe management of data. Data sharing agreements are in place where the Council shares data with other bodies.</p>

<p>Principle G</p> <p>Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.</p>	<p>The Council has three Scrutiny Committees: Place, Overview and Scrutiny Communities. Their primary role is to hold local decision-makers to account and to help improve local services by reviewing and challenging decisions taken by the Council and its partners; undertaking investigations into services or policy areas which are of interest or concern to people in the district; and making evidence-based recommendations to improve services provided by the Council and partner organisations.</p> <p>The Audit and Governance Committee met four times in the year and includes independent members. Internal audit and external audit programs are presented for member scrutiny and tracked, and clear processes ensure external and internal audit recommendations are acted upon by managers and the Council.</p> <p>The internal audit function is delivered in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and provides assurance on governance, risk management and controls.</p> <p>Effective arrangements are in place to produce the Annual Governance Statement, including assurance statements from directors. The Local Code of Governance is reviewed and updated annually.</p> <p>The Council is reviewing its Publication Scheme to ensure transparency information is provided in line with the Transparency Code 2015.</p> <p>Shared service arrangements are appropriately governed to ensure accountability in terms of achieving outcomes and managing risks.</p>
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5. Significant Governance Issues

This final part of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) outlines the actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance issues or risks. The Council's Corporate Governance Group, which monitors and reviews the corporate governance framework, has ensured that issues raised in the previous AGS have been addressed as detailed in Table 1.

Other governance issues identified to further strengthen arrangements are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Progress on significant governance issues identified in the 2023/24 AGS

No.	Significant issue identified in 2022/23 AGS	Action taken in 2023/24 to address the issue
1	<p>Economic Issues</p> <p>At the time of preparing this (2022/23) AGS, economic volatility – both nationally and globally – continues, although there are some early signs of stability emerging with inflation beginning to settle down (CPI peaked at 11.1% in October 2022), with notable reductions in fuel and energy prices. Interest rates though continue to rise as the Government strives to further dampen inflation. This is having a direct impact on both the Council and Qualis, threatening the viability of a range of capital schemes.</p> <p>The economic situation is also proving challenging for the local community and is increasing the demand for Council services in some areas (e.g. Housing Benefits) as well exerting pressure on core Council funding streams such as Council Tax and Business Rates.</p>	<p>The implications continue to be monitored by SLT. It appears the economic risk is now receding, consumer price index (CPI) was down to 3.2% in March 2024.</p> <p>Implications feature as key considerations in the reports presented to Cabinet and in the development of the MTFP (Medium-Term Financial Plan) for 2024/25 and future years.</p> <p>This includes the Section 151 Officer’s quarterly Qualis Monitoring Report to Cabinet.</p> <p>Frontline services, especially Revenues and Benefits, continue to prioritise and resource the delivery of the various support packages offered by the Government in response to public need (e.g. through various Energy schemes and rebates).</p> <p>The Council has a Cost-of-Living page on its website, which includes useful websites, organisations, and advice to help with rising costs.</p>
2	<p>Statement of Accounts</p> <p>The delays with the audit of the Statements are gradually easing, with unqualified (‘clean’) opinions received in December 2024 for both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statements in accordance with the national “backstop” deadlines. However, the backstop deadline for the 2023/24 Statements of 28th February 2025 does not allow sufficient time for the incoming auditors to complete a full audit, with a default “disclaimed” opinion now anticipated in order to complete sign off in accordance with the statutory deadline.</p>	<p>The Finance team is working closely with EY to ensure that the 2023/24 Statements are completed and signed off by the backstop deadline.</p> <p>The priority then shifts to working with EY in the future (on the 2024/25 Statements onwards) to help rebuild assurance as quickly as possible, following the disclaimed opinion in 2023/24</p>

No.	Significant issue identified in 2022/23 AGS	Action taken in 2023/24 to address the issue
3	<p>Financial Management Code</p> <p>The assessment has carried over from the 2021/22 AGS action plan, although further progress was made in addressing the underlying principles of the Code in 2022/23.</p>	<p>Many of the good practice features of the Code have been progressively implemented over the last four years.</p> <p>The Code assessment will now be undertaken in 2024/25 to ensure that the Council can demonstrate compliance with the Code. If there are any remaining deficiencies, an action plan will be developed to address these.</p> <p>A template for the review has been identified and resource being identified to undertake the review.</p>
4	<p>Income Recovery</p> <p>The Income Recovery functions require improvement, with the Council experiencing a range of interlinked financial pressures as a consequence of sub-optimal performance (leading to increased revenue costs through additional bad debt provisions and lower returns from funding incentives such as the Essex “Council Tax Sharing Agreement” (CTSA). The Sundry Debtors function has a substantial backlog of outstanding cases (exacerbated by the recent installation of a new IT system) and the Council experienced higher Local Tax arrears than expected at the year end, due to a decline in both Council Tax and Business Rates collection performance in Quarter 4 of 2022/23.</p>	<p>Additional performance measures have been introduced in 2023/24 to monitor and capture the Council’s progress in tackling a backlog in outstanding Sundry Debts more closely. Additional resources are also being engaged within the Revenues function.</p> <p>Income collection and recovery systems (including performance), for both Local Tax and Sundry Debts, is being explored and benchmarked as part of the shared services partnership with Braintree District Council and Colchester City Council.</p>
5	<p>Financial Regulations</p> <p>The review has carried over from the 2021/22 AGS action plan, with the delay partly as a consequence of ongoing delays to the introduction of the new Management Structure.</p>	<p>The review has been scheduled in for 2024/25.</p> <p>The updated Financial Regulations will be systematically rolled out in a structured way to ensure that they are suitably disseminated and clearly embedded within frontline service areas.</p>

No.	Significant issue identified in 2022/23 AGS	Action taken in 2023/24 to address the issue
Common themes emerging from the 2022/23 Service Assurance Statements were:		
6	<p>Risk Management</p> <p>Further work is required to develop and embed risk management processes.</p>	<p>A revised risk management strategy and policy has been developed and approved by Cabinet in December 2023. Risk management features quarterly at SLT to review strategic risks and an operational risk management group meets quarterly. Service and Directorate risk registers have been developed. Member training on risk management was provided in January 2024.</p>
7	<p>Business Continuity</p> <p>A Business Continuity project has been ongoing during 2022/23 which has included providing relevant training to services so that they can develop their business continuity plans.</p>	<p>Business continuity arrangements are being strengthened through the completion of all Business Continuity Plans (corporate and service level).</p> <p>A business continuity exercise by the Wider Leadership Team was undertaken in November 2023, the outcomes of which are being used to help inform the Plans.</p>

Table 2: Areas for improvement or monitoring during 2024/25

No.	Issue / Risk area	Action plan for 2024/25
1	<p>Terra Verde Services Ltd</p> <p>The Council has set up a wholly owned company, Terra Verde Services Ltd (TVS). which will provide the district's waste collection service from November 2024.</p>	<p>The Council will ensure it has the right governance structures in place to provide assurance to both Members and the public that the new company is working in the best interests of the district.</p>
2	<p>Financial Regulations</p> <p>Carried over from last year's AGS action plan.</p>	<p>Financial Regulations will be reviewed, updated as required, and systematically rolled out in a structured way to ensure that they are suitably disseminated and clearly embedded within frontline service areas.</p>
3	<p>Financial Management Code review</p> <p>Carried over from last year's AGS action plan.</p>	<p>The assessment against the Code, started towards the end of 2023/24, will be concluded during 2024/25. If there are deficiencies, an action plan will be developed to address these.</p>

No.	Issue / Risk area	Action plan for 2024/25
4	<p>Procurement</p> <p>The Procurement Act 2023, due to go live on 28 October 2024, represents a big change for all public bodies.</p> <p>The Act consolidates the different regimes currently governing procurement into one Act, thereby creating a simpler and more flexible system. The existing overarching principles have been replaced with these new objectives which authorities must consider in all procurement activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money • Acting with (and being seen to act with) integrity • Maximising public benefit <p>Treating suppliers the same (unless otherwise justified)</p>	<p>Work has commenced to review internal processes, update all procurement related policies, procedures, and guidance, and identify training and awareness needs for both Officers and Members.</p>
5	<p>Transparency Code</p> <p>The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 sets out the minimum requirements for local authorities to publish open data for public reuse and in a timely way.</p>	<p>Work is in hand to ensure the Council is meeting the Code's publication requirements.</p>
<p><i>Common themes emerging from the 2023/24 Service Assurance Statements are:</i></p>		
6	<p>Declarations of Interest and Gifts & Hospitality</p> <p>The arrangements for keeping declarations of interest up to date are unclear and guidance around recording gifts and hospitality could be improved.</p>	<p>A fundamental review of current processes will be undertaken, and an IT system-based solution developed.</p>
7	<p>Data, decision-making and performance monitoring</p> <p>Improvements to data accuracy are required to adequately support effective decision-making.</p> <p>Performance indicators linked to service objectives need to be developed.</p>	<p>This will be overseen by the officer Information Governance Group which is chaired by the Council's Senior Information Risk Office (SIRO). This will include development of a corporate data strategy or principles and performance indicators at the service level.</p> <p>Work has already commenced to improve the accuracy and use of data when developing new systems and processes, for example the CX housing system.</p>

No.	Issue / Risk area	Action plan for 2024/25
8	Staff training and awareness Training in Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders was requested by some managers	Financial Regulation training and awareness will be rolled out, following the review of Financial Regulations planned for this year. The Procurement Team will be consulted to ensure this training dovetails with their procurement related training.

We propose to continue improving matters in the year ahead, to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for any improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed

Signed

Date:

Date:

Georgina Blakemore
Chief Executive

Councillor Chris Whitbread
Leader of the Council

Glossary of terms



For the purposes of this Statement of Accounts, the following definitions have been adopted:

ACCOUNTING PERIOD

This is the period covered by the accounts, normally a period of twelve months commencing on 1st April. The end of the accounting period is the Balance Sheet date.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The rules and practices adopted by the Council that determine how the transactions and events are reflected in the accounts.

ACCRUALS

Amounts included in the final accounts to recognise income earned and expenditure incurred for both revenue and capital in the financial year, but for which actual payment had not been received or made as at 31st March.

AMORTISATION

A measure of the cost of economic benefits derived from intangible fixed assets that are consumed during the period.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The annual governance statement is a statutory document that explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the council to carry out its functions effectively.

ASSET

An asset is an item having a value to the Council in monetary terms. Assets are categorised as either non-current or current:

- A non-current asset provides benefits to the Council and to the services it provides for a period of more than one year and may be tangible (e.g. a leisure centre), or intangible (e.g. computer software licences); and
- A current asset will be consumed or cease to have material value within the financial year (e.g. cash and stock).

AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS

An independent examination of the Council's financial affairs.

BALANCES (OR RESERVES)

These are usable or unusable reserves. Usable reserves represent accumulated funds from prior years that are available to the Council and can be spent. Some reserves may be earmarked for specific purposes and are for funding future defined initiatives or meeting identified risks or liabilities. Unusable reserves have been established for technical purposes and are not available to spend nor can be used to fund service provision.

BALANCE SHEET

This statement sets out the Council's financial position at the year-end. It shows the balances and reserves at the Council's disposal and its long-term indebtedness, and the non-current and net current assets employed in its operations together with summarised information on the non-current assets held.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

This is the expenditure on the acquisition, construction, enhancement, or replacement of a non-current asset such as land, buildings, and computer. It is expenditure that enhances and improves the use of the assets. It isn't expenditure that merely maintains the value of an existing asset.

CAPITAL ADJUSTMENT ACCOUNT

This account records the accumulated amount of set aside capital receipts and minimum revenue provision (the contribution from revenue to cover repayment of the borrowing that has been undertaken to fund capital expenditure) together with capital expenditure financed by way of capital receipts, grants, and revenue contributions. Set against these amounts are adjustments to the revenue account for depreciation and capital expenditure written off to revenue during the year. This, therefore, ensures that only actual expenses are charged to revenue in year and are paid for by council taxpayers.

CAPITAL FINANCING

Funds used to pay for capital expenditure. There are various sources of funding available to finance capital expenditure including borrowing, leasing, revenue contributions, usable capital receipts, capital grants, capital contributions, revenue reserves and earmarked reserves.

CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT

This measures the change in the underlying need for the council to borrow to finance capital expenditure. Where all capital expenditure is financed when it is incurred by resources generated by the council, e.g. revenue contributions, grants and capital receipts, the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) will not increase. However, if borrowing is required to finance capital expenditure, then the CFR will increase. The annual minimum revenue provision will be applied to reduce the CFR each year and capital receipts can also be used to reduce the CFR.

CAPITAL RECEIPT

A capital receipt is the proceeds from the disposal of land or other non-current assets. The government regulates the proportion of capital receipts that can be used to finance new capital expenditure. Capital receipts cannot ordinarily be used to finance revenue expenditure.

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

This statement summarises the cash flows of the Council for capital and revenue spending as well as the cash flows used to finance these activities.

CIPFA

This is the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. This organisation produces the Code of Practice that practitioners follow so that all local authorities prepare their accounts in a consistent and comparable way.

COLLECTION FUND

This account reflects the statutory requirement for billing authorities to maintain a separate collection fund which shows the transactions of the billing authority in relation to non-domestic rates and the council tax and illustrates the way in which these have been distributed to other authorities (preceptors) and the General Fund.

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 historic buildings.

COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE AND INCOME STATEMENT (CIES)

This is the statement that shows the accounting cost (surplus/deficit) in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It is not the amount funded from taxation. The Council raises taxation to cover the cost of expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

CONSISTENCY

The accounting treatment of like items within an accounting period and from one period to the next is the same.

CONTINGENT GAINS

A contingent gain (or asset) is a possible economic gain 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.

CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

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 events not wholly within the authority's control; or
- A current obligation arising from past events where it is not probable (but not impossible) that a transfer of economic benefits will be required, or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

It is considered that a contingent liability below £100,000 need not be disclosed, as any such amounts would not be significant.

CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC CORE

This includes all the activities which local authorities engage in specifically because they are elected, multi-purpose organisations. The costs of these activities are those that are over and above those that would be incurred by a series of independent, single purpose nominated bodies managing the same services. It includes costs relating to the corporate management and democratic representation.

COUNCIL TAX

A local tax on dwellings within the district, set by the billing authority (Epping Forest District Council) and the precepting authorities (the county council, fire and rescue services, the police and town and parish councils). It is calculated by taking the revenue expenditure requirements for each authority divided by the council tax base for the year.

CREDITORS

Amounts owed by the Council for goods and services that it has received before 31st March, but that have not been paid for at that date.

DEBTORS

Amounts owed to the Council for goods and services that it has provided before 31st March, but where the associated income was not received at that date.

DEPRECIATION

This is the measure of the wearing out, consumption or other reduction in the useful economic life of a fixed asset whether arising from use, passage of time or obsolescence through technological or other changes. The useful life is the period over which the Council will derive benefit from the use of a fixed asset.

FAIR VALUE

The fair value of an asset is the price at which it could be exchanged in an arm's length transaction less, where applicable, any grants receivable towards the purchase or use of the assets.

FINANCE LEASE

This is a lease that transfers substantially all of the risks and rewards of ownership of a fixed asset to the lessee. Such a transfer of risks and rewards may be presumed to occur if, at the inception of the lease, the present value of the minimum lease payments, including any initial payment, amounts to substantially all of the fair value of the leased asset.

GENERAL FUND

This is the account where all the costs of providing the Council services (with the exception of the landlord services, the costs of which sit in the HRA and Local Council precepts) are charged to, which are then paid for from Council Tax and government grants.

GOING CONCERN

The concept that the authority will remain in operational existence for the foreseeable future, in particular that the revenue 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.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reflects a statutory obligation to account separately for local authority housing provision, as defined in particular in Schedule 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It shows the major elements of housing revenue expenditure such as maintenance, administration, rent rebates and capital financing costs, and how these are met by rents subsidy and other income.

IMPAIRMENT

This is a reduction in the carrying value of a non-current asset to below its carrying value (due to obsolescence, damage, or an adverse change in the statutory environment).

INTANGIBLE ASSETS

This is expenditure which may properly be defined as being capital expenditure, but which does not result in a physical asset being created. For expenditure to be recognised as an intangible asset it must yield future economic benefits to the council. One of the most common examples would be software licences.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING STANDARDS (IFRS)

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) are a set of accounting standards developed by an independent, not-for-profit organisation called the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB).

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTING STANDARDS (IPSAS)

International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) are a set of accounting standards issued by the IPSAS Board for use by public sector entities around the world in the preparation of financial statements.

INVESTMENTS

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 that do not meet the above criteria should be classified as current assets.

INVESTMENT PROPERTIES

An interest in land and/or buildings:

- In respect of which construction work and development have been completed; and
- Which are held for their investment potential, any rental income being negotiated at arm's length.

LIABILITY

A liability exists where the Council owes payment to an individual or another organisation:

- A current liability is an amount which will become payable or could be called in within the next accounting period, e.g. creditors or cash overdrawn.
- A deferred liability is an amount which by arrangement is payable beyond the next year at some point in the future or to be paid off by an annual sum over time.

LONG TERM DEBTORS

These debtors represent the capital income still to be received, e.g. from the sale of an asset or the granting of a mortgage or a loan.

MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP)

This is the minimum amount that the Council must charge to the CIES each year to provide for the repayment of General Fund debt.

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This financial statement presents the movement in usable and unusable reserves (the Council's total reserve balances).

NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NDR) (also known as Business Rates)

Non-domestic rates, or business rates, collected by the Council are the way that those who occupy non-domestic property contribute towards the cost of local services. Under the business rates retention arrangements introduced from 1st April 2013, local authorities keep a proportion of the business rates paid locally (currently 50%). This money, together with revenue from council taxpayers, fees and charges and certain other sums, is used to pay for the services provided by the Council.

NET BOOK VALUE

The amount at which non-current assets are included in the balance sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current value less the cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.

NET CURRENT REPLACEMENT COST

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

NET REALISABLE VALUE

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

NON-OPERATIONAL ASSETS

Non-current assets held by a local authority but not directly occupied, used, or consumed in the delivery of services. Examples of non-operational assets are investment properties, assets that are surplus to requirements pending sale or redevelopment and assets under development or construction.

OPERATING LEASES

Leases other than a finance lease.

OPERATIONAL ASSETS

Non-current assets held and occupied, used, or consumed by the local authority in the direct delivery of those services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility. Operational assets comprise Council dwellings, other land and buildings, vehicles, plant and equipment, infrastructure, and community assets.

POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

These are events, both favourable and unfavourable, which occur between the balance sheet date and the date on which the responsible financial officer signs the Statement of Accounts.

PRECEPT

The levy (demand for money) made by precepting authorities (the authorities with the power to instruct another local authority (the billing authority) to collect an amount from council tax on their behalf). Precepts are demanded by the county council, fire and rescue services, the police and parish and town councils.

PRIOR YEAR ADJUSTMENTS

These are material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors. They do not include normal recurring corrections or adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

Tangible assets that yield benefits to the local authority and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

PROVISIONS

Provisions are required for any liabilities of uncertain timing or amount that have been incurred. Provisions are required to be recognised when:

- The local authority has a present obligation (legal or constructive) as a result of a past event;
- It is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation; and
- A reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation.

A transfer of economic benefits or other event is regarded as probable if the event is more likely than not to occur. If these conditions are not met, no provision should be recognised.

A constructive obligation is an obligation that derives from an authority's actions where;

- By an established pattern of past practice, published policies or sufficiently specific current statement, the authority has indicated to other parties that it will accept certain responsibilities; and
- As a result, the authority has created a valid expectation on the part of those other parties that it will discharge those responsibilities.

PRUDENCE

This is the concept that revenue is not anticipated until received in the form either of cash or of other assets, or a reliable estimate of the cash realisation can be assessed with reasonable certainty.

PRUDENTIAL CODE

Since 1st April 2004, local authorities have been subject to a self-regulatory “prudential system” of capital controls. This gives authorities the freedom to determine how much of their capital investment they can afford to fund by borrowing. The objectives of the code are to ensure that the local authority’s capital investment plans are affordable, prudent, and sustainable, with Councils being required to set specific prudential indicators.

PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD (PWLB)

A Central Government Agency, which provides loans for one year and above to local authorities at interest rates only slightly higher than those at which the Government can borrow itself. Virtually all borrowing undertaken by local authorities comes from the PWLB.

RELATED PARTIES

Two or more parties are related parties when at any time during the financial period:

- One party has direct or indirect control of the other party; or
- The parties are subject to common control from the same source; or
- One party has influence over the financial and operational policies of the other party, to an extent that the other party might be inhibited from pursuing at all times its own separate interests; or
- The parties, in entering a transaction, are subject to influence from the same source to such an extent that one of the parties to the transaction has subordinated its own separate interests.

Advice from CIPFA is that related parties to a local authority include Central Government, precepting bodies or bodies levying demands on the Council Tax, members and chief officers of the Council and its pension fund.

RELATED PARTY TRANSACTION

A related party transaction is the transfer of assets or liabilities or the performance of services by, to or for a related party, irrespective of whether a charge is made. Examples of related party transactions include:

- The purchase, sale, lease, rental or hire of assets between related parties;
- The provision of a guarantee to a third party in relation to a liability or obligation of a related party;
- The provision of services to a related party, including the provision of pension fund administration services; and
- Transactions with individuals who are related parties of an authority or a pension fund, except those applicable to other members of the community or the pension fund, such as Council Tax, rents, and payments of benefits.

This list is not intended to be comprehensive.

The materiality of related party transactions should be judged not only in terms of their significance to the authority but also in relation to its related party.

REMUNERATION

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

REVALUATION RESERVE

This account was created on 31st March 2007. The purpose of which is to hold all revaluations occurring to fixed assets subsequent to that date.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

These are the day-to-day payments on the running of Council services including salaries, wages, contract payments, supplies, and capital financing costs.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE FUNDED FROM CAPITAL UNDER STATUTE (REFCUS)

This is expenditure of a capital nature that does not result in a fixed asset being created. An example of such an item would be expenditure on a former HRA property held on a long lease by a third party. The expenditure is written off in the year that it is incurred.

STOCKS

These are items of raw materials and stores a Council has procured and holds in expectation of future use. Stock comprises 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.

THE CODE

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom known as 'The Code' incorporates guidance in line with IFRS, IPSAS and UK GAAP Accounting Standards. It sets out the proper accounting practice to be adopted for the Statement of Accounts to ensure they 'present fairly' the financial position of the Council. The Code has statutory status via the provision of the Local Government Act 2003. There are also accompanying guidance notes for practitioners.

UNAPPORTIONABLE CENTRAL OVERHEADS

These are overheads for which no user now benefits and should not be apportioned to services.

Glossary of pension related terms



ACTUARIAL GAINS AND LOSSES

For a defined benefit pension scheme, the changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses that arise because:

- Actual events have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation (known as experience gains and losses); or
- The actuarial assumptions have changed.

CURRENT SERVICE COST

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

CURTAILMENT

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.

DEFINED BENEFIT SCHEME

This is 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).

DEFINED CONTRIBUTION SCHEME

A pension or other retirement benefit scheme into which an employer pays regular contributions fixed as an amount or as a percentage of pay and will have no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions if the scheme does not have sufficient assets to pay all employee benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS

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

EXPECTED RATE OF RETURN ON PENSION ASSETS

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

IAS19

International Accounting Standard 19 (IAS19) ensures that organisations account for employee retirement benefits when they are committed to pay them, even if the actual payment may be years into the future.

INTEREST COST (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.

INVESTMENTS (PENSIONS FUND)

The investments of the Pensions Fund will be accounted for in the statements of the fund. However, authorities (other than town and community councils) are also required to disclose, as part of the transitional disclosures relating to retirement benefits, the attributable share of pension scheme assets associated with their underlying obligations.

NON-DISTRIBUTED COSTS

Non-distributed costs are defined as comprising:

- Retirement benefit costs including past service costs, settlements, and curtailments. To note, current service pension costs are included in the total costs of services;
- The costs associated with unused shares of IT facilities; and
- The costs of shares of other long-term unused but unrealisable assets.

PAST SERVICE COST

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.

PENSION SCHEME LIABILITY

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

PROJECTED UNIT METHOD - PENSION FUND VALUATION

This is an accrued benefits valuation method in which the scheme liabilities make allowance for projected earnings. An accrued benefits valuation method is a valuation method in which the scheme liabilities at the valuation date relate to:

- The benefits for pensioners and deferred pensioners (i.e. individuals who have ceased to be active members but are entitled to benefits payable at a later date) and their dependents, allowing where appropriate for future increases; and
- The accrued benefits for members in service on the valuation date. The accrued benefits are the benefits for service up to a given point in time, whether vested rights or not. Guidance on the projected unit method is given in the Guidance Note GN26 issued by the Faculty and Institute of Actuaries.

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 redundancy in exchange for those benefits because these are not given in exchange for services rendered by employees.

SCHEME LIABILITIES

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

SETTLEMENT

An irrecoverable action that relieves the employer (or the defined benefit scheme) of the primary responsibility 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

VESTED RIGHTS

In relation to a defined benefit scheme, these are:

- For active members, benefits to which they would unconditionally be entitled on leaving the scheme
- For deferred pensioners, their preserved benefits; and
- For pensioners, pensions to which they are entitled.

Vested rights include where appropriate the related benefits for spouses or other dependents.