

36. Accounting Policies

a. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the council's transactions for the 2024/25 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2025. The council is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in accordance with proper accounting practices. 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).

These financial statements have been prepared with reference to the following qualitative characteristics and underlying assumptions:

- **Relevance:** the accounts have been prepared with the objective of providing information about the council's financial performance and position that is useful for assessing the stewardship of public funds and for making financial decisions.
- **Materiality:** the concept of materiality has been utilised in preparing the accounts so that insignificant items and fluctuations under an acceptable level of tolerance are permitted providing that in aggregate they would not affect the interpretation of the accounts.
- **Faithful Representation:** the financial statements are complete, neutral and free from error, and faithfully represent the phenomena that they purport to represent.
- **Comparability:** the financial statements are based on the Code which should aid comparison between other local authorities and with other reporting dates.
- **Verifiability:** these accounts utilise quantified information in order to assure users that this information faithfully represent the economic phenomena that it purports to represent.
- **Timeliness:** these accounts provide decision makers with information that is capable of influencing their decisions.
- **Understandability:** these accounts are based on accounting concepts and terminology which require reasonable knowledge of accounting and local government. Every effort has been made to use plain language and where technical terms are unavoidable they have been explained in the glossary of terms contained within the accounts.
- **Accruals Basis:** the financial statements, other than the cash flow, are prepared on an accruals basis. Income and Expenditure is recognised in the accounts in the period in which it is earned or incurred not as the cash is received or paid.

- **Going Concern:** the accounts have been prepared on the assumption that the council's functions and services will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.
- **Primacy of Legislation Requirements:** in accordance with the Code, where an accounting treatment is prescribed by law then it has been applied, even if it contradicts accounting standards. The following legislative accounting requirements have been applied when compiling these accounts:
 - Capital receipts from the disposal of property, plant and equipment are treated in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2003.
 - The Local Government Act 2003 requires the council to set aside a minimum revenue provision.

Conventions

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.

Throughout this Statement of Accounts credit balances are indicated with parentheses, e.g. (£1,234).

b. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. The only exception to this principal is for electricity, gas and similar quarterly payments. These are charged at the date of the meter reading rather than being apportioned between financial years.

Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.

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.

Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.

Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.

Where income 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.

c. Acquisitions and Discontinued Operations

Acquired operations

Any material operations acquired or discontinued by the council during the accounting period are disclosed in the accounts.

d. 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 are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value. The council has deemed that deposits held within money market funds and call accounts are categorised as cash equivalents.

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.

e. Council Tax and Business Rates

Billing Authorities act as Agents, collecting Council Tax and Business Rates on behalf of the major preceptors and as principals, collecting Council Tax and Business Rates for themselves. 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 Business Rates.

Accounting for Council Tax and Business Rates

The Council Tax and Business Rates income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the council's share of accrued income for the year. However, regulations determine the amount of Council Tax and Business Rates that must be included in the council's General Fund for the year. Therefore, the difference between the income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the General Fund for the year 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 end of year balances in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates relating to arrears, impairment allowances for doubtful debts, overpayments and prepayments, and appeals.

Where debtor balances for the above are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the statutory arrangements will not be made (fixed or determinable payments), the asset is written down and a charge made to the Collection Fund. The impairment loss is measured as the difference between the carrying amount and the revised future cash flows.

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

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

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the council's financial position or financial performance.

Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

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

g. Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding fixed assets during the year:

- depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service;
- revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off; and
- amortisation of intangible fixed 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 amortisations are therefore replaced by an annual contribution from revenue in the General Fund Balance (Minimum Revenue Provision), by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

h. Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable During Employment

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

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the council to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy. Termination benefits are charged on an accruals basis to the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the council can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the council recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the council to the pension fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year end.

Post-Employment Benefits

Employees of the council are members of three separate pension schemes:

- The Teachers' Pension Scheme, administered by Capita Business Services Ltd on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE);
- The NHS Pension scheme, administered by NHS Business Services Authority; and,
- The Local Government Pensions Scheme, administered by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council as the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF).

These schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees work for the council.

However, the arrangements for the NHS and teachers' schemes mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot ordinarily be identified specifically to the council. These schemes are therefore accounted for as if they are defined contribution schemes and no liability for future payments of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet. The Dedicated Schools Grant line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with the employer's contributions payable to Teachers' Pensions in the year. The Health and Adult Social Care line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with the employer's contributions payable to the NHS Pension Scheme in the year.

The Local Government Pension Scheme

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

- The liabilities of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund attributable to the council are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on

assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc. and projections of projected earnings for current employees.

- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate based on the indicative rate of return on a basket of high-quality corporate bonds, Government gilts and other factors.
- The assets of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund attributable to the council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
 - quoted securities – current bid price
 - unquoted securities – professional estimate
 - unitised securities – current bid price
 - property – market value.

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

Service Costs

- current service cost - the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year - allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked.
- past service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-Cash Limit costs.
- net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), i.e. net interest expense for the council - the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability (asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability (asset) during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

Re-measurements

- the return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- contributions paid to the Greater Manchester Pension Fund – cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.
- asset ceiling, if applicable, charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure

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

The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

Discretionary Benefits

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

i. Events After the Balance Sheet Date

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

Two types of events can be identified:

- those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events; 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.

j. Fair Value Measurement

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

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

The 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 that market participants act in their economic best interest.

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

The 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.

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

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

k. Financial Instruments

Financial Liabilities

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

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

The reconciliation of amounts charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the net charge required against the General Fund Balance is managed by a transfer to or from the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified into three types:

- Fair Value through Profit or Loss (FVPL) - the council does not have any assets that fall to be classified as FVPL
- Amortised Cost

- Fair Value through other Comprehensive Income (FVOCI)

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For most of the loans made by the council, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

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

The council has assets such as investments and debtors which are classified as financial assets measured at amortised cost.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through other Comprehensive Income (FVOCI)

Financial assets that are measured at FVOCI are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value.

Investment income is credited to Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when it becomes receivable by the council.

Where an equity instrument is designated as FVOCI, changes in fair value are posted to Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure and are balanced by an entry in the Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve (an unusable reserve). When the asset is de-recognised, the cumulative gain or loss previously recognised in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure is transferred from the Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve and recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services.

The council has two equity instruments designated at Fair Value through other Comprehensive Income (FVOCI). The council has made irrevocable elections to designate the assets as FVOCI on the basis that they are held for non-contractual benefits, they are not held for trading but for strategic purposes.

The fair value is based on the principal that the equity shares have no quoted market prices and is based on an independent appraisal of the company valuation each year.

Expected Credit Loss Model

The council recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost either on a 12-month or lifetime basis. The expected credit loss model also applies to lease receivables and contract assets. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the Council.

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

I. 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 Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as creditors. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ringfenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Capital grants and contributions used to fund Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute have been accounted for as revenue grants/contributions at the point at which it is known that they will fund such expenditure.

Where capital grants are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

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

m. Interests in Companies and Other Entities

The council has material interests in companies that have the nature of subsidiaries and which require it to prepare group accounts. An assessment of the council's interests has been completed during the year to determine the relationships that exist and whether they should be included in the Council's Group accounts.

In the council's own single-entity accounts, the interests in companies and other entities are recorded as financial assets at cost, less any provision for losses.

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

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

n. Investment Property

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

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, being the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. As a non-financial asset, investment properties are measured at highest and best use. Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions at the year end.

An investment property under construction is measured at cost until such time as its fair value can be determined reliably or its construction is complete, whichever comes first. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income line and result in a gain for the General Fund Balance. However, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

o. Leases

The Council as Lessee

The council classifies contracts as leases based on their substance. Contracts and parts of contracts, including those described as contracts for services, are analysed to determine whether they convey the right to control the use of an identified asset, through rights both to obtain substantially all the economic benefits or service potential from that asset and to direct its use. This also includes arrangements with nil consideration, peppercorn or nominal payments.

Where the council is leasing an asset from a third party, a right of use asset and corresponding lease liability are recognised at commencement of the lease or the IFRS16 transition date of 1 April 2024, if later.

The lease liability is measured at the present value of the lease payments, discounted at the rate implicit in the lease, or if that cannot be readily determined, at the lessee's incremental borrowing rate specific to the term and start date of the lease. Lease payments include:

- fixed payments;
- variable lease payments dependent on an index or rate, initially measured using the index or rate at commencement;
- the exercise price under a purchase option if the council is reasonably certain to exercise;
- penalties for early termination if the lease term reflects the council exercising a break option; and,
- payments in an optional renewal period if the council is reasonably certain to exercise an extension option or not exercise a break option.

The right of use asset is initially measured at cost, comprising:

- the initial lease liability;
- any lease payments already made less any lease incentives received;
- initial direct costs; and,
- any dilapidation or restoration costs.

The right-of-use asset is subsequently measured using the fair value model. The authority considers the cost model to be a reasonable proxy except for:

- assets held under non-commercial leases;
- leases where rent reviews do not necessarily reflect market conditions;
- leases with terms of more than five years that do not have any provision for rent reviews; and,
- leases where rent reviews will be at periods of more than five years.

For these leases, the asset is carried at a revalued amount. The right of use assets held under index-linked leases are adjusted for changes in the relevant index, while assets held under peppercorn or nil consideration leases are valued using market prices or rentals for equivalent land and properties.

The right-of-use asset is depreciated straight-line over the shorter period of remaining lease term and useful life of the underlying asset as at the date of adoption.

The lease liability is subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method. It is remeasured, with a corresponding adjustment to the right of use asset, when there is a change in future lease payments resulting from a rent review, change in an index or rate such as inflation, or change in the council's assessment of whether it is reasonably certain to exercise a purchase, extension or break option. When such a remeasurement occurs, a corresponding adjustment is made to the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset, with any further adjustment required from remeasurement being recorded in the income statement.

Leases of low value assets (value when new less than £10,000) and short-term leases of 12 months or less are expensed to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as are variable payments dependent on performance or usage, 'out of contract' payments and non-lease service components.

Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes interest, straight-line depreciation, any asset impairments and changes in variable lease payments not included in the measurement of the liability during the period in which the triggering event occurred. Lease payments are debited against the liability. Rentals for leases of low-value items or shorter than 12 months are expensed.

Depreciation and impairments are not charges 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.

The Council as Lessor

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 council to a third party. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

Finance Leases

Where the council grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment to a third party, the relevant asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal. At the commencement of the lease, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. A gain, representing the council's net investment in the lease, is credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal), matched by a lease (long-term debtor) asset in the Balance Sheet.

Lease rentals receivable are apportioned between:

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

The gain credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on disposal is not permitted by statute to increase the General Fund Balance and is required to be treated as a capital receipt. Where a premium has been received, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future financial years, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the future rentals are received, the element for the capital receipt for the disposal of the asset is used to write down the lease debtor. At this point, the deferred capital receipts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against Council Tax, as the cost of noncurrent assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are therefore appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Operating Leases

Where the council grants an operating lease over a property, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Financing and Investment Income line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (relating to investment properties). Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease).

p. Material Items of Income and Expenditure

Where items of income and expenditure are material their nature and amount are disclosed separately either on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement or in the notes to the accounts. Disclosure will depend upon how significant the items are to the understanding of the reader of the accounts.

q. Overheads and Support Services

The council operates and manages its support services within the Finance and Resources Portfolio and this is how the costs relating to overheads and support services are reported to management. The costs of overheads and support services are therefore not re-apportioned across other council portfolios

r. Property, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of good 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 the 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 is capitalised subject to a de minimis level of £10,000, except for devolved education expenditure where a de minimis level of £2,000 is applied.

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; and,
- 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.

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 fair value, unless the acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the 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.

Donated assets are measured initially at fair value. The difference between fair value and any consideration paid is credited to the Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Where gains are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

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

- infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost;
- council dwellings – current value, determined using the basis of existing use value for social housing (EUV-SH);
- surplus assets – the current value measurement base is fair value, estimated at highest and best use from a market participant's perspective;
- 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.

Where 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 Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

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

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

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

Highways Infrastructure Assets

Highways infrastructure assets include carriageways, footways and cycle tracks, structures (e.g. bridges), street lighting, street furniture and land which together form a single integrated network.

Highways infrastructure assets are generally measured at depreciated historical cost. However, this is a modified form of historical cost – opening balances for highways infrastructure assets were originally recorded in balance sheets at amounts of capital undischarged for sums borrowed as at 1 April 1994, which was deemed at that time to be historical cost. Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by the carrying amount of the asset being written down to the recoverable amount.

Impairment

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

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by:

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

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

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all Property, Plant and Equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives. 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).

Depreciation is calculated on the bases set out in the Property, Plant and Equipment note to the Financial Statements. Where material, buildings (non-council dwellings) which have been revalued from 1 April 2010 have been valued on an average asset life basis, which averages typical costs of components of buildings over maximum life expectancy for these components. Depreciation is calculated on these average lives which range from 30 to 40 years, compared to the normal life expectancy of buildings of 40 years. Components of council dwellings whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the dwellings are depreciated separately.

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

Disposals and Non-current Assets Held for Sale

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previously losses recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale. If assets no longer meet the criteria to be classified as Assets Held for Sale, they are reclassified back to non-current assets and valued at the lower of their carrying amount before they were classified as held for sale; adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had they not been classified as Held for Sale, and their recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell. Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as Assets Held for Sale.

When an asset is disposed of or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. A proportion of receipts relating to housing disposals is payable to the Government. The balance of receipts is required to be credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve and can then only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the council's underlying need to borrow (the capital financing requirement). 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 fixed 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.

s. 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 or service potential, 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 Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement 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 into account 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 now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

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

t. Reserves

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

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

Internal Insurance Funds

The council operates two main self-insurance funds, set up to meet potential future claims and claims agreed in principal but yet to be settled.

The funds have been split between provisions, reflecting claims which are certain or very likely to occur and reserves, for unknown future claims.

u. Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset and has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement 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 then reverses out the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the level of Council Tax.

v. Revenue Recognition

Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.

Where the council is acting as Agent of another organisation, the amounts collected on behalf of that organisation are excluded from the council's revenue.

Revenue for Council Tax and Business Rates is recognised when the amount of revenue can be measured reliably, and it is probable it will be received by the council.

w. Schools

The Code confirms that the balance of control for local authority-maintained schools (i.e. those categories of school identified in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended) lies with the council. The Code also stipulates that those schools' assets, liabilities, reserves and cash flows are recognised in the council Statement of Accounts (and not the Group Accounts). Therefore schools' transactions, cash flows and balances are recognised in each of the financial statements of the council as if they were the transactions, cash flows and balances of the council.

x. Value Added Tax

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