

1. Material accounting policies

General principles

The statement of accounts summarises the council's transactions for the 2022/23 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2023. 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 comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

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.

Accruals of expenditure and income

The revenue accounts of the council are maintained on an accruals basis in accordance with proper accounting practices. In particular:

- Revenue from contracts for services or provision of goods are recognised when the council provides them to the customer.
- Supplies and services are recorded as expenditure when the goods are consumed, or services received.
- Interest payable on borrowings and receivable on investments is accounted for 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 it is doubtful that debts will be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

There is a de-minimis level in place for all accruals of income and expenditure. This level is reviewed annually and is currently set at £10,000. Accruals are not required to be made for individual transactions under this value, with the exception of the following:

- Any grant where applying the de-minimis level would affect the claim.
- Accruals which are calculated using system automated reports.
- For a group of similar transactions where there would be a material impact upon the management or financial accounts of not processing the accrual, for example trading services.
- Accruals for schools income and expenditure.

Cash and cash equivalents

The council identifies cash as being both cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are any deposits made with financial institutions that have an initial maturity period of less than three months and readily convertible to known cash amounts with insignificant risk of change in value.

Prior period adjustments, changes in accounting policies and estimation errors

Prior period adjustments arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively 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/relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the council's financial position/performance. Where a change is made it is applied retrospectively 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.

Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates

Billing authorities act as agents, collecting council tax and non-domestic rates (NDR) on behalf of the major preceptors and, as principals, collecting council tax and NDR 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 NDR. Under the legislative framework for the Collection Fund, billing authorities and major preceptors share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of council tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted.

Employee benefits

Termination benefits

Termination benefits are payable whenever an employee's employment is terminated before the normal retirement date or whenever an employee accepts voluntary redundancy. These are charged on an accruals basis to the relevant service 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 individual in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards.

Post employment benefits

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

- The Teachers' Pension Scheme, administered by Capita Teachers' Pensions on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE)
- The Local Government Pension Scheme, administered by Wolverhampton City Council
- The NHS Pension Scheme, administered by NHS Pensions

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

Arrangements for the teachers' pension scheme and NHS pension scheme mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot be identified to the council. These schemes are therefore accounted for as if they were a defined contributions scheme. For both schemes no liability for future payments of benefits are recognised in the balance sheet. The employer's contributions payable in the year are charged to the surplus or deficit on provision of services.

Local government pension scheme

The local government scheme is accounted for as a defined benefit scheme.

The liabilities of the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities 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 future earnings for current employees.

Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, based on the weighted average of spot yields on high quality corporate bonds.

The assets of the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities 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 pensions liability is analysed into the following components:

- Service cost comprising:

- Current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated 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.
- Net interest on the net defined benefit liability, i.e., net interest expense for the council – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability that arises from the passage of time. Calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability at the beginning of the period taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

- Re-measurements comprising:

- The return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability.
- Remeasurement 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.

- Contributions paid to the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the general fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the council to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards.

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.

Fair value measurement

The council measures some of its non-financial assets, such as surplus assets, investment properties, financial instruments held at fair value through profit and loss and financial instruments held at 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.

Financial instruments

Financial assets

Financial assets are classified into three types:

- Amortised cost
- Fair Value through Profit or Loss (FVPL)
- Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income (FVOCI)

The council's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows. If payments are solely principal and interest, they are classified as amortised cost. Otherwise, they are classed as FVPL or 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 surplus and deficit on provision of services for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective interest rate for the instrument. For most of the loans that the council has made, this means that the amount presented in the balance sheet is the outstanding principal receivable and interest credited to the CIES is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Expected credit loss model

The council recognises expected credit losses on all its assets held at amortised cost either on a 12 month or lifetime basis. The expected credit loss model also applies to lease receivables. Only lifetime losses are recognised for debtors held by the authority.

Impairment losses are calculated to reflect the expectation that the future cash flows might not take place due to the borrower defaulting. Where credit risk is assessed to be high then losses are assessed on a lifetime basis. If risk the risk is assessed to be low, then losses are assessed on a 12-month basis.

Financial assets measured at FVPL

Financial assets measured at FVPL 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.

Fair values are based on the following techniques:

- Instruments with quoted market prices – the market price
- Other instruments with fixed and determinable payments – discounted cash flow analysis

Financial assets measured at FVOCI

With the adoption of IFRS 9 – Financial Instruments the standard requires that investments in equity be classified as fair value through profit and loss unless there is an irrevocable election to designate the asset as fair value through other comprehensive income. The investments in Birmingham Airport Holdings (BAH) and Sherbourne Recycling Limited are both equity

instruments and as such, the default position is that any gains and losses on changes in fair value would be recognised through profit and loss.

As these are both strategic investments not held for trading the council has opted to make the irrevocable decision to designate them both as fair value through other comprehensive income. This decision results in no impact on the revenue budget. Any gains or losses on the valuation of the shareholding will therefore be transferred to a Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve.

Financial assets 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.

Fair values are based on the following techniques:

- Instruments with quoted market prices – the market price
- Other instruments with fixed and determinable payments – discounted cash flow analysis

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. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost.

Gains and losses on the repurchase or early settlement of borrowing are credited or debited to the CIES in the year of repurchase/settlement. Where premiums and discounts have been charged to the surplus or deficit on provision of services as a result of The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/573), these regulations allow the impact on the general fund balance to be spread over future years. The council has a policy of spreading the gain/loss over the term that was remaining on the loan against which the premium was payable or discount receivable when it was paid. For discounts receivable, statute limits this to a maximum of 10 years

Government/non-government grants and contributions

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

- the grants/contributions will be received.
- the council will comply with any conditions attached to the payments.

Where the conditions have not been satisfied the grant/contribution will be carried on the balance sheet as creditors. When the conditions have been satisfied the grant/contribution will be recognised in the CIES by either crediting:

- the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants/contributions and capital grants used to finance REFFCUS spend in year)
- taxation and non-specific grant income (un-ringfenced revenue grants and capital grants received in year excluding those used for REFFCUS)

Where capital grants are credited to the CIES, 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.

Joint operations

These are arrangements by which the parties that have joint control of the arrangement have the rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities relating to the arrangement e.g., Better Care Fund (BCF). All parties have joint control with decisions of the activities of the arrangement requiring unanimous consent from all parties. The council recognises on its balance sheet the assets that it controls and the liabilities that it incurs and debits and credits the CIES with the expenditure it incurs and the share of income it earns from the activity of the operation.

Interests in companies and other entities

An assessment of the council's interests has been carried out during the year in accordance with the Code of Practice to determine the group relationships that exist. Inclusion in the group is dependent upon the extent of the council's control over the entity demonstrated through ownership, such as a shareholding in an entity or representation on an entity's board of directors.

The council does have a number of interests in companies and other entities. One has been determined to be an associate company for the council, Sherbourne Recycling Ltd. It has been determined that production of group accounts is not required as it is currently the council's share of the profits and losses, and reserves are not material. Instead, a comprehensive note has been produced providing all relevant information has been produced.

Investment properties

Investment properties are properties held by the council to solely earn rentals and/or capital appreciation. They are recognised only when it is probable that future economic benefits or service potential will flow to the council, and that the cost or fair value of the expenditure can be measured reliably.

Investment properties are initially measured at cost, except where acquired through a non-exchange transaction which are measured at fair value.

After recognition investment properties are measured at fair value. Any gain or loss from a change in fair value is recognised in the CIES. The same treatment is applied to gain and losses on disposal.

Investment properties measured at fair value are not subject to depreciation.

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 the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership of a non-current asset to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases. The council does not hold any material finance leases.

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

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).

Finance leases

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease as 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. 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 finance charge – debited to 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 authority at the end of the lease period).

The authority is not required to raise council tax to cover depreciation or revaluation and impairment losses arising on leased assets. Instead, a prudent annual contribution 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 a revenue contribution 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.

The council as lessor

Operating leases

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

Finance leases

The council does not hold any material finance leases as a lessor.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI)/Public-Private Partnership (PPP) schemes

PFI and similar contracts are agreements to receive services, where the responsibility for making available the property, plant and equipment needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor. As the council is deemed to control the services that are provided under its PFI schemes, and as ownership of the property, plant and equipment will pass to the council at the end of the contracts for no additional charge, the council carries the assets used under the contracts on its balance sheet as part of Property, Plant and Equipment.

The amounts payable to the PFI operators each year are analysed into five elements. Three of these elements are material to the council's accounts:

- Fair value of the services received during the year – debited to the relevant service in the CIES.
- Finance cost – interest is charged on the outstanding Balance Sheet liability, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES.
- Payment towards liability – applied to write down the Balance Sheet liability towards the PFI operator (the profile of write-downs is calculated using the same principles as for a finance lease)

The other two elements are contingent rents and lifecycle replacement costs which for the council's PFI contracts are not material.

Property, plant and equipment (excluding highways infrastructure assets)

Property, plant and equipment are tangible assets that are held for use in the provision of goods and services, or for administrative purposes, and are expected to be used for more than one year.

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of property, plant and equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis. This is provided that it is probable that future economic benefits or service potential will flow to the council, and that the cost of the expenditure can be measured reliably. Any expenditure that does not meet this criteria i.e., it maintains the asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits and service potential (day to day servicing/repairs and maintenance), is charged to revenue as it is incurred.

The council does not set a de-minimis level for capitalising costs as it considers that spend that is of a capital nature should be accounted for as such.

Where the council incurs capital spend on or has revalued any property, plant and equipment this will be reviewed to determine whether there are any material components. An identifiable component within a main asset (e.g., a lift within a building) will be recognised separately and accounted for like any other piece of property, plant and equipment. The council will only review material components where the main asset has a gross book value of £1 million. Individual components will only be recognised where the value is greater than £150k or they represent a significant proportion of the main asset.

Measurement and depreciation

Property, plant and equipment are initially measured at cost, except donated assets which are measured at fair value. Where it is a donated asset the measurement of the asset at fair value does not constitute a revaluation and is not recognised as such.

After recognition property, plant and equipment assets are depreciated and valued as shown below.

	Valuation basis	Asset life	Depreciation method
Operational buildings - general	Existing use value	10-80 years	Straight line
Operational buildings - specialised	Depreciated replacement cost	10-100 years	Straight line
Plant, vehicles and equipment	Current value*	3-10 years	Straight line
Community assets	Historic cost	No determinable asset life	Not depreciated
Surplus assets	Fair value - market value	10-80 years	Straight line
Assets under construction	Historic cost	n/a	Not depreciated

***For vehicles, plant and equipment due to their short operational lives the council uses depreciated historic cost as a proxy for current value.**

The council has adopted a policy of applying full depreciation in the year of acquisition and no depreciation in the year of disposal.

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.

Disposals

When property, plant and equipment assets are disposed of or decommissioned the net gain or loss is taken to the CIES.

Amounts in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. A proportion of receipts (75%) relating to mortgages given to former tenants who purchased their properties under the right to buy scheme is payable to the government. The balance of the receipts is credited to the capital receipts reserve.

Highways infrastructure assets

Highways infrastructure assets comprise carriageways, footways and cycle tracks, structures (e.g., bridges), street lighting, street furniture, traffic management systems and land. Together they form a single integrated network.

Recognition

Expenditure on acquisition or replacement of components of the network is capitalised on an accrual basis. This is provided that future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to the authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably.

Measurement

Highways Infrastructure assets are measured using a modified depreciated historical cost. The balances for highways infrastructure assets were originally recorded in balance sheets at amounts of capital undischarged for sums borrowed as at 1 April 1994. This was deemed at that time to be equivalent to 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.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on the parts of the highways infrastructure assets that are subject to deterioration or depletion. Depreciation is charged on a straight-line basis.

Annual depreciation is the depreciation amount allocated each year. The useful lives of the various parts of the highways network are as follows:

	Useful life
Carriageways	35 years
Footways and cycle tracks	50 years
Structures	100 years
Street lighting (excluding PFI scheme)	31 years
Street lighting PFI	30 years
Street furniture	30 years
Traffic management systems	15 years

Disposals and derecognition

When highways infrastructure assets are disposed of or decommissioned the net gain or loss is taken to the CIES.

Impairment of non-current assets

At the end of the financial period all non-current assets (excluding non-current assets classified as held for sale) are assessed by type of asset for an indication of any possible impairment. If there is an indication of a possible impairment, an estimate of the new asset value is made. If there is no indication of a possible impairment no further action is taken.

If the conditions that gave rise to an earlier impairment no longer exist, the impairment is reversed out of the CIES and reinstated to the asset value. This reversal will not exceed what would be the carrying amount for the asset at the reversal date had the impairment not taken place. Any excess to this amount is treated as a revaluation gain and recognised in the revaluation reserve.

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 existing net book value or fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is recognised. Any gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previous losses previously recognised. 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.

Intangible assets

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the council as a result of past events (e.g., software licenses) are recognised as intangible assets if it is probable that future benefits created by the asset will flow to the council.

Intangible assets are initially measured at cost. After recognition intangible assets are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and impairments.

Amortisation of intangible assets is carried out where a finite useful life is identified. Amortisation is based on what is determined to be a pattern that reflects the use of economic benefits. If this pattern is not determinable then the asset is amortised on a straight-line basis.

Heritage assets

The accounting policy for heritage assets as laid out below makes no distinction between tangible and intangible heritage assets. The assets the council holds cover both tangible (e.g., war memorials) and intangible (e.g., the audio-visual material held within the Epstein Archive) heritage assets.

Heritage assets are recognised and measured (including the treatment of revaluation gains and losses) in accordance with the council's accounting policies on property, plant and equipment. However, some of the measurement rules are different in relation to heritage assets as detailed below.

The council includes the Council House and Town Hall, and Walsall Library/Museum buildings within its asset base. Although these are historical buildings, they are operational assets i.e., the council uses them to deliver its services. These are included within property, plant and equipment and valued using the depreciated replacement cost (DRC) methodology and depreciated over their remaining useful life.

The council's heritage asset collections are accounted for as follows:

Art collections

The art collections are reported on the balance sheet at insurance valuation, based on market values. These assets are deemed to have indeterminate lives and a high residual value. Therefore, the council does not consider it appropriate to charge depreciation.

Acquisitions are made by purchase or donation in line with the gallery's acquisition policy. Acquisitions are initially recognised at cost and donations are recognised at insurance valuation.

Museum collections

The museum collections are reported at insurance valuation, based on market values for those items over £1,000. The council maintains an inventory of this collection however there is no readily available valuation held by the council for items of less than £1,000. The council believes that the benefits of obtaining a valuation for these items to the user of the accounts would not justify the cost given the specialised nature of this archive. As such the council has not recognised items less than £1,000 on the balance sheet.

For those assets held on the balance sheet they are deemed to have indeterminate lives and a high residual value. Therefore, the council does not consider it appropriate to charge depreciation.

Acquisitions are made by purchase or donation. Acquisitions are initially recognised at cost and donations are recognised at insurance valuation if the value is over £1,000.

Local history archive

The council's local history archive has no readily available valuation held by the council. There is no definitive market value for these types of assets as they are normally obtained by donation. The council believes that the benefits of obtaining a valuation for these items to the user of the accounts would not justify the cost given the specialised nature of this archive. As such the council has not recognised this archive on the balance sheet.

Civic regalia

The council holds civic regalia for use by the Mayor and Mayoress for official ceremonial purposes. These are reported at insurance valuation. Due to the nature of these assets the council does not deem it appropriate to charge depreciation.

Other heritage assets

The council has five statues, a number of war memorials, memorial clocks and public art works around the Borough. There is no readily available valuation held by the council for these types of assets and no definitive market value as they are not normally traded. The council believes that the benefits of obtaining a valuation for these items to the user of the accounts would not justify the cost given the specialised nature of these assets. As such the council has not recognised these assets on the balance sheet.

Heritage assets – General

The carrying amounts of heritage assets are reviewed where there is evidence of impairment for heritage assets, e.g., where an item has suffered physical deterioration or breakage or where doubts arise as to its authenticity. Any impairment is recognised and measured in accordance with the council's general policies on impairment – see accounting policy for property, plant and equipment. The council may occasionally dispose of heritage assets which

have a doubtful provenance or are unsuitable for public display. The proceeds of such items are accounted for in accordance with the council's general provisions relating to the disposal of property, plant and equipment.

Provisions

Provisions are required for any liabilities of uncertain timing or amount that have been incurred.

They are recognised when:

- the council has a present obligation (legal or constructive) as a result of a past event.
- it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits or service potential will be required to settle the obligation.
- a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation.

If these conditions are not met, then no provision is made.

Recognition of the provision is made in the year that the council becomes aware of the obligation and is based on the best estimate of the likely settlement.

Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year. Where it becomes apparent that a transfer of economic benefit is not required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made) the provision is reversed back.

When some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be met by another party (i.e., from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income in the surplus or deficit on provision of services if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the obligation is settled.

Reserves

The council sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future expected commitments or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts from 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 CIES. The reserve is then appropriated back to the general fund balance so there is no charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute

Capital expenditure incurred during the year but not resulting in the creation of a non-current asset for the council is classified as revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute (REFFCUS). Expenditure that can be classified as this is defined within the Local Government Act 2003 and associated capital financing regulations. This includes grants paid to other persons (such as housing renovation grants and disabled facility grants) and bodies for capital expenditure purposes. The council writes out the entire expenditure to the CIES in the year it is incurred. To ensure that no impact is passed on to council taxpayers, this expenditure is then reversed out through the movement in reserves statement by a transfer to the capital adjustment account on the balance sheet.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

Where the council is able to recover VAT, it is excluded from both income and expenditure. This is in accordance with proper accounting practices.

Accounting for schools

The Code confirms that the balance of control for local authority maintained schools (i.e., Community, Voluntary aided and Voluntary maintained schools) lies with the council. 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, rather than requiring consolidation in the Group Accounts. Academies are outside of the council's control and their transactions are not reflected in the council's accounts.

Recognition of School Assets

The significant assumptions applied in estimating the fair values are School assets are carried on the balance sheet in accordance with the legal status of ownership or intended legal status and any other arrangements in place regarding the use of these schools. The recognition of land and buildings for each type of school is based on the code requirements and accounting standards to determine the underlying relationship to the council of each type of school. Based on these tests the council has identified the following classification of schools within the accounts:

- Community - on balance sheet
- Foundation - on balance sheet
- Voluntary Controlled - on balance sheet
- Voluntary Aided - off balance sheet
- Academies - Academies are outside of the council's control and their transactions are not reflected in the council's accounts.

Capital expenditure on voluntary aided schools is treated as revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute.

PFI Schemes

The council has one school subject to PFI contract, which is not shown on the council's balance sheet. This is because it is a voluntary aided school and the control of the right to use the buildings has passed to the school trustees.