

## **1. Accounting Policies**

### **1.1 General Principles**

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's financial transactions for the 2010/12 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2012. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011, and this requires the preparation to be in accordance with proper practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2011/12 and the Service reporting Accounting Code of Practice 2011/12, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act.

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

### **1.2 Accruals of Income and Expenditure**

All transactions of the Council are accounted for in the year in which they take place, not simply when the cash payments are made or received:

- fees, charges and rents due from customers are accounted for as income at the date the Council provides the relevant goods or services
- supplies and services 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 Stock on the Balance Sheet. This also applies where the Council acts as agent, most significantly for Council Tax and NNDR collection. The Council collects all precepts on behalf of the major preceptors, and the deficit or surplus held will be shown as a debtor or creditor balance respectively
- interest 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 has 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
- income and expenditure are credited and debited to the relevant service revenue accounts, unless they properly represent capital receipts or capital expenditure.

Exceptions to this principle are:

(i) utility bills and similar instalment payments which are charged at the date of meter reading rather than being apportioned between financial years. This policy is consistently applied each year and therefore does not have a material effect on the year's accounts

(ii) certain payments made on a claims basis which are regular in terms of incidence (such that the accounting period contains twelve full months) or for which the accrual would be immaterial.

(iii) accruals of less than £500 are not adjusted for within the accounts due to the level of materiality of the transactions.

### **1.3 Cash and Cash Equivalents**

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of no more than 24 hours. Cash Equivalents are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value. Oxford City Council regards overnight funds to represent a Cash Equivalent. 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 Authority's cash management.

### **1.4 Exceptional Items**

When items of income and expenditure are material, their nature and amount is disclosed separately, either on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement or in the notes to the accounts, depending on how significant the items are to an understanding of the Authority's financial performance.

### **1.5 Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors**

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment. Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Authority's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied. Material errors discovered in prior period figures

are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

### **1.6 Charges to Revenue and 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
- amortisation of Intangible Fixed Assets attributable to the service.

The Authority is not required to raise Council Tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisations. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from Revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the authority in accordance with statutory guidance. Oxford has not made a contribution due to applying a prudent assessment.

Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisations are replaced in the General Fund Balance by way of an adjusting transaction within the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

### **1.7 Employee Benefits**

#### **Benefits Payable during Employment**

Short-term employee benefits (those falling due within 12 months of the year end) such as wages, salaries and paid annual leave and sick leave, bonuses and non monetary benefits for current employees, are considered as an expense in the year in which the employee renders the service to the Authority.

An accrual is made against services in the surplus or deficit on the provision of service, (where considered material) for the cost of holiday entitlement and other forms of leave earned by employees but not taken before the year end, and which may be carried forward into the next financial year based on following years salary. Accruals are not made for immaterial costs in respect of outstanding car mileage claims.

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

## **Termination Benefits**

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy and are charged on an accruals basis to the Non Distributed Costs line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when the Authority is demonstrably committed to the termination of the employment of an officer or group of officers or making an offer to encourage voluntary redundancy

The statutory provision requires the General Fund to be charged with the amount agreed to be payable to the Pension Fund, not the amount calculated under IFRS. In the Movement of Reserves Statement, appropriations are made to and from an Employment Reserve, a balance of this account appears on the Balance Sheet. The Employment Reserve is matched by the accrual for termination.

## **Post-employment Benefits**

Employees of the Authority are members of the Local Government pension fund administered by the Oxfordshire County Council

## **The Local Government Pension Scheme**

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

- the liabilities of the Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to-date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc, and projections of projected earnings for current employees.
- the liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 5.5%, based on the indicative rate of return on the iBoxx High Quality 15 Year corporate bond which is AA rated.
- the assets of Oxford County Council Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
  - quoted securities – current bid price
  - unquoted securities – professional estimate
  - unitised securities – current bid price

- property – margin above yield.

The change in the net pension's liability is analysed into seven components:

1. Current Service Cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned is allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked
2. Past Service Cost – the increase or reduction in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years is debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non Distributed Costs
3. Interest Cost – the expected increase in the present value of liabilities during the year as they move one year closer to being paid is debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
4. Expected Return on Assets – the annual investment return on the Fund assets attributable to the Authority, based on an average of the expected long-term return is credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
5. Gains or Losses on Settlements and Curtailments – the result of actions to relieve the Authority of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees - debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non Distributed Costs
6. 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 are debited to the Pensions Reserve
7. Contributions paid to the Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund – cash paid as employer's contributions to the Pension Fund in settlement of liabilities is not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the Pension Fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are 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 Authority also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award.

### **1.8 Events after the Balance Sheet Date**

Events after the balance sheet date are those happenings, favourable or unfavourable, that have occurred between the Balance Sheet Date and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. FRS21 sets out the recognition and measurement requirements for two types of events after the Balance Sheet Date:

- *adjusting events* – those that provide additional evidence of conditions that existed at the Balance Sheet date and materially affect the amounts included
- *non-adjusting events* – those that are of sufficient materiality that their disclosure is required, in the notes to the Core Financial Statements, for the fair presentation of the financial statements.

### **1.9 Financial Instruments and Financial Assets**

#### **Financial Liabilities**

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

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

#### **Financial Assets**

Financial assets can be classified into two types, however as Oxford has no Available For Sale Assets the policy is restricted to Loans and

Receivables (assets that have fixed or determinable payments but are not quoted in an active market).

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

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

#### **1.10 Foreign Currency Translation**

Where the Authority has entered into a transaction denominated in a foreign currency, the transaction is converted into sterling at the exchange rate applicable on the date the transaction was effected. Where amounts in foreign currency are outstanding at the year end, they are reconverted at the spot exchange rate at 31 March. Resulting gains and losses are recognised in the Financing and Investment and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

#### **1.11 Government Grants and Contributions**

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

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

Amounts recognised as due to the 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 the way in which the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using the grant or contribution are to be consumed by the recipient, or the 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-ring fenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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

#### **Area based Grant**

Oxford City Council record Area Based Grant (ABG) from the Government in relation to Climate change as a general revenue grant within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement under the heading Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income. ABG is a non-ringfenced grant.

#### **1.12 Community Infrastructure Levy**

The Authority has elected to charge a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) the levy will be charged on new builds (chargeable developments for the Authority) with appropriate planning consent. The Council will charge for and collect the levy in 2013. The income from the levy will be used to fund a number of infrastructure projects to support the development of the area. CIL is received without outstanding conditions and will be recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure



statement in accordance with the accounting policy for Government grants and contributions as set out above. CIL charges will be largely used to fund capital expenditure. However, a small proportion may be used to fund revenue expenditure.

### **1.13 Housing Levy**

The Council has adopted a policy of making a levy on square foot development of housing development. The levy will be received as income and recorded in the service within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account, but then earmarked through the Movement In Reserves Statement (MIRS) to be retained to assist social housing development. When the earmarked reserve is applied an entry will be made in the MIRS to reduce the earmark reserve and increase the general fund balance to compensate for the expenditure applying the levy.

### **1.14 Heritage Assets**

A tangible Heritage Asset is a tangible asset with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities that is held and maintained principally for its contribution to knowledge and culture. An intangible Heritage Asset is an intangible asset with cultural, environmental or historical significance. Examples of intangible Heritage Assets include recordings of significant historical events.

Property Heritage Assets that are operational are not separately identified, and are included in the appropriate Property Plant and Equipment, or Investment property category of the Council's Balance Sheet.

Property Heritage Assets that are not operational will be identified separately on the face of the Balance Sheet in the Category of Heritage Assets and will follow the accounting treatment appropriate to the asset.

#### **Measurement Rules in relation to other Heritage assets**

Oxford City Council Heritage Assets can be categorised as follows:

- The Great Mace and Plate Room Silver Plaques and Cutlery
- Furniture
- Civic Regalia and Chains of Office (including number Plate)
- Firearms
- Pictures and Drawings

These assets are deemed to have an indeterminate life and high residual values, and the Authority does not consider it necessary to provide for depreciation.

The assets movements are relatively static with very little acquisitions or disposals. However, acquisitions are initially recognized at cost, and donated assets at insurance valuation.

- Memorials gardens and City Walls

The Authority has identified War Memorials in St Giles, and Marston Road, which along with the ancient City walls (inside New College, and Hall Street) and the Rewley Abbey Wall meet the criteria of Heritage assets. However, these assets lack any comparable market values and cost records do not exist. The cost of providing a Balance Sheet valuation on these assets would be disproportionate to any benefit to the user of the Authorities financial statements and therefore are excluded from the Balance Sheet.

- Heritage Non operational property

The Authority has identified the Plain Fountain which is a significant Asset in terms of its cultural and Heritage presence. The Asset is included in the Balance Sheet at it Depreciated replacement Cost.

The value will be reviewed every five years to ensure any potential material changes can be reflected

The asset has a definable life and therefore will be depreciated.

- Oxford City First Registration number plate

The Council's Mayors Car carries the first registration plate issue in Oxford, and the plate is valued at market value.

The value will be reviewed every five years to ensure any potential material changes can be reflected

These assets are deemed to have an indeterminate life and high residual values, and the Authority does not consider it necessary to provide for depreciation.

### **1.15 Intangible Assets**

Expenditure on non monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Authority as a result of a past event (e.g. software licences and system development expenditure) is capitalised when it is expected that future benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Authority, and are amortised to the relevant service revenue account over the economic life of the investment to reflect the pattern of consumption of benefits.

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

Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is primarily intended to promote or advertise the Authorities goods or services. Website development for a business purpose would be capitalised.

Intangible Assets are measured at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Authority can be determined by reference to an active market. The depreciation of an Intangible Asset is amortised over the asset's useful life to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired – any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an Intangible Asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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

#### **1.16 Interest in Companies and Other Entities**

The Authority has material interest in the Barton Oxford LLP. The Council has a 50% interest in the Company and share profit and losses, and is therefore required to prepare group accounts. The method adopted in the financial statements is to provide side by side Financial statements consolidated on a proportionate basis.

#### **1.17 Inventories and Long Term Contracts**

Inventories are normally valued at the lower of cost or net realisable value where practical. However, for small value stocks current purchase price or average cost may be used. This is a departure from the Code, but the effect is not material to the Council's accounts.

Where the Council has entered into contracts that run for longer than one year, they are disclosed as a note to the accounts. Entries are only realised in the Balance Sheet if the contracts become onerous, in which case the Council would recognise the difference between the fair value of the contract and the actual payments due to be made, effectively creating a Provision.

#### **1.18 Investment Property**

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

Investment Properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, based on the amount at which the asset could be exchanged between knowledgeable parties at arm's length. Investment Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions at the year end. Gains and Losses on Revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Rentals received in relation to Investment Property are credited to the Financing and Investment line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, and result in a gain for the General Fund Balance.

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

### **1.19 Leases**

Leases are classified as Finance Leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as Operating Leases. Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification. Arrangements that do not have the legal status of a lease but convey a right to use an asset in return for payment are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets.

#### **a) The Authority as Lessee**

##### **Finance Leases**

Property, Plant and Equipment held under Finance Leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Authority are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Lease payments are apportioned between:

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

Property, Plant and Equipment recognised under Finance Leases are 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.

### **Operating Leases**

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

### **b) The Authority as Lessor**

#### **Finance Leases**

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

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

The gain credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on disposal is not permitted by statute to increase the General Fund Balance and is required to be treated as a Capital Receipt. Where a premium has been received, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future financial years, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the rentals are received, the repayment element is used to write down the long term 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 fixed assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements

for capital financing. Amounts are therefore appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

### **Operating Leases**

Where the Authority grants an Operating Lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. 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.

### **1.20 Overheads and Support Services**

The cost of Overheads and Support Services are charged to those that benefit from the supply of services based on use and in accordance with Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Service Reporting Accounting Code of Practice 2011-12 (SeRCOP).

The total absorption costing principle is used – the full cost of overheads and support services are shared between users in proportion to the benefits received, with the exception of:

- Corporate and Democratic Core – costs relating to the Council's status as a multifunctional, democratic organisation
- Non Distributed Costs – the cost of discretionary benefits awarded to employees retiring early and any depreciation and impairment losses chargeable on non-operational properties.

These two categories are defined in SeRCOP and accounted for as separate headings in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as part of Net Expenditure on Continuing Services.

### **1.21 Property, Plant and Equipment**

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

### **Recognition**

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation and replacement of components is capitalised on an accruals basis.

The cost of components replaced are added to the asset carrying value, and an assessment of the carrying value of the component replaced is made, and then derecognised.

### **Measurement**

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- the purchase price
- any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

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

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

- infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost
- dwellings – fair value, determined using the basis of Existing Use Value for Social Housing (EUV-SH)
- all other assets – fair value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its Existing Use Value (EUV).

Where there is no market-based evidence of fair value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost (DRC) is used as an estimate of fair value. For non-property assets that have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for fair value.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at fair value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their fair value at the year-end, but as a minimum they are revalued 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.

### **Impairment**

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

- where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains)
- 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, and where material, 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 following basis:

- dwellings and other buildings – straight-line allocation over the useful life of the property as estimated by the valuer
- vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment – straight-line allocation over the useful life, as advised by a suitably qualified officer
- infrastructure – straight-line.

Where an asset comprises major components whose costs are significant in relation to the total cost of the asset, the components 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 sales costs. Where there is a subsequent decrease in the net fair value, 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 losses previously 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.

The Revaluation Reserve on Assets Held for Sale (AHFS) is frozen in the previous asset category as the identification of an AHFS removes the capital accounting requirement. It is only when the asset disposal takes place that the revaluation reserve is moved to the Capital Adjustment Account.

### **Disposals**

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. A proportion of receipts relating to housing disposals (75% for dwellings, 50% for land and other assets, net of statutory deductions and allowances) is payable to the Government. In the case of pooling of Land the council can apply the sums to regeneration, and social housing investment.

The balance of receipts is required to be credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve, and can then only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the Authority's underlying need to borrow (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.

### **1.22 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Similar Contracts**

The Council did not operate any PFI contracts during 2010/11.

### **1.23 Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets**

#### **Provisions**

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

The Council maintains a Provision for the funding of the self-financed element of insurance claims. This Provision is funded through contributions from the relevant Service Revenue Accounts.

Provisions for bad or doubtful debts are separately disclosed against debtors on the Balance Sheet and are not included in the Provisions figure. Known uncollectible debts have been written off.

Provisions are charged to the appropriate Revenue Account and when payments for expenditure are incurred to which the Provision relates they are charged direct to the Provision. Provisions are reviewed at each Balance Sheet date and if no longer required are reversed. In addition, Provisions for bad debts have been made within the accounts for expected losses of income in respect of sums due but not received from debtors.

### **Contingent Liabilities**

Contingent Liabilities are not recognised as liabilities in the Balance Sheet; however, all contingent liabilities are disclosed if there is a possibility of an outflow of economic benefit.

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

### **Contingent Assets**

A Contingent Asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible asset whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority.

Contingent Assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a Note to the Accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefit or service potential.

### **1.24 Reserves**

The Council sets aside specific amounts as Reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. These are separate from Provisions. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts in the

Statement of Movements on the General Fund Balances. When expenditure to be financed from a Reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate Service Revenue Account in that year to count against the Net Cost of Services in the Income and Expenditure Account. The Reserve is then appropriated back to the General Fund Balance so that there is no net charge against Council Tax for the expenditure.

Certain Reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for tangible fixed assets and retirement benefits. They do not represent usable resources for the Council.

Capital Reserves are not available for revenue purposes and some can only be used for specific statutory purposes. The Capital Adjustment Account represents the balance of the surpluses or deficits arising from the periodic revaluations of fixed assets and the amounts set aside from revenue or capital receipts to finance expenditure on fixed assets and certain other capital financing transactions. The Revaluation Reserve contains valuation gains recognised since 1 April 2007.

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

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

#### **1.25 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 has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year. Where the Authority 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.

#### **1.26 VAT**

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.

#### **1.27 Carbon Reduction Commitment Allowances**

The Authority is required to participate in the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme. This scheme is currently in its introductory phase which will last until 31 March 2014. The Authority is required to purchase and surrender allowances, currently retrospectively, on the basis of emissions i.e. carbon dioxide purchased as energy is used. As carbon dioxide is emitted (i.e. as energy is used), a liability and an expense are recognised. The liability will be discharged by surrendering allowances. The liability is measured at the best estimate of the expenditure to meet the obligation, normally at the current market price of the number of allowances required to meet the liability at the reporting date. The cost to the authority is recognised and reported in the costs of the authority's services and apportioned to the services on the basis of energy consumption.

### **1.28 HRA Self Financing**

On 28th March 2012 the council will pay Department for Communities and Local Government £198.5 million in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) self financing reforms. The accounting entries for this will show this amount in the HRA CI&E, but will be taken back out through the Movement In Reserves Statement so as not to affect the bottom line. This new accounting policy has been established to enable the future repayments to be used to reduce the loan liability and is being accounted for in 2011-12 as an exceptional item.